



## **Meadows First School English Policy**

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**Head Teacher:** S Hewitt

**Chair or Governors:** A Lynch

**Coordinator:** L Andrews

# Meadows First School

## English Policy

This policy is a statement of our aims, principles and strategies for the teaching of English at Meadows. It is defined by current national guidance on best practice, in-service training and staff discussion.

### **Vision Statement**

We work in partnership with parents to ensure each child plays their full part in the school community. Our motto is 'Caring, sharing and preparing for life.'

We aim to create fluent readers and writers with all the vital language skills they need for life. The children at Meadows First School are immersed in high quality texts which inspire learning and act as effective writing models. We believe this has a significant impact on their vocabulary as well as the quality of their writing. We want all children to leave Meadows First School with high standards of written and spoken literacy as well as a life-long reading habit and a love of books.

### **INTENT**

The National Curriculum and EYFS framework states: The understanding of language provides access to the whole curriculum and is essential to participate fully as a member of society. 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.

### **IMPLEMENTATION:**

**EYFS:** Through effective teacher modelling and a language rich environment, children learn to speak confidently and listen to others. Language is developed through structured play experiences, exploration of imaginary worlds as well as listening to and sharing quality texts. Letters and Sounds are taught rapidly, developing the skill of blending for early reading and segmenting for spelling. Common irregular/tricky words are also taught systematically, enabling the children to read and understand simple sentences. 'Talk for Writing' is used to help the children explore language patterns for story retelling and writing. Correct letter formation is taught through 'Dough Disco' and 'Write Dance', helping the children to develop the skills needed for handwriting.

**Key stage 1:** In Year 1, reading continues to focus on daily phonics, by teaching the remaining letter combinations needed for decoding words (such as 'oy' as well as 'oi' taught in Reception). Children explore alternative pronunciations and learn common exception words. They practise their word reading and comprehension skills as a class, in groups and individually. 'Talk for Writing' continues in Year 1, often using texts that have predictable structures and refrains. Texts are carefully chosen to act as models for writing as well as to capture the children's interest.

Further common exception words are taught in Year 2, with the focus on reading for meaning easily and fluently. 'Drop Everything and Read' sessions, together with whole class and guided group work enable the children to share ideas, draw inferences and make predictions with confidence. Teachers use every opportunity to discuss new vocabulary. 'Talk for Writing' develops into the 'Reading into Writing' approach, using high quality texts as clear and effective models for writing. Grammar is embedded through focused skills teaching and applied in both short and extended writing opportunities. In Year 2, spelling continues to be taught daily with the introduction of suffix rules. Children have opportunities to practise their skills by using the 'Spelling Shed' app on ipads, both at home and at school.

**Key Stage 2:** Approaches established in Key Stage 1 are developed in Years 3 and 4. For example, 'Drop Everything and Read' sessions continue to give pupils the chance to meet books and authors that they might not choose themselves. Whole class 'Close Reading' lessons often focus on how writers use words and phrases for effect, capturing the interest of the reader. Children use dictionaries to check the meaning of unfamiliar words. The texts used for 'Reading into Writing' will typically be less complex than those used for 'close reading' but are selected for high quality language and grammatical features that fit in with the National Curriculum. Proofreading and editing skills become more developed; children make use of thesauri and dictionaries when making corrections and revisions to their writing.

**IMPACT** Pupils at Meadows are able to:

- Read easily, fluently and with good understanding
- Widen their vocabulary by reading for pleasure and gathering information
- Write clearly and coherently in a range of contexts, for different purposes and audiences
- Clearly explain their understanding and ideas orally
- Listen carefully to others and participate in debates

## Speaking & Listening

During Reception and Key Stage 1, pupils learn to speak confidently and listen to what others have to say. Through effective teacher modelling, they are encouraged to use language to explore their own experiences and imaginary worlds.

