English Policy



St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

Date updated:	September 2026
Next review:	September 2027
Policy lead:	English Leader
Approved by	Approval pending

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1. Vision and principles

At St John Fisher, we believe that every child has the right to become a confident reader, writer and communicator. English enables children to access the wider curriculum, express ideas, understand others and enjoy literature. Reading is a powerful leveller: strong early foundations open doors to learning and opportunity.

Our approach is rooted in high-quality first teaching, carefully sequenced small steps, rich language experiences and timely, actionable feedback. We aim for every child to experience success, while maintaining ambition and challenge for all, including pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged.

- Secure essential knowledge and skills before expecting independent application.
- Use assessment to identify the highest-priority barrier and respond promptly.
- Model, practise, discuss and revisit learning so that knowledge becomes secure.
- Provide access to ambitious texts, purposeful writing and meaningful talk throughout school.

2. Reading

2.1 Early reading and phonics

Read Write Inc. Phonics provides systematic teaching for children learning to decode. Children learn sound–letter correspondences, blending and increasingly fluent word reading. Teaching and decodable reading books are matched to pupils' current phonics knowledge; assessment informs grouping and next steps. In Reception and Year 1, phonics and decoding remain the core of early reading instruction.

High-quality shared stories, rhymes, poetry and book talk complement phonics from the outset. Adults read aloud texts children may not yet be able to decode independently, helping build language comprehension, vocabulary and enjoyment.

2.2 Whole-class reading: Years 2–6

All classes from Year 2 to Year 6 use Pathways to Read through a consistent whole-class approach. Every reading session includes explicit fluency practice alongside planned vocabulary and comprehension teaching. Teachers model fluent reading and thinking, then provide supported and increasingly independent opportunities to practise, discuss and respond to texts.

Pupils learn to retrieve and explain information, predict, infer, explore authorial choices and justify responses with evidence. Oracy and high-quality texts underpin these lessons. Teachers use questioning, observation and recorded responses where purposeful to check understanding and adapt teaching.

2.3 Reading Plus: Years 3–6

Reading Plus supplements classroom reading teaching through personalised practice in fluency, comprehension, vocabulary and stamina. All pupils in Years 3–6 are allocated 30 minutes in school each week and encouraged to complete a further 30 minutes at home as homework. An

after-school Reading Plus club offers additional access and support. Staff monitor engagement and progress and respond where further teaching is needed.

2.4 Additional reading support

Pupils who have gaps in decoding receive targeted support through Read Write Inc. Fast Track Tutoring or Fresh Start, as appropriate. Pupils who decode accurately but need additional support with other aspects of reading are listened to and read with at least three times each week. These sessions address identified needs in fluency, vocabulary and/or comprehension rather than simply increasing reading time.

Teachers review the impact of support, including whether pupils can apply developing skills in classroom reading. Support is adjusted when progress is insufficient.

2.5 Reading for pleasure

Reading for pleasure is a whole-school responsibility. The Pie Corbett Reading Spine supports the selection of rich, high-quality literature across year groups; teachers also select texts to reflect pupils' interests, broaden experiences and introduce new voices. The spine is a guide to literary entitlement, not a restrictive list.

Daily reading aloud, stories, poetry, book talk, opportunities to choose books and access to inviting class and school libraries help pupils develop positive reading identities. In Reception and Year 1, shared stories and reading for pleasure sit alongside, but do not replace, systematic phonics teaching.

3. Writing

3.1 Intent

At St John Fisher, we believe that every child should experience success as a writer. Our writing curriculum is designed to develop confident, independent writers who can communicate effectively for a range of purposes and audiences.

We recognise that writing is a complex process, requiring children to develop secure transcription skills alongside the ability to generate, organise and communicate ideas. Our approach is built on strong foundations, high-quality teaching, carefully sequenced small steps and meaningful feedback.

3.2 Establishing Strong Foundations – EYFS and Year 1

In EYFS and Year 1, we prioritise the foundational skills children need to become successful writers.

