



## **English Policy for Grasslot Infant School**

### **Introduction**

At Grasslot Infant School, we are committed to fostering a love for literacy from an early age. Our English policy outlines our approach to teaching reading and writing across Early Years and Key Stage One. We utilize Read Write Inc. for reading, Drawing Club for writing in Early Years, and Literacy Tree for writing in Key Stage One, ensuring a comprehensive literacy programme.

### **Principles of teaching literacy.**

#### **Early Years**

Communication and Language is a 'Prime' area of learning in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Literacy is a 'Specific' subject area. In the Foundation Stage children are taught through adult led activities and given opportunities to reinforce and enhance their learning through continuous provision. Reception children also receive focused 'Literacy' teaching time. Children begin their Phonics teaching within the Early Years as to build a solid foundation for reading.

#### **Key Stage 1**

English is a core subject for Key Stage 1 in the National Curriculum. The curriculum provides each year group with clear objectives which the teacher covers throughout the year in order to ensure children meet the end of year expectations. A combination of whole class and small group teaching enables teachers to address the needs of all children within the class at a level appropriate to them.

### **Oracy**

In the EEF publication 'Preparing for Literacy – Improving communication, language and literacy in the early years' they state:

**“Language provides the foundation of thinking and learning and should be prioritised”.**

At Grasslot Infant School we agree with this and put a lot of emphasis on teaching speaking and listening skills throughout the whole school using a variety of speaking and listening focused activities.

We recognise that whilst hearing is a natural ability in most children we need to teach the skill of listening. Children should develop an ability to listen to a speaker in formal and informal contexts, be able to respond appropriately to what they have heard and to appreciate the occasional need for 'silence'.

To develop our pupils as speakers and listeners we:

- give them opportunities to express their ideas, thoughts and feelings in small groups through circle time
- give them opportunities to take part in discussions and drama / role play activities
- encourage them to listen and respond appropriately to others

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- encourage, model and praise the use of vocabulary and the grammar of Standard English wherever possible
- Provide them and model using specific vocabulary linked to every day life and specific topics
- provide a variety of opportunities to speak in larger groups, to visitors and to an audience
- Use Talk Boost and Early Talk Boost intervention where needed.

We assess the children in the Early Years on their vocabulary and speech using a set of tier one words linked to our topics. Children are assessed at the start and end of each topic so we can measure progress. Children are exposed to age appropriate vocabulary during their continuous provision through interactions with adults. This is on display in each area of the provision and modelled by staff. Children are exposed to Tier Two Vocabulary where it is explicitly taught during story time and Drawing Club.

We have Oracy planning for Key Stage one which ensures that oracy takes place across the curriculum and introduces children to Tier Two Vocabulary and allows them to think and talk like Scientists, Historian, Geographers etc.

## **Reading**

### **Reading for Pleasure:**

Promoting reading for pleasure in our Infant School is essential for fostering a love of books and literacy from a young age. We believe that all children should begin their reading journey in school in a positive way by providing them with:

- Cosy reading areas in school to encourage children to explore books independently.
- A variety of books and genres which link to our topics and children's interests ensuring representations of different cultures and traditions.
- Regular reading for pleasure sessions each day as a class and on a one to one.
- Reading for pleasure books for the children to take home and share with families.
- Reading Rewards each term.

Each class has a Reading Spine which consists of books which are read throughout the school year. Some are linked to topics and others are taken from the writing programmes 'The Drawing Club' used in Reception and 'The Literacy Tree' in Key Stage One.

### **Early Phonics and Reading:**

In the Little Sunbeams and Nursery, the children are exposed to early Phonics through listening games and Phase One Phonics activities. In the Summer Term of Nursery, if the children are ready we begin to prepare them for phonics by introducing them to the single letter sounds.

### **Read Write Inc. Phonics**

The programme is for pupils in Reception to Year 2 who are learning to read and write. In Read Write Inc. Phonics pupils:

- Decode letter-sound correspondences quickly and effortlessly, using their phonic knowledge and skills



- Read common exception words on sight
- Understand what they read
- Read aloud with fluency and expression
- Write confidently, with a strong focus on vocabulary and grammar
- Spell quickly and easily by segmenting the sounds in words
- Acquire good handwriting.

