

# WHITEHILLS PRIMARY SCHOOL

"...putting children first..."



## LITERACY POLICY

Date Reviewed: November 2020

Reviewed by: Lucy Haynes & Jemma Gillespie

Ratified by Governors: 26<sup>th</sup> November 2020

## **Whitehills Primary School**

### **Literacy Policy**

#### **Aims**

- To develop each child's ability to communicate effectively with others through speech, writing and drama, and to listen with understanding.
- To develop writing through a systematic and consistent approach throughout the school.
- To enable each child to become an enthusiastic, responsive and knowledgeable reader and writer for life.
- To give a wide variety of language experiences in an environment that enables each child to realise his/her full potential.

#### **Background**

At Whitehills we acknowledge that English is an important subject in its own right and that it is also crucial to all other areas of the wider curriculum.

- In Foundation Stage, early Literacy skills are taught throughout the whole curriculum.
- Individual reading, alone or with an adult, whole class reading and guided reading, or booster groups, take place in year groups where appropriate. Comprehension is developed through use of the VIPERS skills.
- Phonic groups meet each day in KS1 and lower KS2, (using the phonics programme 'Letters and Sounds') and children are grouped and taught according to their ability; thus any group could contain children from a different class.
- In Years 3,4, 5 and 6, spelling is taught through discrete spelling sessions at least twice a week. (For those children not ready for this, they continue with the 'Letters and Sounds' programme). Spelling is currently taught through the use of the 'No-Nonsense Spelling' programme, where rules and patterns are taught in a progressive manor.
- Writing is taught through planned units of work, which focus on audience and purpose whilst also encompassing the elements which need to be taught in line with the National Curriculum. The 'Talk for Writing' approach is one of the main vehicles used to teach writing.

#### **Foundation Stage**

The Foundation Stage's Early Learning Goals fall under the headings of 'Reading and Writing'. The majority of Literacy activities are carried out through drama, play, games, oral rehearsals and discussion, whilst allowing for opportunities to encourage the children to experiment with writing in all its various forms. Experiences are provided through all aspects of the reception environment to aid this, including the use of the outdoors. Foundation Stage use the phonics programme, 'Letters and Sounds' and the approaches of Talk for Writing to develop the pupil's knowledge, understanding and skills in reading and writing progressively and appropriately across the year.

#### **Speaking & Listening**

##### **Objectives**

At Whitehills we encourage our children to:

- Speak with increasing confidence and fluency.

- Develop their ability to communicate information, ideas, opinions and feelings.
- Use oral rehearsals to formulate ideas prior to writing.
- Speak to a variety of audiences appropriately and develop suitable vocabulary – using Standard English confidently in a range of formal and informal contexts.
- Listen with increasing attention and concentration.
- Respond effectively to what they have heard.
- Be a participant in group discussions.
- Actively take part in drama activities.
- Respond to talk partners.
- Value contributions of others.
- At KS2 participate in formal debates and structured discussions.

In the Foundation Stage, play activities are one of the main vehicles for all learning. Pupils are encouraged to listen to and talk through their experiences with peers and adults.

In Year 1, each classroom has an area set aside for creative role-play, often linked to topics. This gives the children opportunities to extend their speaking and listening skills. Discrete drama units are also included in the planning.

In KS1 and KS2 classes, drama techniques are planned into Literacy sessions and other curriculum areas as appropriate. Drama for writing techniques are also used throughout the academic year and across a range of units of work. In Years 5 and 6 opportunities for debate are evident in planning.

Within Key Stage 1 and 2 the elements and conventions of drama, oral rehearsals and talk are used alongside writing through Talk for Writing and Drama for Writing units to hook the children and aid a deeper emersion and broader understanding of the text type that is being learned. A combination of these elements and conventions complement the teaching and learning of key writerly tools, short burst writing linked to National curriculum gaps, planning skills for fiction and non-fiction and persuasive arguments. This allows for opportunities to explicitly link talk to writing and children are also continually learning and exploring new language through this.

