



## English Policy

**Our mission is to inspire, nurture and challenge every learner to achieve their full potential.**

“English is the language of the future... the most important tool you’ll ever need, no matter what career you choose. You have the right to English. Make it your right!” Benjamin Zephaniah

### **Introduction:**

At Holbrook Primary School we will develop the abilities of all pupils to communicate effectively in speech and in writing; to listen with understanding and to become enthusiastic and responsive readers so that they can cope with the language demands in adult life. We will use a wide range of multi-cultural literature and reference materials, to develop the self-esteem of all pupils and an understanding and respect for all cultures alongside their own. We will liaise closely with services which have an impact on pupils’ achievement in English and Literacy skills, such as Speech and Language Development services, EMAS, Early Years team and advisory teachers to ensure that any gap in individual outcomes is narrowed.

### **At Holbrook Primary School we aim to develop in all pupils:**

- A positive attitude towards all aspects of English.
- A love of reading and writing and an appreciation of good literature.
- The ability to communicate and respond effectively.
- The competence to produce work of high quality.
- Independence and confidence.
- Persistence and stamina.
- A keen awareness of audience in all areas of English, across the range of literacy skills.
- The confidence to tackle and solve problems through the application of knowledge and the effective use of skills.

### **To ensure we realise our aims, we shall:**

- Provide a language rich environment that promotes a culture of reading and writing.
- Develop in pupils an interest in and a love of books and literature that will not only support their learning across the curriculum but also enrich their lives
- Value and use books as a basis for learning, pleasure, talk and play
- Teach pupils the craft of writing in order to develop in children the confidence and skills to write well for a range of purposes and audience
- Teach the basics – spelling, handwriting and punctuation - to liberate creativity
- Foster in pupils the confidence, desire and ability to express their views and opinions both orally and in writing
- Value and celebrate diversity in culture and language.

**To ensure consistency of approach for our pupils, we have non- negotiable aspects of practice known as “Primary Principles”.** These principles are updated each term to ensure they are relevant to the school’s work and priorities.

### **Learning and Teaching**

We believe that pupils learn best when their work is purposeful and set in a meaningful context. Therefore, teachers plan English so that it links with rich and exciting topics. All learning styles of the children are met (auditory, visual, kinaesthetic) through a wide range of learning opportunities. Key skills are thoroughly taught through guided work and adult supported activities. Independent activities are planned to consolidate and extend learning.

Teachers (and where appropriate, HLTAS) will –

- Strive to provide inspiring and meaningful language experiences. The teacher's role is therefore varied – someone who observes, facilitates, supports, provides a critical audience, models and scaffolds high quality writing and reading.
- Demonstrate high levels of personal literacy skills and have high expectations of our pupils and provide challenging and enriching opportunities in a safe and supportive environment.
- Have a clear understanding of the objectives being taught, openly sharing these with the pupils.
- Plan for well-paced lessons, which drive learning forward and ensure pupils make progress within lessons.
- Pass on their optimism and high expectations for success to the pupils.
- Appropriately use a range of teaching strategies, (including direction, demonstration, modelling, scaffolding, explanation, targeted questioning, initiating and guiding exploration, discussing and challenging ideas generated by the pupils).
- Listen and respond to pupils in a sensitive and supportive manner, discussing and evaluating pupils' successes.

HLTAS/Learning Support Assistants/ other adults will –

- Demonstrate competent literacy skills
- Contribute ideas for lesson planning
- Play an active role during whole class sessions, supporting the learning objective
- Support guided groups and project high expectations
- Support the teacher in the plenary of whole class sessions
- Organise and run intervention groups (across the school), in liaison with the Deputy Head/Senco/Class teacher.

## **Planning**

We use the National Curriculum and Early Years Foundation Stage guidance (EYFS) as the basis for implementing the statutory requirements of the programme for English. Long term and medium term planning is carried out with reference to the Cornerstones curriculum.

