



Theale Church of England Primary School

English Policy

“The value of English in the curriculum? What can I say? Without English, nothing. And without good English, nothing very well.” Anne Fine, author.

“Studying English literature at my school was my first, and probably my biggest, step towards mental freedom and independence. It was like falling in love with life.” Ian McEwan, novelist.

The rationale for teaching English

English has a pre-eminent place in education and in society. A high-quality education in English will teach pupils to speak and write fluently so that they can communicate their ideas and emotions to others and through their reading and listening, others can communicate with them. Through reading in particular, pupils have a chance to develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually. Literature, especially, plays a key role in such development. Reading also enables pupils both to acquire knowledge and to build on what they already know. All the skills of language are essential to participating fully as a member of society; pupils, therefore, who do not learn to speak, read and write fluently and confidently are effectively disenfranchised.

Curriculum Intent

At Theale Church of England Primary School, we have a relevant, deep and broad curriculum that inspires children to love reading and writing and be confident speakers of the English language.

Children will have access to a wide range of genres of texts and a variety of teaching methods, through explicit teaching; informal discussions; stage and challenge books and cross-curricular links. Therefore, children will have the skills, strategies and knowledge they need to take pleasure and meaning from language in all its forms; they will be independent, critical, life-long readers and learners.

We will promote speaking and listening exercises that delve deeper into learning opportunities, reflecting our whole-school employment of Rosenshine’s Principles of Instruction. This will enable children to become confident, accurate and versatile users of language, both spoken and written. A language-rich environment will not only aid children in becoming accurate spellers but will also allow them to access areas of the school curriculum through an enhanced understanding of vocabulary.

Our curriculum will allow for explicit teaching of spelling, grammar, punctuation and handwriting. Nurturing skills in these areas will see children leaving Theale with: a consistent, cursive and legible handwriting style; the ability to spell most age appropriate words (see National Curriculum); the ability to make phonetically plausible attempts at new words, and the grammatical understanding required to use all appropriate grammatical techniques for purpose.

Ultimately, we aim to provide children with appropriately scaffolded, inspiring, and challenging teaching, which will allow them to become mature, logical, and enthusiastic readers and writers for life.

Curriculum Implementation

At Theale, we follow the sequence of learning as set out in the National Curriculum framework for English. Our curriculum provides children with an understanding of the power of the word in all its forms and the ability to use the written and spoken word to express themselves. They learn that reading, writing and spoken language are key components to success in every aspect of the curriculum and the wider world.

Our English curriculum centres around our anchor texts in our reading spine: this delineates the broad, varied range of texts that children will engage with through taught content throughout their time with us at Theale. We actively encourage a love of reading and writing, purposely creating opportunities for exposure to texts through which we can celebrate our similarities and differences; texts that are, in Rudine Sims Bishop's words, "*windows, mirrors and sliding glass doors*".

We recognise that learning to read is one of the most important skills that children can learn in school as it is fundamental to accessing all areas of learning and functioning in modern society. We know that being a fluent reader allows pupils to comprehend texts that are more complex, so a greater emphasis is put on decoding in Key Stage 1 in order to set children up for success in later years.

Our whole curriculum has a common thread of high-quality vocabulary. We know that a child with weak language skills is more likely to fall behind their peers at the end of KS2 and further into adulthood. This means we have a strong focus on developing pupils' vocabulary. Pupils are purposefully exposed to high-quality vocabulary in meaningful ways, allowing for deep processing: this helps build their ability to read, write and articulate themselves.

Spoken language has a high profile at Theale and is woven through many aspects of the curriculum. We understand the value of being able to verbalise your ideas, opinions and feelings articulately. In order to support this, we seek every opportunity to develop oracy across the whole curriculum. This takes many forms such as drama; debate and performance (poetry, performance and more).

During every unit of English, children are exposed to high-quality texts from a range of cultural, historical and social contexts. Each year, pupils encounter fiction and non-fiction texts that differ in style and genre. These genres are revisited in a spiral curriculum that allows pupils to build on prior learning and expand their understanding with increasing complexity.

At Theale, we believe in immersing our children in texts through reading and analysing the skills of an expert writer. This is important as through this immersion, children become aware of the language skills of a writer and use this as a model for their writing. Using this model, children develop greater competence in the conventions of spelling, punctuation, sentence structures and text organisation. Each English unit of work lasts between 1 and 3 weeks, centred around a high-quality stimulus and linked to our anchor texts in our reading spine. Lessons are carefully sequenced to support pupils' writing. In the majority of cases, this is a text but is sometimes a video. Texts are aimed at the high end of the year group expectations for reading to ensure all abilities are exposed to rich vocabulary and ambitious literature. Our English curriculum extends themes and texts over a number of weeks to allow children total immersion in a topic and this lesson structure allows for development of writing skills (imitation, application and innovation of new skills and ideas). This allows children to engage with a topic or text in a more meaningful way to extend their learning. Children are enabled to express feelings, thoughts and imaginative ideas in verse and prose and to foster writing that is clear, direct, logical, vivid, and appropriate for a specific audience.