The organisation of mixed ability groups within the class assist the speaking and listening skills of all children whatever their competence or confidence. All pupils have equal opportunities to participate in the full range of speaking activities provided. Children have talk partners.

All classes present a class assembly to the rest of the school and parents. All children also have the opportunity to take part in school productions at the end of Key Stage 2.

The recently published *Teaching Standards* make it plain that all teachers should:

- demonstrate an understanding of and take responsibility for promoting high standards of literacy and the correct use of standard English, whatever the teacher's specialist subject (Part 1, point 3).

The inclusion of standard English, along with the full sense of 'communicate', suggests that the definition of literacy should be taken to include the ability to speak and listen effectively alongside the skills of reading and writing.

## **Reading**

### **Objectives**

At Whitehills we aim to:

- Develop a love of reading – by creating a welcoming and well-resourced reading environment across the whole school.
- Ensure children read a wide range of fiction and non-fiction,
- Deliver quality reading lessons where key comprehension skills (VIPERS) are taught, modelled and practised.
- At KS2 read and analyse Shakespeare (Macbeth and Hamlet)
- Enable all children to read independently for a variety of different purposes.
- Encourage children to use a range of strategies in order to attain their full reading potential.
- Value and promote the cultural literature of other countries.
- Be aware of different languages and English dialects.
- Have a reading pathway for children underachieving in reading.
- Ensure a consistent reading assessment is used across the school.

### **Principles of high-quality phonic work**

The White Paper is explicit about the effectiveness of the teaching of phonics and early reading. There is an expectation that teachers should ensure that all pupils communicate effectively. This includes their ability to apply their reading and writing skills successfully and to speak articulately in a range of contexts and for different purposes.

Beginner readers should be taught:

- high-quality phonic work will be most effective when it is part of a broad and rich curriculum that engages children in a range of activities and experiences to develop their speaking and listening skills and phonological awareness
- grapheme–phoneme correspondences in a clearly defined, incremental sequence
- to apply the highly important skill of blending (synthesising) phonemes in the order in which they occur, all through a word to read it
- to apply the skills of segmenting words into their constituent phonemes to spell
- that blending and segmenting are reversible processes.
- Phoneme manipulation ensures children have a secure sound to grapheme correspondence.
- for most children it starts at EYFS, subject to the professional judgement of teachers and practitioners
- it is multisensory, encompassing simultaneous visual, auditory and kinaesthetic activities to enliven core learning
- it is time-limited, such that the great majority of children should be confident readers by the end of Key Stage 1
- it is systematic, that is to say, it follows a carefully planned programme with fidelity, reinforcing and building on previous learning to secure children’s progress

- it is taught discretely and daily at a brisk pace
- there are opportunities to reinforce and apply acquired phonic knowledge and skills across the curriculum and in such activities as shared and guided reading
- children's progress in developing and applying their phonic knowledge is carefully assessed.

In Reading we acknowledge various stages of development.

These are:

- Emergent Reader - one who listens actively and understands that books communicate meaning.
- Beginner Reader - one who relates story to text and recognizes words as a unit of meaning.
- Developing Reader - one who shows awareness of stability of print and uses multiple cues
- Consolidating Reader - one who usually reads with little support and is beginning to read silently.
- Independent Reader - one who is confident, self motivated, chooses and tackles a range of texts with confidence.
- Experienced Reader - one who shows definite reading interests and can explain their reasons for choice.

We aim to teach reading through the use of various skills. Pupils are encouraged to use:

- Picture cues
- One to one correspondence
- Phonic clues
- Context cues
- Self-correction
- Reading ahead
- Prediction
- Syntax
- Comprehension
- Inference and deduction

This list is not entirely progressive but cumulative.

A variety of methods are used to teach pupils and move them through the stages of development.