In addition, we teach pupils to work effectively with a partner to explain and consolidate what they are learning. This provides the teacher with opportunities to assess learning and to pick up on difficulties, such as pupils' poor articulation, or problems with blending or alphabetic code knowledge.

We group pupils homogeneously, according to their progress in reading rather than their writing. This is because it is known that pupils' progress in writing will lag behind progress in reading, especially for those whose motor skills are less well developed.

In Reception we emphasise the alphabetic code. The pupils rapidly learn sounds and the letter or groups of letters they need to represent them. Simple mnemonics help them to grasp this quickly. This is especially useful for pupils at risk of making slower progress. This learning is consolidated daily. Pupils have frequent practice in reading high frequency words with irregular spellings – common exception words.

We make sure that pupils read books that are closely matched to their increasing knowledge of phonics and the common exception words. This is so that, early on, they experience success and gain confidence that they are readers. Re-reading and discussing these books with the teacher supports their increasingly fluent decoding.

Alongside this, the teachers read a wide range of stories, poetry and non-fiction to pupils; they are soon able to read these texts for themselves.

Embedding the alphabetic code early on means that pupils quickly learn to write simple words and sentences. We encourage them to compose each sentence aloud until they are confident to write independently.

Our aim is for pupils to complete the phonics programme as quickly as possible. The sooner they complete it, the sooner they will be able to choose books to read at their own interest and comprehension level.

Pupils are taught to articulate their thoughts and ideas out loud and to communicate what they know and understand. Pupils answer every question with a partner, comment on each other's ideas, clarify each other's thinking, and build upon each other's thoughts and ideas. The teacher asks questions to take their thinking further and clears up any misconceptions. Partner discussion helps teachers assess what and how pupils are learning throughout the lesson.

### **Outcomes for children: Assessing and tracking progress**

We assess all pupils following Read Write Inc. Phonics using the Entry Assessment. This gives us a very good indication of how well they are making progress relative to their starting points. We do this for all pupils, whenever they join us, so we can track all of them effectively, including those eligible for the pupil premium.



For those on the Read Write Inc. Phonics programme, we record their starting date and entry point on the tracker to monitor the rate at which they are making progress. We can also easily identify those who joined the programme later. The expectation for finishing the Read, Write inc. programme is by the end of Spring Term One in Year 2.

Pupils who are making slower progress usually complete the programme by the end of Year 2. We support pupils who have identified special educational needs for however long it takes until they can read. For example, we identify those who are at risk of falling behind their peers immediately – whatever their age. Highly trained staff then tutor them for 15 minutes every day, using the Read Write Inc. One-to-one tutoring programme.

By the end of Key Stage 1, our pupils are able to read aloud age-appropriate texts accurately and with sufficient speed for comprehension. This means that we can focus on developing their comprehension, preparing them well for transition to Key Stage 2. Their good decoding skills mean that they have a sound strategy for decoding unfamiliar words when they come across them at whatever stage or in any subject, even into secondary school.

### **Narrowing the gap – and the pupil premium**

The programme as a whole has been very effective for our pupils in narrowing performance gaps between different groups, both within our school and nationally.

We know from our tracking that our pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium have made progress in line with that of our other pupils or are catching up quickly.

### **Impact across the curriculum**

Our teachers are enthusiastic about using the Read Write Inc. programme because they can see how well pupils learn from it and the progress they make, not just in English, but across the curriculum.

Data is used effectively to ensure gaps are closing between all groups – in particular those eligible for the pupil premium (Read Write Inc. assessment and tracking, phonics screening check).

Slower progress pupils and those with specific SEN are taught in small homogeneous teaching groups and receive Read Write Inc. one-to-one tutoring.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

The programmes' 'cycle of instruction' means that, after direct instruction and guided practice, the pupils teach another pupil. In this way they all rehearse and consolidate what they have been learning. This helps the pupils to make their understanding clear to themselves and helps the teacher deal with any misconceptions. 'Partner teaching' is a key assessment tool.