Class teachers complete a weekly/ short term plan for the teaching of English. This lists the specific learning objectives for each lesson and gives details of how lessons are to be taught. It also includes details of how learning will be differentiated for pupils.

## **Organisation**

English is taught on a daily basis. Links between English and other subjects are made to provide a rich context for learning. The main features of English teaching include whole class teaching, independent or group activity and a plenary (a lesson review where children reflect on the learning that has taken place.)

The success of English teaching is dependent on meaningful contexts where links can be made to other curriculum areas or classroom activities. Starting points for learning should arise from exciting texts, poems, various print materials, artefacts and other first-hand experience. Teachers encourage pupils to use their developing reading, writing and speaking and listening skills in other subjects.

In the Foundation Stage, Communication forms the basis of one of the 3 prime areas with Literacy as a specific area. The emphasis is on teaching literacy skills through role play, stories, storytelling and big books.

## **Reading**

Reading skills are taught in more than one context.

### **Shared Reading**

Some English lessons will include a shared reading aspect. The teacher models the reading process to the whole class as an expert reader, providing a high level of support. Teaching objectives are pre-planned and sessions are characterised by explicit teaching of specific reading strategies, oral response and high levels of collaboration. The pupils join in, where appropriate, with the reading of the text. The texts selected are quality texts that reflect the teaching objectives.

### **Guided Reading**

Pupils put into practice their growing expertise in a structured group situation. The approach to Guided Reading is:

- 1) Select the text - Excerpts from relevant texts are used (often taken from the class book for the term). Most groups of children will work from the same text although a teacher may choose to use something simpler with children who struggle with decoding, depending on the focus of the learning. The excerpt will be 100 words in length (beginning at 50 words in Key Stage One and increasing).
- 2) Identify the features – teachers identify approximately ten features in the text to assess its usefulness for the purpose using the coding. This is used as a prompt for teachers; children are given a blank text. A key is used to do this:
  - Words that the children may find difficult to decode are UNDERLINED
  - Language features that the teacher wants to discuss (such as unfamiliar punctuation, figurative language etc) are CIRCLED
  - Concepts that may be difficult for the children to conceptualise are identified with a SQUARE.
- 3) Design the questions – teachers chose three types of questions, one from each category:
  - Exposition – find and retrieve information straight from the text
  - Explore – look deeper. Make inferences based on clues in the text
  - Expansion – think outside the text. For example, relate to the events from a personal perspective etc.

The teacher's role is supportive, modelling a reflective, appreciative approach to content, and prompting the reader if necessary to consider a balanced range of information and problem solving. Discussion is facilitated by the teacher, with the emphasis being on children doing the talking. Children are encouraged to share ideas and opinions within an environment which supports the theory that not every question has a right answer.

Guided reading groups are arranged according to the needs of the class. In most classes, groups are of mixed ability. Teachers will decide to group children by ability if this is in the best interests of the children. All pupils work with the teacher at least once in a fortnightly period. Younger pupils and pupils in need of extra support will have supplementary sessions. In addition, learning support assistants and HLTAs will teach some groups providing extra adult time for teaching key reading skills.

Each teacher keeps notes made during each guided session. This informs the planning for the next session. Next steps are shared with the pupils so that they know what they can do to improve. Teachers use these notes to inform on-going assessment and to determine the band in which a child is working at the end of the term.

It is intended that guided reading provides a forum for children to demonstrate what they have learned about reading and to further develop and extend their reading and comprehension skills. Information from guided sessions will be shared with parents where relevant.

### **Individual Reading**

Pupils have access to a range of picture books, transition chapter books and longer texts to support the development of their individual reading skills. Pupils start the reading scheme in Foundation Stage and continue on this scheme until they become competent, independent readers. They can then choose from a wide variety of books in KS2.

Teachers are responsible for ensuring that pupils are taking home books appropriate to their reading level regularly and for communicating effectively with parents their child's progress through the use of the reading record.

All classrooms have a range of reading books that vary in difficulty. All scheme reading books are graded as part of the scheme by publishers.