Handwriting, spelling and early transcription skills are explicitly taught, practised and monitored daily. Children develop fine and gross motor skills through carefully planned activities that support pencil control, letter formation and writing fluency.

Alongside this, children are given meaningful, real-life opportunities to write, helping them understand that writing has a purpose and that their ideas are worth communicating.

Ongoing assessment ensures that gaps are identified quickly and children receive the support and practice they need to succeed.

3.3 Developing Fluent Transcription – Years 2–6

We recognise that when children must concentrate heavily on handwriting, spelling and sentence construction, they have less capacity to focus on the content and quality of their writing.

From Year 2 onwards, children take part in daily **English 4-a-Day** sessions. These short, focused activities reduce the cognitive demands of extended writing, allowing children to concentrate on accuracy and fluency.

Through regular retrieval and practice, children revisit essential spelling, punctuation, grammar and sentence-level skills, helping them become increasingly automatic and confident in their application.

3.4 Handwriting – Letter-join

Handwriting is taught explicitly in discrete sessions on alternate days.

We use Letter-join to provide a consistent and progressive approach to handwriting. Teaching focuses on accurate letter formation, letter size, spacing, orientation and joins, with the aim of developing fluent, legible and increasingly automatic handwriting.

Children are encouraged to apply these skills consistently across all written work.

3.5 Spelling – Pathways to Spell

Spelling is taught explicitly in discrete sessions on alternate days, alongside handwriting.

We use Pathways to Spell to provide structured and explicit spelling instruction. The programme makes purposeful connections to the vocabulary encountered in our reading and writing units, ensuring cohesion across our English curriculum.

Children are given regular opportunities to revisit, practise and apply spelling knowledge in different contexts.

3.6 Teaching Writing – Pathways to Write

Our writing curriculum follows an adapted Pathways to Write approach, built around high-quality texts, purposeful writing and carefully sequenced small steps.

At the beginning of each writing unit, the **purpose and audience** are clearly established. Children are taught not only what they are writing, but why they are writing and how their choices will affect the reader.

Teaching follows a gradual release of responsibility through the **I do, We do, You do** approach:

- **I do:** Teachers explicitly model writing, making their thinking, language choices and decisions visible.
- **We do:** Children rehearse ideas, explore vocabulary and construct writing collaboratively with teacher guidance.

- **You do:** Children apply their learning independently, drawing on the knowledge and skills they have secured.

Talk is central to this process. Children are encouraged to rehearse sentences orally, explore vocabulary, discuss ideas and explain their choices before writing.

High-quality texts provide rich models of effective writing, while grammar and punctuation are taught explicitly and in context. Children are encouraged to understand **why** particular language choices are effective, rather than simply including features to meet a success criterion.

3.7 Progression in Writing

Our writing curriculum is supported by whole-school progression documents that identify the knowledge and skills children need to develop from EYFS to Year 6.

Learning is carefully sequenced so that children build on secure foundations, revisiting and extending their understanding of sentence construction, grammar, punctuation and text organisation as they progress through school.

Teachers use these progression documents alongside our adapted Pathways to Write approach to ensure that new learning builds on prior knowledge and that expectations increase appropriately over time.

Through explicit modelling, guided practice and increasingly independent application, children develop greater control over their writing, making deliberate choices about vocabulary, structure and language to suit different purposes and audiences.

3.8 Feedback and Responsive Teaching

We believe that effective feedback is timely, precise and leads to improvement.

Teachers use ongoing assessment, questioning and observation to identify misconceptions and determine the next steps in learning.

In-the-moment feedback enables teachers to address errors, clarify understanding and support children while they are writing.

Whole-class feedback is used to celebrate effective writing, address common misconceptions and identify the most important next steps for improvement.

Feedback is focused and manageable, prioritising the aspect of writing that will have the greatest impact on a child's progress. Children are supported to understand their next steps and given opportunities to respond, practise and apply feedback.