- Shared Reading – whole class
- Echo Reading - whole class
- Line by Line Reading – whole class
- Guided Reading - group reading intervention with support
- Group Reading - pupils in a group support themselves
- Paired Reading - can be of the same ability or mixed ability
- Individual Reading - listening to readers on a one to one basis
- Silent Reading - for personal enjoyment, information or answering comprehension
- Weekly Book Buddy Sessions - older classes pair up with children in younger classes
- EYFS have one Bookworm session a week, when parents come into school to read with their child
- Book Talk – whole class discussions responding to what has been read.

The pupils are encouraged to read from a wide variety of texts. The core reading scheme at Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 uses an 'I read' 'We read' approach to

accommodate this. The 'I read' books are progressive and sequential Phonic based books that are in-line with the Letters and Sounds Phonics programme. The 'I read' books develop the pupil's confidence and opportunities to practise the sounds they know when independently reading at home or at school as they only include the sounds that the pupils have learnt so far in class. Alongside this, library books and the 'We read' books that are designed to be read with an adult at home or at school, expose the pupils to more language and more challenging reading opportunities. In unison, this mix of reading opportunities ensure that the pupils are practicing skills they have learnt at their own pace, deepening their understanding and they expose them to the wide breadth of reading opportunities that they need in order to progress effectively. The guided reading materials have been selected from a variety of schemes most appropriate to each year group.

Reading books for the rest of the school and any from Year 2 that are ready for it, are accessible from the Reading Pathway, located centrally in the school and in classrooms.

New parents are given a pack containing information which will help them to have informed and positive reading sessions with their children.

To determine where children should be placed on the 'Reading Pathway', an unseen texts assessment pack is used. These texts are written to match the stages on the pathway. To be awarded a particular reading stage, children must read the passage of text with at least 95% accuracy using a fluent style as modeled in the videos produced by the DfE to exemplify the national standards.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4c\\_DMS-3IE&t=4s&safe=true](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4c_DMS-3IE&t=4s&safe=true)

Children are re-assessed on the reading stage assessments 5 times throughout the year. Progress is then monitored, and intervention put in place if children are falling behind.

We encourage a shared reading approach which involves child, teacher and parents working in partnership. Parents are encouraged to hear their children read regularly and in Early Years Foundation Stage 2 and Year 1 and Year 2 to comment on their 'Home Reading Record'. In Years 3, 4 5 and 6 use 'Reading Journals' to assist children to develop their personal responses to books. The most able readers in Year 6 have in Reading Challenges. In Years 5 and 6 books have been selected to appeal to boys. Gifted readers in Year 6 are encouraged to read specific texts recommended by the teacher. Each year the school celebrates World Book Day in order to raise the profile of reading. Termly Learning Conferences give the children a reading target which is shared with parents and the child to work on at home.

Whilst children are encouraged to read their book from the reading pathway to develop fluency, we ensure children are all exposed to higher levels of challenging text during reading lessons and through a daily whole class read-aloud book.

To develop the children's reading further, with particular focus upon higher order skills such as deduction, the school teaches reading comprehension through the VIPERS skills - Vocabulary, Inference, Prediction, Explain, Retrieve and Sequence (Key Stage 1) Summarise (Key Stage 2). These cover the contents domains associated with the reading National Curriculum. These skills are taught through 3 reading sessions per week, where they are explicitly modelled and children are given opportunities to practice and apply them in different contexts.

High quality texts are used alongside other stimuli (such as images, video clips and song lyrics) and shared with children to expose them to higher levels of vocabulary and unfamiliar contexts. This enables even the least able readers to learn new language and comprehend complex texts.

## **Library**

At Whitehills we have a dedicated library, where children learn book handling skills and the love of books is further promoted. A mixture of World Book Days, author visits and poetry workshops help us to promote reading too. We have a named adult responsible for running the library to develop library skills at Key Stage 1 and a group of child librarians at Key Stage 2 who take responsibility for issuing and returning books for their class.