Pupils are given the opportunity to deliberately practice writing in a variety of fiction and non-fiction styles and genres across all year groups. Our spiral approach to writing means children revisit prior learning and build upon this with increasing complexity. Pupils are encouraged to develop their own ideas, vocabulary and creativity with increasing freedom of choice as they progress through the school.

Curriculum Impact

- Pupils will be able to communicate confidently, effectively and accurately in speech and writing, in ways appropriate for various occasions and purposes.
- Pupils will discuss in order to learn and be able to elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas.
- Pupils will become fluent, accurate, expressive and knowledgeable readers, developing an appreciation of the wealth and diversity of literature and an understanding of what they read.
- Pupils will take pleasure in reading for enjoyment.
- Pupils will be confident and discerning authors.
- Pupils will be offered a range of writing and reading genres, throughout the school.
- Pupils will develop a consistent, fluent cursive legible style of handwriting suitable for a range of purposes.
- Pupils will learn how to find information from a variety of sources and to record information and findings in various ways.
- Pupils will develop an appreciation and understanding of the English Language.
- Pupils will acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language.
- Every pupil will learn to spell confidently and accurately. They will be able to draw on a range of strategies in order to communicate effectively and independently in writing.

Reading

The programmes of study for reading at Key Stages 1 and 2 consist of two dimensions:

- word reading
- comprehension

It is essential that teaching focuses on developing pupils' competence in both dimensions; different approaches to teaching are needed for each.

At Theale C of E Primary School reading is the most important skill we teach children. Our reading scheme is designed to be used for individualised reading. In the early years all the children are heard read every day by an adult. In key stage two the children are heard read by their teacher at least weekly, with anyone a year or more below their chronological age reading with an adult every day. Some children will read twice a week and some three times, depending on need. We guide our "free readers" to ensure they read a wide variety of authors and styles.

In addition to individual reading, we use a broad variety of guided reading texts from our identified anchor texts and supplementary texts.

Children are given time to read for pleasure in school several times a week, they have access to a selection of books in their classrooms. The children use the school library and visit the local library for age-appropriate activities and research. The children also use our school laptops for researching topics related to their learning online.

Story time is an extremely important part of the day at Theale: enjoying a book as a class and considering its contents through deep questioning encourages a meaningful engagement with texts.

We enjoy visits from the local library and take part in competitions and challenges they set up. We also benefit from visits from authors to school.

Children's progress in reading is closely monitored and regularly assessed using the Salford and Hodder reading tests and their comprehension is assessed using PM bench marking and non-statutory SATs in years 3-5.

Writing

The programmes of study for writing at Key Stages 1 and 2 also consist of two dimensions:

- transcription (spelling and handwriting)
- composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech and writing)

It is essential that teaching develops pupils' competence in these two dimensions. In addition, pupils are taught how to plan, revise and evaluate their writing.

At Theale, we teach our children to become confident and discerning writers. The children will be able to use appropriate formats and styles to communicate effectively for a range of purposes and audiences; this includes poetry, narrative and non-narrative writing.

Our writing is intrinsically linked to our anchor texts in our reading spine, and each unit of work follows our writing journey, developed along the Education Endowment Foundation's 2021 recommendations for improving literacy. Each writing journey arises from our reading spine and is broken into 6 steps: discovery, drafting, editing, composition, reviewing and publishing. Each writing journey culminates in a presentable piece of work for each text type. The number of lessons or time spent on each step varies according to year group and text type.

Children have the opportunity to write every day for real as well as imaginary audiences. The school environment is language-rich and include work that they have helped to create and is valued. Time will be given for children to talk about their writing and refine their writing by planning, revising, editing and proof-reading.

Teachers and other adults will regularly demonstrate high quality writing, explaining the process to help the children. Grammar and punctuation will be taught at the level appropriate for the child's age and ability.

By the time the children leave Theale, they will have achieved a fluent, legible, cursive handwriting style, and the ability to present finished work appropriately, neatly and clearly.

Children will be able to communicate in both narrative and non-narrative forms and write for a purpose. They will use effective vocabulary, selecting words with precision to create a desired effect, to write in a lively and thoughtful way, sustaining and developing ideas in interesting ways to engage and sustain readers' interest.