3.9 Developing Independent Writers

Our ultimate aim is for children to become confident, independent writers who can apply their learning across different contexts.

As children progress through school, scaffolding is gradually reduced, allowing them to take increasing responsibility for planning, composing, reviewing and improving their writing.

Independent writing provides opportunities for children to demonstrate what they know and can do without adult support. Teachers use this evidence, alongside ongoing assessment, to identify strengths, address gaps and plan subsequent teaching.

We want every child to leave St John Fisher able to communicate clearly, write accurately and make thoughtful choices about how to engage their reader.

4. Oracy

4.1 Intent

At St John Fisher, we recognise that oracy is fundamental to learning. We believe every child has the right to develop the confidence, vocabulary and communication skills needed to express themselves, engage with others and succeed.

Oracy is both a skill to be explicitly developed and a powerful tool for learning. Through purposeful talk, children clarify their thinking, deepen understanding, develop vocabulary and learn to reason, explain and communicate effectively.

We do not teach oracy as a separate subject. Instead, structured opportunities for speaking and listening are embedded throughout the curriculum, with particular emphasis on reading, writing and mathematics.

4.2 Our Oracy Framework

Our approach is underpinned by the **Voice 21 Oracy Framework**, which identifies four interrelated strands of spoken language:

- **Physical:** Speaking clearly and audibly, using appropriate pace, tone and expression.
- **Linguistic:** Developing vocabulary, sentence structures and language appropriate to different purposes and audiences.
- **Cognitive:** Organising ideas, explaining, reasoning, justifying and evaluating.
- **Social and Emotional:** Listening actively, taking turns, collaborating and responding respectfully to others.

These strands support a progressive approach to developing confident and effective communicators from EYFS to Year 6.

4.3 Teaching Oracy – A Consistent Whole-School Approach

Oracy is explicitly modelled and developed through everyday classroom teaching.

Across the school, teachers establish consistent routines that ensure talk is purposeful, inclusive and supports learning.

Our shared expectations include:

- Modelling and encouraging full-sentence responses.
- Providing structured opportunities for partner talk and discussion.

- Explicitly teaching and referring to sentence stems.
- Encouraging oral rehearsal before writing.
- Using questioning and participation strategies that give all children opportunities to contribute, rather than relying on hands-up responses.

Teachers use strategies such as Think–Pair–Share, partner accountability and guided discussion to encourage children to listen, respond and build on one another's ideas.

Classes establish positive, co-constructed rules for discussion, helping children understand how to listen actively, take turns, respect different viewpoints and contribute confidently.

4.4 Progressive Development of Spoken Language

Oracy skills are developed progressively and cumulatively from EYFS to Year 6.

In EYFS and Key Stage 1, children develop the foundations of effective communication through listening, storytelling, retelling, questioning and speaking in increasingly complete sentences.

As children move through Key Stage 2, they are taught to justify opinions, build on and challenge ideas, use increasingly precise vocabulary and adapt their language for different audiences and purposes.

By Year 6, children are expected to participate confidently in discussions, evaluate different viewpoints, structure arguments and communicate effectively through presentations and purposeful dialogue.

Progressive sentence stems provide scaffolding for spoken language. These are explicitly modelled, revisited and extended as children move through school, enabling them to express increasingly complex ideas with confidence and independence.

4.5 Oracy Across the Curriculum

Purposeful talk is embedded across all subjects and is used to deepen understanding and support learning.

In English, children discuss texts, explore vocabulary, explain interpretations, rehearse sentences orally and develop ideas before writing.

In mathematics, children explain methods, compare strategies, justify answers and reason mathematically.

Across the wider curriculum, children use subject-specific vocabulary to ask questions, explain concepts, evaluate evidence and communicate their understanding.

Teachers plan meaningful opportunities for talk, ensuring that discussion has a clear learning purpose and contributes to children's understanding.