## **Writing**

### **Objectives**

At Whitehills we use five essential criteria for effective writing enabling the children to:

- Write with confidence and independence in a widening variety of ways for a range of different purposes.
- Communicate meaning to a reader using a wide-ranging vocabulary and appropriate grammar.
- Develop and organise ideas effectively using coherent and grammatically correct sentences and appropriate text structures.
- Develop a comfortable, legible handwriting style using Kinetic Letters when applicable.
- Use a range of punctuation marks accurately.

### **Talk for Writing**

At Whitehills Primary School we advocate the use of Talk for Writing. Talk for Writing is rooted in the principles of assessment for learning and use of high-quality model texts.

This model of teaching writing is based on the process below:

- Use of Assessment for Learning to assess what children can already do
- Use of a high-quality model text to expose children to what a good one looks like
- Learning/imitating the text orally to internalise the writerly language and sentence structures
- Building banks of vocabulary, warming up the tune of the text type, deepening understanding through drama and exploration, developing a knowledge of progressive story pattern and non-fiction structures and lots of short-burst writing to prepare for writing
- Shared innovation of the model text to create a new one
- Teaching grammar, punctuation and vocabulary through the model text
- Children writing their own text using everything they have learnt
- Children reflecting and editing and improving their writing based upon this

Talk for Writing is one of the tools in our box at Whitehills and, as such, is used as and when appropriate/necessary to support the teaching of writing. It is more appropriate for some types of writing than others.

### **Early Years Foundation Stage**

There are now 7 areas of learning (2013)

Communication and Language is one of the three Prime Areas.

'Literacy' (reading and writing) is one of the 'specific' areas which follow the Prime Areas. All the areas are required for children to develop the ability to write.

Play is a basis of how children learn throughout the Foundation Stage. It can offer them opportunities to express themselves through speech, role-play and writing. Opportunities to write can be found within the classroom environment and the outside area.

Pupils learn to write through:

- Playing and experimenting with writing, for example through role play, and watching others write (shared / model writing);
- Having their emergent writing valued and celebrated;
- Playing games and singing rhymes which help them to hear sounds in words and form the letters that represent them (early spelling and handwriting);
- Developing oral language through Talk for Writing and opportunities to communicate with others;
- Writing with an adult individually and / or in a group;
- Exploring and magpying writing ideas from other great authors;
- Letters and Sounds phonic programme.

A variety of methods are used to teach pupils and move them through the stages of development throughout the school;

- Modelled writing - whole class;
- Supported / Shared writing - the teacher scribes or scaffolds the group's writing;
- Guided Writing - group writing with support;
- Group Writing - pupils in group support themselves;
- Paired Writing - can be of the same ability or mixed ability;
- Independent Writing - working individually;
- Support/scaffold material ~~should be readily~~ available to all children;
- Key vocabulary relevant to topics and units should be displayed on vocabulary boards washing lines or learning walls;
- Drama for Writing;
- Always Tools that are built upon year by year.

The above methods are all used in the classroom and are matched to the appropriate teaching objectives.

Pupils are given the opportunity to write for a variety of audiences such as the teacher, class, year group, other children, adults in the school or community and imagined audiences. High achievers in Years 5 and 6 support writing a termly newsletter to parents. Planning and 'scaffolding' are used in all year groups when appropriate.

Pupils are encouraged to write for a variety of purposes / genres. They are taught to use writing as a means of developing, organising and communicating ideas. To develop their writing, pupils are encouraged to plan, orally rehearse, draft, revise proof-read and present their work. Time is set aside in planning to allow children the opportunity to edit and we value the necessity to do so. Opportunities for editing and redrafting are evident in planning. Peer and self-assessment occur regularly.

### **Handwriting**

From the Early Years pupils are taught to form letters correctly using Kinetic Letters programme. Handwriting is based on Kinetic Letters. A progressive scheme introduced in September 2016.