In Read Write Inc. Phonics, because the pupils are grouped across the school in terms of their reading ability, they are reading at an appropriate decoding level every day. The homogeneous groups in the Phonic lessons help us to focus the teaching and ensure pupils learn to read quickly. Staff teaching Read Write Inc. Phonics record the results from the Assessments, which take place each half term. This data allows us to intervene in different ways. For instance, we quickly move pupils to another group if they are progressing faster than their peers. Those who continue to struggle have one-to-one tutoring so that they keep up.



All the pupils are engaged, with a positive impact on their behaviour. They learn to participate fully: we agree with them the rules for working in a group or discussing with a partner. We discourage 'hands up' for answering questions because we believe that all pupils should answer every question. The teacher selects pupils to answer.

The Read Write Inc. programme has detailed lesson plans. These give the teachers practical day-to-day guidance, but we work hard to build on these plans so that the lessons are matched carefully to the needs of their particular group. Every activity is prepared thoroughly and has a clear purpose. The teacher explains this at the beginning so that the pupils understand, during the activity, what they are learning and why.

Additional support for lower-attaining pupils learning to read

Pupils in the 'lowest' attaining group have the widest variety of needs. This is therefore the least homogeneous group. In order to give these pupils the same carefully targeted teaching as all the other groups, some of these pupils have daily one-to-one tutoring for 10 to 20 minutes, in addition to their group session in the morning. This tutoring helps us to meet their individual needs.

### **Homework**

We support pupils to select appropriate books to take home, depending on what support they might receive at home. Pupils take home books containing graphemes they have been taught in the Read Write Inc. Phonics lessons. This means that they are confident to read at home, even if their parents cannot read with them.

The children read three times a week in school and the expectation is that they read five times a week at home. Therefore, each week children are 'set' a Read, Write, Inc Phonics book and a Quiz book on their Oxford Owl online account. These are the books which the children have been using in school that week therefore they will be confident to read again at home. They also take a 'Book Bag Book' home each week to read in addition to their online book.

We award children on a weekly basis for 5 lots of reading and the children take part in the Bronze, Silver and Gold award system in school where they receive awards for 50, 100 and 150 lots of reading each year.

Children who are not reading at home are picked up in school and are either listened too during one-to-one tuition time or take part in the 'Chapter One' intervention where they read to an adult online on a weekly basis.

### **Quality of teaching and pupils' progress**

The headteacher and reading leader monitor pupils' progress together until every child can read. No child is left behind to struggle. We record lesson observations and any subsequent coaching alongside the 'teacher tracker' so that we can see if there is a correlation between the quality of the teaching and the progress pupils make.

- The Read Write Inc. 'cycle of instruction' is embedded across the curriculum – MYYT, TTYP. Pupils do not raise their hands to answer questions.
- Close grouping in Phonics is maintained – pupils are moved on quickly.
- The purpose of each activity is clear to both teachers and pupils.
- Planning and marking is thorough.



- In Phonics, pupils read books at home that closely match their word reading ability.
- Teaching is monitored thoroughly (see Leadership and Management).

**The reading leader's roles include:**

- ensuring that our teaching of reading is of the highest quality and that all our pupils make progress
- ensuring pupils in the 'lower progress' group are making good progress and organising one-to-one tutoring for the pupils who need extra support
- keeping the groups homogeneous, i.e. at the same reading level
- providing further training (through masterclasses, coaching/ observation and face-to-face feedback).

**Professional development**

A key element of Read Write Inc. is consistent whole-school practice, underpinned by appropriate professional development. The headteacher, all the teachers and teaching assistants are trained to teach reading. All staff have attended two-day Phonics training and the trainer has returned to support us on subsequent development days. We hold at least two Development Days every year to ensure we are aware of up-to-date practice.

We implement the Read Write Inc. program to provide a structured and systematic approach to phonics and reading.

Key elements include:

- Daily phonics sessions that cater to the varying abilities of our students.
- Engaging and diverse reading materials that captivate children's interests and encourage a love for reading.
- Regular assessments to track progress and tailor support for individual learning needs.