### **Reading across the Curriculum**

Teachers use a variety of texts in a range of subjects. Reading skills are practised and enhanced across the curriculum.

### **Class Reading Areas**

To support reading in class and to encourage an exciting reading environment, there is a dedicated reading area in each classroom which has, as a minimum:

- A bookcase of attractively displayed fiction and non-fiction.
- Both published and children's posters to develop an interest in reading.
- A seating area, preferably with rugs, cushions or other soft furnishings
- A book stock that changes throughout the year
- Magazines, audio books and other materials to support reading

In addition:

- Box collections from the library service may be used to supplement book stock.
- Pupils may be involved in organising class reading areas and in requesting books for purchase
- 'Author of the term' linked to class topics or pupil interests may be used

### **School Library**

All pupils have access to the school library. Teachers can book the library for learning sessions. Teachers decide whether to take a whole class, half a class or a small group at a time for library skills practice and access to the library stock. Wider use of the library is encouraged through these sessions. In addition, the library is open week after school for Key Stage Two Home Learning club.

### **Reading Scheme**

Oxford Reading Tree is the main scheme used by the school. Pupils from Foundation Stage onwards will read books from this scheme and make progress through the levels. Books from other schemes with phonics based texts are used which supplement the phonics teaching programme.

**Every teacher has a responsibility to spark within children a love of reading and develop high level reading skills so that they can access the curriculum.**

### **Writing**

Writing skills are taught in more than one context

#### **Shared Writing**

Writing opportunities are embedded across the curriculum in order to provide a rich context for writing and to give children real purposes and audiences for their written work. Shared writing takes place within the English lesson. The teacher models the writing process to the whole class as an expert writer, articulating the process. Teaching objectives are pre-planned and sessions are characterised by explicit teaching of specific writing strategies, oral response and high levels of collaboration. The pupils join in individually or through partner work, with the writing, where appropriate.

During follow up activities, pupils share ideas and experiment with writing, with the support of the teacher. The learning objective is shared with pupils.

#### **The Big Write**

From Y1 onwards, pupils complete a 'Big Write' on a fortnightly basis. Teachers establish an atmosphere and an expectation that pupils will complete a piece of writing under timed conditions on paper that, once marked, forms part of the child's writing portfolio. A Talk Home Learning task is sent home the day before each Big Write in KS2 and where appropriate in KS1. KS1 classes that do not send home Talk Home Learning before the Big Write will carry out a preparatory lesson in school the day before so that children are prepared for the writing task.

**Every teacher has a responsibility to spark within children a love of writing and develop high level writing skills so that they can express themselves and communicate across the curriculum.**

### **Presentation**

We believe that all pupils want to present their writing in the best possible way, especially for display and redrafting. Our Presentation Policy and Handwriting guidelines provide detailed information.

### **Phonics, Spelling and Key Words**

Efforts are made to contextualise pupils' learning of spelling as much as possible, and to make the experience a meaningful and enjoyable one, e.g. by linking to poetry and stories. In the Foundation Stage, pupils are introduced to phonics through a structured multi-sensory programme.

As soon as possible, pupils are encouraged to check and edit their own writing and to take responsibility for their own spelling development. A separate spelling policy details the approach we take to teaching spelling and encouraging good spelling across the school.

Key Word expectations are set for each year group and are based on the spelling lists in the National Curriculum. These are shared with parents and are checked and tested by the class teacher. Key words and/or spellings are weekly expectations of home learning.

The school follows the LETTERS AND SOUNDS phonics programme.

### **Speaking and Listening**

The development of language is crucial. It is important because of its association with the development of higher order thinking skills and the impact that language can have on the quality of life itself. Spoken Language is important in the progression of children's thinking as it assists them in making reference to things in the past, present, future or elsewhere in the world outside their immediate experience.

Children's talk should be used to underpin and extend their thinking. Linguistic competence is of paramount importance because it is a key to personal and social development. We use language to provide structures to enhance children's learning. It is important that classrooms are positive and secure environments where pupils feel valued and are respected by others, so feel able to speak confidently and communicate effectively.