As the pupils' skills and confidence increase, they are introduced to joined handwriting. Teachers will promote a suitable sitting position, an appropriate grip, correct formation of letters and strings of letters and letter families. Joins and capital letters are also given special attention.

Pupils begin handwriting in pencil and once they become more competent with a joined style, they are introduced to handwriting pens. In Years 1 to 4 handwriting is taught as an integral part of spelling activities and for some children in Years 5 & 6.

Further detail can be found in the handwriting policy.

## **Spelling**

### **Objectives**

At Whitehills we aim to enable the children to:

- Spell a range of common words and recognise spelling patterns which are then correctly used in their writing
- Identify mis-spelt words in own writing and learn to spell them.
- Use a dictionary, an iPad, word mat or modelled writing to check or correct spellings.

### **Implications for Teaching and Assessment of Spelling**

'No Nonsense Spelling' is the scheme used to inform spelling teaching across years 3 – 6 for children who have moved on from Letters and Sounds. For some children in Year 2, who have completed the Letters and Sounds programme, they begin to make the transition towards No Nonsense Spelling sooner.

Across KS2, spelling is taught in discreet lessons with a focus on the patterns and rules laid out in the National Curriculum. These lessons (2/3 a week) focus on teaching the rules and patterns rather than just testing knowledge of them. Therefore, spellings are not sent home to be learnt for a test: we strongly believe this does not lead to long term retention and use of the rules in day to day writing.

Children are grouped for spelling sessions to ensure they are learning patterns and rules appropriate to their needs.

### **Recording and Assessment**

Assessment is an integral and ongoing part of daily teaching and learning. Assessments are made throughout each lesson and at the end of a lesson or series of lessons to gather information of what children have learnt, progress they have made and to inform next steps in learning.

Staff meet regularly to moderate across classes, year groups, phase groups and with other schools – this is essential to ensure consistency of judgments and ensure smooth transitions.

In Years 1-6, teacher assessments occur 3 times per year and are entered onto SAS tracking sheets. Teachers need to make reference to this data to aid adapting planning to meet the needs of the children and to report to parents, during Termly Learning Conferences and at the end of the academic year and for transfer to the next year group and for transition to other schools.

PIRA (Progress in Reading Assessment) and GAPS (Progress in Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling) tests are also administered 3 times a year to support teacher assessment and identify gaps in learning. These provide a standardized score enabling the attainment of each child to be compared to national expectations and to their peers. Always Tools are also monitored and assessed against the pupil's writing 3 times throughout the year to ensure that basic expectations of secretarial skills from previous years are still maintained as pupils move through the school. This enables progress to be monitored throughout the year as well as across the school from individual starting points.

## **Information Technology Links**

Information technology is a major resource that is used in Literacy for word processing, involving the drafting and redrafting of work originated at the computer. The introduction of visual literacy principles into Literacy teaching is highlighting the benefits of using CDs, DVDs, digital cameras, internet downloads, tablets and iPads and other resources within lessons. When considering using IT staff should be aware and make explicit reference to safety.

## **Integrated Curriculum**

English has obvious links with all other areas of the curriculum. Language activities are incorporated into Science, History, Geography and R.E. topics. Speaking and listening skills, reading and where appropriate writing, form an integral part of the curriculum.

Since autumn 2010, we have introduced an integrated curriculum, whereby children are given, through a range of mainly foundation subjects, a wider range of stimuli and experiences in preparation for writing than they would have through Literacy alone. In the integrated units, writing opportunities are being given with emphasis on transferring Literacy skills into other subjects. Planning is adapted accordingly to fit into the integrated units of work, where appropriate.

## **Equal Opportunities**

We need to ensure that all pupils have equal access to the full range of activities. Nationally and in our school, there are gender differences in relation to literacy attainment, especially in writing. Therefore, there needs to be a continued commitment to ensure that there is equal access to all aspects of literacy education.