Children entering school in FS2 will have already had a wide range of experiences in literacy and we value and build upon these individual experiences using role play, writing areas, the outdoor area and book corners to develop these skills. The Early learning goals for Communication, Language and Literacy underpins all work in this area.

At each Key Stage, a programme of study sets out what pupils should be taught to ensure coverage of a range of genres.

Spelling

At Theale, we teach our children to be fluent, confident spellers. From an early age pupils will be exposed to daily Read Write Inc phonic activities taught through reading initially, and crossing into writing as appropriate. They will be able to blend and segment phonemes in simple CVC and CCVC

words. Children will be taught grapheme phoneme correspondences and rules for applying these. As children move through the programme/school they will be able to spell more complex polysyllabic words drawing on previously taught rules and strategies. By the time the children leave Theale, they will make more adventurous word choices which they will spell with confidence, including contextual and lexical words.

Speaking and Listening/Spoken Language

Spoken language is the main form of human communication as such must be developed to the highest level of competency. To achieve this, children will be taught to learn to use the vocabulary and grammar of standard English. To formulate, clarify and express their ideas and be able to adapt their speech to a widening range of circumstances and demands. The children will learn to listen, understand and respond appropriately to others and to participate in group activities through discussion, debate and drama. The children will be able to be critical and discerning in what they listen to and say, and to express themselves in an articulate, and confident manner.

Poetry

Exploring poems and poetry encourages a passion for the written word, development of oracy and thematic engagement with a range of topics – poems create portals to the personally experienced world and the experience of others.

Our poetry curriculum includes poems that will be explored and learnt by each year group across the school year. The learning and performance of these poems will be enjoyed and celebrated during a half-termly assembly.

The poems in our poetry curriculum are connected to the written work around our anchor texts in our reading spine or to annual events, enriching the in-depth learning experience we offer all children at Theale C of E Primary School.

Drama

Children at Theale are taught drama. They have the opportunity to use their imagination, develop their empathetic skills and thus developing their understanding of cause and effect. They will learn to work as part of a team and thus develop responsibility to others, improve their acting and performance skills.

Drama at Theale is used to enhance other curriculum areas such as history, PSHE and RE. It is also used to develop social and racial awareness and will help children to deal with social ills such as bullying.

Structure of Provision

All pupils are taught English between 7 and 8 hours a week. The children have 1hr each day of literacy in the Early Years and Key Stage 2, in addition the children have daily reading time and 'story' time, and in the early Years, phonics and RWI. Handwriting time is also implemented across the whole school, daily in FS2, three times a week in Years 1 and 2 and as required but at least once a week in KS2.

Cross-curricular links

Cross-curricular links are embedded in the planning, teaching and learning of Literacy. Unit plans are adapted and linked to topics where appropriate.

Information and Communication Technology

The use of ICT and the teaching of ICT should enhance, develop and support pupils' learning of Literacy.

Homework

Appropriate homework will be set by the class teacher to enhance and develop children's learning in Literacy following guidelines from the school's homework policy.

A reading record will be sent home with each child. This is for parents and teachers to record the reading books children read and to write a brief assessment of their reading.

Spelling homework will be given to children from FS2.

Equal Opportunities, Gifted and Talented and those with Special Needs

Every pupil will be given equal opportunity to follow the National Curriculum or Foundation Stage Curriculum irrespective of their ethnic or linguistic background, gender, disability or religious beliefs. Children with Special Educational Needs will have full access to the English curriculum which will be modified to best meet their needs. We will ensure equity in every learning opportunity. Those identified as Gifted and Talented will be given opportunities to develop their skills further.

Assessment, Record Keeping and Marking

Assessment, record keeping and marking will be carried out according to the school's policies. In alignment with National Curriculum requirements, teacher assessment will be the basis by which the performance of pupils' achievement in Literacy is assessed.

Pupils in the Foundation Stage will be assessed using the e-Profile which is informed through teacher assessment.

Pupils in Key Stage 1 and 2 will be assessed through teacher assessments which are informed by termly progress checks using APP criteria and optional SATs tests for reading in the summer term. Writing is assessed using the Oxford criteria. Cognitive Ability tests and standardised Nfer tests will be used in the spring term. Children in Year 2 and Year 6 will be formally assessed using the SATs.

Monitoring

The monitoring of Literacy will take the form of classroom observations, monitoring of planning, work scrutiny, interviews with children, learning walks and monitoring of displays. The subject leader, working with the head teacher is responsible for the monitoring of Literacy. The head teacher will report to governors through a termly report.