As they progress through Key Stage 2, pupils learn to adapt and develop the way they speak to suit different situations. They are encouraged to develop their skills through performance poetry, school productions or class debates. Throughout the school, children have lots of opportunities to share ideas with talk partners as well as being encouraged to participate in whole class discussions. At Meadows, we believe that 'Talk for Writing' is essential for promoting high standards of literacy. Retelling stories and composing sentences orally enable children to become increasingly familiar and confident with grammatical structures. They can also experiment more freely with vocabulary choices before selecting the most effective words to use in their writing.

## Reading

We encourage a love of reading amongst all our pupils at Meadows First School. Every day, we enjoy sharing stories, poems and non-fiction texts in our 'Drop Everything and Read' time. By making these sessions fun, the children are encouraged to read for pleasure as well as to develop valuable learning skills. The children keep us informed about their favourite stories and authors so that our class libraries are stocked with a wide range of popular books as well as children's magazines. Throughout

the school, we are committed to developing the children's vocabulary and actively encourage the children to be inquisitive about new words as well as incorporating them into their writing.

- In Reception, the children begin the process of reading by sharing books with an adult. In the early stages these books may not have words, as pupils are encouraged to develop comprehension skills through the use of picture and contextual clues. This also helps to develop their vocabulary and imagination. As the children are introduced to phonics, they begin to apply this knowledge by blending sounds in order to read simple words. They also begin to recognise tricky words which do not follow phonics or spelling rules. We use a variety of reading schemes linking in with the 'Letters and Sounds' programme which we use to structure our phonics teaching at Meadows. These books are colour banded to match phonics taught and to allow the children to progress at their own pace.
- In Year 1, the focus is still very much on reading through phonics. The children learn all the remaining letter combinations needed for decoding words (such as 'ay' as well as 'ai' taught in Reception). They also begin to learn that some letters can be pronounced in different ways such as 'ow' in *owl* or *snow*. The children's progress is monitored closely to ensure that their phonic knowledge is secure. Pupils not on track to meet national standards are supported in small booster groups to help them catch up with their peers. The children regularly practise their word reading and comprehension skills by reading to an adult in guided groups as well as individually.
- In Year 2, we give children regular opportunities to build their fluency by reading words automatically without overt sounding out. This is monitored individually to ensure that children are able to meet the national standards. Additional practice time is given to pupils as necessary. Comprehension skills are taught as whole class and guided group activities with shared text extracts. Most pupils progress rapidly through the colour banded book system. Children falling behind are identified quickly and interventions are put in place.
- By Years 3 and 4, the teaching of reading focuses on comprehension, developing vocabulary and responding to texts. We also have guided sessions at least twice a week where pupils can continue to practise their word reading skills, developing their use of expression. Children not attaining National Standards in Year 2 are identified for targeted intervention, either individually or in small groups. We have a wide range of colour banded books for home reading. In addition, many of our Key Stage 2 pupils are also 'free readers' and can choose to supplement their home readers with books from our class libraries. All children have access to our class libraries during the school day. Our 'Drop Everything and Read' sessions, as well as whole class reading lessons, give pupils the opportunity to share texts that may be above their personal word reading level.

## Writing & Grammar

At Meadows we are committed to using both the 'Talk for Writing' and 'Reading into Writing' approaches. We believe writing is closely related to reading and the two activities reinforce each other. By sharing high quality texts together, the children are able to identify techniques, vocabulary and language patterns used by authors and poets which can be applied to their own writing. As well as using texts to model writing, we also use 'shared writing' as a tool to demonstrate success. It is important that we share the process of writing with our children. After discussing ideas, pupils get to watch their teachers and peers experiment with vocabulary choices, punctuation and sentence types. Afterwards, they can apply these new skills with greater confidence in their own work. It is important that pupils learn to write independently from an early stage and as they develop, pupils are shown how to plan, draft, revise and proofread their work.