All pupils are entitled to a broad and balanced literacy curriculum. Each pupil will have the opportunity to progress through the curriculum at a level and rate appropriate to their needs. Inevitably, difficulties will arise from time to time, as pupils do not access new information at the same rate; furthermore, an individual may achieve at different levels within the various areas of literacy such as reading, writing and speaking and listening. In the context of the classroom, it is the teacher's responsibility to match the need to relevant activities.

## **Special Educational Needs**

We recognise that all children have an entitlement to Literacy and work is differentiated accordingly.

Although we teach Literacy to "Year group expectations" we recognise that some children will be working above or below these expectations. We ensure that we use assessment to inform the next step for each child. Action may include:

- i. Use of recognised agencies
- ii. Additional support of a Learning Support Assistant, e.g. in scribing;
- iii. Emphasis on oral or practical work;
- iv. Provision of extension materials for the gifted child;
- v. Individual programme of work;
- vi. Specialist support e.g. teacher of the deaf or visually impaired, English as a second language specialist.
- vii. Early identification of possible dyslexia and coloured slides to aid reading.
- viii. Coloured backgrounds evident on whiteboards.
- ix. Technology to support learning: Ipads, Clicker 6, Word Shark.

## **More Able / Gifted and Talented pupils**

Pupils who are currently achieving more highly in English are likely to show some of the

following characteristics.

### **Creative flair**

Writing or talking in imaginative and coherent ways elaborating on and organising content to an extent that is exceptional for their age.

Stamina and perseverance using any suitable opportunities to produce work that is substantial and obviously the product of sustained, well-directed effort.

### **Communicative skills**

Involving and keeping the attention of an audience by exploiting the dramatic or humorous potential of ideas or situations in imaginative ways.

Taking a guiding role in helping a group to achieve its shared goals, while showing sensitivity to the participation of others.

Writing with a flair for metaphorical or poetic expression.

Grasping the essence of particular styles and adapting them to their own purposes.

Expressing ideas succinctly and elegantly, in ways that reflect an appreciation of the knowledge and interests of specific audiences.

Using ICT to research ideas and create new text.

### **Ability to take on demanding tasks**

Researching, comparing and synthesising information from a range of different sources, including ICT.

Engaging seriously and creatively with moral and social themes expressed in literature.

### **Arguing and reasoning**

Creating and sustaining accounts and reasoned arguments at a relatively abstract or hypothetical level, in both spoken and written language.

Grasping the essence of any content and reorganising it in ways that are logical and offer new syntheses or insights. Justifying opinions convincingly, using questions and other forms of enquiry to elicit information and taking up or challenging others' points of view.

### **Awareness of language**

Understanding the nature of language and showing a special awareness of features such as rhyme, intonation or accent in spoken language, and the grammatical organisation of written texts. Showing an interest and enthusiasm for language study, including an awareness of the relationship between the sounds and words of different languages, that are not apparent to most of their peers.

In the classroom, a high achieving child should:

1. Have a teacher who expects excellence, not just competence.
2. Experience challenge, sometimes to the point of finding the work difficult.
3. Have access to learning opportunities, such as work set at a higher level than their peers or a different starting point during a lesson.
4. Originality, creativity and highly imaginary thinking, questioning and problem solving are positively recognised and reinforced
5. Self-esteem built in the children by clearly acknowledging creditable failures
6. Drawing together what has been learned and matching it to the previously discussed success criteria set during the lesson
7. Enabling children to make the links between their existing skills, knowledge and understanding and new skills, knowledge and understanding
8. Enabling children to have further opportunities to reflect on the learning once the lesson has finished.

### **Arrangements for Review**

This policy has been produced by the Literacy co-ordinators and agreed by staff and governors and is a reflection of the shared values of the staff. It replaces the previous policy.

This policy will be reviewed in autumn 2022.

Dated policy reviewed: November 2020

Reviewed by: Lucy Haynes & Jemma Gillespie