**Writing**

**Writing in Early Years.**

Mark making and early writing are crucial for the development of two year olds and Nursery aged children. We believe it is important for children to:

- Develop their gross and fine motor skills improving posture and hand strength.
- Improve hand eye coordination.
- Understand symbols have meaning.
- Express ideas and develop vocabulary.

Children are exposed to Early mark making and writing in the Early Years in a series of activities that take place each day:

- The Dough Disco programme
- Move to Write programme wrote by Cumberland Early Years Team
- Healthy Movers programme following the Active Start programme.

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They are also given the opportunity during Continuous Provision to develop Mark Making through open access to the writing, craft and painting areas.

Each Friday morning the children have a Funky Finger sessions where they develop their fine motor skills and learn to make the early marks of lines, circles, squares, crosses etc whilst developing hand strength and finger control.

## **Drawing Club**

In Reception, we focus on developing children's writing skills through the Drawing Club, which encourages creative expression. This approach includes:

- Opportunities for children to draw and illustrate their ideas, enhancing their understanding of storytelling.
- Guided activities that support the transition from drawing to writing, fostering fine motor skills and confidence.
- Encouragement for children to narrate their drawings, promoting oral language development.

## **Writing in Key Stage One.**

### **Literacy Tree**

For Key Stage One, we utilize the Literacy Tree framework to enrich our writing curriculum. This includes:

- Exposure to a wide range of high-quality texts that inspire and inform children's writing.
- Structured writing lessons that focus on different genres and purposes, enabling children to develop their own voice and style.
- Opportunities for collaborative and independent writing, along with constructive feedback to help refine their skills.

The texts the children use in Drawing Club and Literacy Tree lessons are taken from the recommended texts for each age group provided by the programmes. These texts are language rich and ensure the children are exposed to tier two vocabulary.

### **Assessment**

We regularly assess children's reading and writing progress through a combination of formative assessments and observations. This ensures that we can provide targeted support and celebrate individual achievements, helping each child to thrive.

Children in the Early Years will complete a 'Baseline Assessment'. This will occur during September for all children in Nursery and Reception. Following this they will be regularly assessed through observation, discussion and written work against Development Matters in the Early Years. At the end



of Reception, a judgement will be made as to whether the children are performing at the 'Expected' level for their age.

In Key Stage One the children will be assessed against the National Curriculum expectations for their year group. Evidence will be gathered and recorded in books and, where appropriate, photographic evidence will be collated on Tapestry. At the end of Key Stage 1 a formal judgment will be made against the Expected Standard using the evidence.

Assessment of phonics is carried out in day-to-day teaching with evidence gathered from guided reading and independent writing to identify the phase children are working at. A phonics assessment is also carried out at the end of each phase, or end of term to inform tracking. During Year 1, children also undertake a Phonics Screening Check. Year 2 children who did not reach the benchmark in Year 1 will also be re-screened.

We assess children's mark making and writing during the first half term to give class teachers a baseline for the start of the year. There are three other checkpoints throughout the school year when the children's mark making and writing is assessed.

In Early Years we use the Development Matters statements for Communication, Language and Literacy, Physical Development and Writing. We indicate whether a child is on track or not on track at this point. Additional support is then put in place at this point.

In Key Stage One, children are assessed against the Herts for Learning Writing Criteria which has a list of broken down National Curriculum statements for Year One and Year Two. Again, those children who are not meeting National Expectation there will be additional support put in place.

### **Special Educational Needs and Gifted and Talented**

Every child within the school is provided with differentiated planning to suit their needs. Where necessary, objectives may be taken from alternative year groups- below for less able or above to extend.

Children who are identified as needing further support, whether less or more able, have the opportunity to take part in catch up programmes for reading and writing in an afternoon.

Lessons are differentiated to provide children who are identified as being Gifted and Talented with appropriate challenges and extension tasks to extend their learning.

### **Equal Opportunities and Inclusion**

All children irrespective of gender, ability, ethnic and social circumstances have access to the curriculum.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

It is the responsibility of the subject leader and Head Teacher to evaluate the working of this policy throughout the school.

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