The teaching of phonics, spelling and handwriting is an essential part of the writing process and is used to build up accuracy and speed. Children are taught to punctuate their writing correctly, using a range of different punctuation marks. We teach grammar and punctuation skills in line with the National Curriculum and to fit in with the style of writing covered in class. After reading texts which model appropriate sentence types and features of language, the children go on to write independently. We plan 'sequences of learning' where children have opportunities to learn and practise specific skills. These skills are then identified on the success criteria for extended pieces of writing. At Meadows, we believe that children should transfer their phonics, spelling and handwriting skills into all their writing. In addition, the children are encouraged to maintain the highest possible standards by applying and embedding their knowledge of punctuation and other features of language across all areas of the curriculum.

## Handwriting

It is important that our children are able to write clearly and neatly when presenting their ideas. Correct letter formation is taught from the beginning using a cursive script. Handwriting is taught regularly to enable our children to develop a fluent and legible style as well as practising their spelling skills. Cursive handwriting is introduced from Year 1, with opportunities to practise joining letters using entry and exit strokes.

## Spelling

Great emphasis is placed on spelling within English lessons and across the curriculum. The children are given regular opportunities to apply their knowledge in dictation and independent writing. In Key Stage 2, the children are taught how to use a dictionary in order to develop their independent proofreading skills.

### Equal Opportunities

We believe that all children irrespective of background, race, gender and ability should have equal access to the curriculum. Our school practice should provide opportunities which reflect the cultural diversity of the community and locality. To reflect the diversity of our world, we ensure that children have access to a wide range of resources and first-hand experiences both in school and with the wider community around us.

### SEN

At Meadows we recognise the need to cater for children with special educational needs, including children of higher abilities. Work is differentiated to assist children's learning in terms of:

- Learning outcomes
- Tasks
- Teaching methods
- Resources
- Small group or individual interventions

Tasks can be broken down into small steps, giving children achievable goals. Activities should reinforce children's enjoyment and understanding of the subject.

In line with our 'Growth Mindset' approach, children are given opportunities to attempt open-ended tasks and challenging work. Children showing particular talents and gifts for English are routinely given

challenges by their class teachers. They are also encouraged to participate in activities organised by our G&T coordinator, often in conjunction with other schools.

### **Reading interventions:**

If children are not progressing as expected or we feel they need a confidence boost, we use an effective intervention programme called 'Rapid Reading'. The children use a computer package to develop both their word reading and comprehension skills. We have trained staff who lead these sessions and monitor the children's progress closely. As an alternative to this strategy, we also have resources to implement another programme known as 'Better Reading'. Children needing one-to-one support benefit most from this approach.

### **Health and Safety**

Health and safety regulations in class-based lessons apply as for any other subject.

### **Assessment and Recording**

Assessment procedures for English are consistent with the school's **Assessment Policy**. A variety of assessment strategies are used to provide evidence for judgements related to speaking and listening, writing, reading fluency and comprehension. Teachers assess pupils as an ongoing formative process as well using more formal summative assessment tools.

Phonics tracking systems are in place for Reception and Year 1. Children who are falling behind are identified quickly for further support and intervention.

Fluency in reading is to be monitored in all year groups, in addition to Year 2. PIRA tests are used each term for formally assessing reading comprehension, giving both standardised scores and reading ages. This data forms part of pupil progress monitoring. Salford reading tests are also used when considered more appropriate for pupils with Special Needs.

Writing is assessed and moderated (both in school and across local schools) with reference to National Curriculum guidelines. This informs planning and future provision.

### **Monitoring and review:**

The subject leader is responsible for:

- The monitoring of the standards of children's work and the quality of the teaching in English.
- Providing support for colleagues in the teaching of English.
- Renewing, updating and complementing the resources needed to deliver the English curriculum.
- Monitoring whole school planning, to ensure progression and continuity.
- Keeping staff informed of developments or changes in the English curriculum.
- Providing a strategic lead and direction for the subject across the whole school.