Teachers provide pupils with a variety of opportunities to talk in different situations and for different audiences and support them to speak with clarity, confidence and fluency using appropriate forms of speech.

Talk Boost is a feature of KS1 classrooms.

Pupils are encouraged to:

- ask relevant, varied and thought-provoking questions
- listen with attention, patience and respond appropriately to others
- to follow increasingly complex instructions
- use a variety of drama techniques including 'hot seating', 'tableau' and 'conscience alley' to explore issues
- express themselves, their feelings and their emotions accurately
- explain a process using the correct technical vocabulary

### **Special Educational Needs**

All pupils will have full access to English lessons. Any additional support that is required will take place during the guided/ independent sessions, allowing the pupil to benefit from the rich classroom literacy environment.

Pupils may be withdrawn at other times during the school day, such as the key stage intervention programme time. For pupils with identified SEND targets are set matching the needs of the child. Pupils with SEN will have the opportunity to work with the teacher, teaching assistant and independently.

In class, the teacher will set differentiated tasks to support less able, and extend the more able.

### **More Able and Higher Attaining Pupils**

More able children will be challenged and motivated by greater differentiation of materials and tasks. The class teacher will also aim to identify pupils who may be gifted in English and provide them with appropriate learning opportunities.

All pupils will be taught so that they remain in the zone of challenge. Questions which stretch and extend thinking will be used.

## **Equal opportunities**

Teachers at Holbrook Primary School are aware of the issues related to gender and literacy learning and, in particular, the difference in performance by boys and girls in national tests. If boys and girls are to have equal access to literacy learning, teachers need to consider these in all their complexity. However, until boy performance in reading and writing improves, teachers will give thought to the strategies that engage and enhance the quality of work of boys. In particular, the link between talk and writing will be emphasised.

## **Celebrating Diversity**

At Holbrook Primary School we celebrate language diversity. Books in classrooms and the library, as well as displays around school, reflect the fact that we live in a multi-lingual and multicultural society. Teachers will endeavour to enrich their literate environment by including translated signs, notices and numerical symbols. A particular effort is made to display our own bi-lingual children's home languages. EAL children work with children who present good models of language. Support may be offered by teachers from EMAS. Books and resources will also support our work on equalities by representing different families and non- gender conforming characters.

## **Assessment and Recording**

The teacher carries out formative assessment on a daily and weekly basis to inform planning. It involves identifying children's progress against teaching objectives, determining what a child has already achieved and moving them on to the next stage of their learning development.

Children take formal tests, in Reading, Writing and EGPS (SpaG), each term. These tests measure progress and are used to support teachers' judgements in the assessment of children. These tests, along with on-going assessment, are used by teachers to inform medium term planning. Assessment bands are communicated to parents on a termly basis and, when age appropriate, to children.

Marking and feedback in English is linked to the learning objective and success criteria. Over time, assessment should build a picture of pupils' abilities to be effective communicators, enthusiastic readers of fiction and non-fiction, creative and imaginative users of language and careful, evaluative listeners.

Teachers are expected to highlight up to three spellings in English work and these should be corrected by the child. This could include looking the word up in the dictionary and writing it out three times correctly / less able and younger pupils have the word written out for them but are still expected to write the word out themselves.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The quality of teaching in English, the standards attained by pupils, and their progress will be a regular part of the school's monitoring of learning, teaching and pupil progress.

The subject leader for English will review the progress of pupils using available data and follow this up with work scrutiny, classroom visits, learning walks, lesson observations and pupil interviews.

The governors with responsibility for English will receive regular reports from the subject leader and will carry out their own monitoring exercises and report to the curriculum committee and the full governing body. Governors will be invited to visit classrooms to enable them to carry out their responsibilities.

## **Conclusion**

This policy will be reviewed in line with the governing body's schedule of policy review. It should be considered alongside other relevant policy statements.

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