4.6 Inclusion and Equitable Participation

We recognise that children enter school with different levels of language development, confidence and experience.

Structured talk is an important part of ensuring that all children, including those with SEND and disadvantaged pupils, can participate successfully in learning.

Teachers use strategies such as visual sentence stems, vocabulary pre-teaching, strategic pairing, modelling and additional thinking time to remove barriers to participation.

Our aim is to create classrooms where every child's voice is valued and all children are supported to develop the confidence and skills to contribute.

5. Inclusion, Adaptive Teaching and Additional Support

At St John Fisher, we believe that every child has the right to experience success in reading, writing and oracy. We maintain high expectations for all pupils, including those with SEND, disadvantaged pupils and children learning English as an additional language.

Our approach to inclusion is rooted in high-quality first teaching**,** carefully sequenced small steps and responsive feedback. We recognise that adaptive teaching benefits all learners and is an integral part of everyday classroom practice, rather than something provided only for identified groups.

Teachers use a range of adaptive teaching strategies, including explicit modelling, scaffolding, oral rehearsal, vocabulary support, guided practice and opportunities for repetition and retrieval. These approaches enable children to access ambitious learning while developing confidence and independence.

Ongoing assessment and **targeted, in-the-moment feedback** allow teachers to identify individual barriers, address misconceptions and provide the next steps needed to move learning forward. Support is responsive and proportionate, with scaffolding gradually reduced as children become more secure.

Where pupils require additional support beyond high-quality classroom teaching, targeted interventions are provided to address specific gaps in knowledge or skills. Their impact is regularly reviewed to ensure that pupils make progress and can increasingly apply their learning independently.

Our aim is not to lower expectations, but to provide the right support and teaching so that every child has the opportunity to meet them**.**

6. Assessment, Monitoring and Impact

6.1 Principles of Assessment

At St John Fisher, assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. Its primary purpose is to identify what children know, understand and can do, recognise barriers to progress and inform the next steps in teaching.

We believe that effective assessment should be purposeful, manageable and lead to action. Assessment is used not simply to measure attainment, but to ensure that every child receives the teaching and support needed to succeed.

6.2 Formative Assessment and Responsive Teaching

Teachers continually assess learning through questioning, observation, discussion, pupils' work and independent application.

Assessment is used to identify misconceptions, gaps in foundational knowledge and the highest-priority next steps for individual pupils and groups.

In-the-moment feedback enables teachers to address misconceptions and support pupils during learning. **Whole-class feedback** is used to celebrate successes, address common errors and provide focused opportunities for improvement.

Teachers use this information to adapt subsequent teaching, revisit essential knowledge and provide additional support or challenge where needed.

6.3 Assessment of Reading

Early reading is assessed formally every half term through Read Write Inc. assessments. These assess children's phonics knowledge, decoding accuracy and fluency, informing groupings, reading-book allocation and the identification of pupils requiring additional support through Fast Track Tutoring or Fresh Start.

Weekly phonics progress meetings provide opportunities for the phonics team to review children's progress, identify those at risk of falling behind and agree timely actions to address gaps in learning. This ensures that teaching and support are responsive to children's needs rather than waiting until the next formal assessment.

From Year 2, teachers assess fluency, vocabulary and comprehension through Pathways to Read lessons, questioning, discussion and pupils' independent responses.

In Years 3–6, Reading Plus provides additional information about children's reading development, engagement and progress.

Assessment information is used to distinguish between difficulties with decoding and those relating to fluency, vocabulary or comprehension, ensuring that support is matched to pupils' needs.

6.4 Assessment of Writing

Writing is assessed through ongoing classroom assessment, independent writing and the application of skills across different contexts.

Teachers consider both transcription and composition, identifying whether barriers relate to handwriting, spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence construction or the organisation and development of ideas.

Independent writing provides important evidence of what children can achieve without adult support.

Feedback prioritises the aspect of writing that will have the greatest impact on progress, with opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their next steps.

6.5 Assessment of Oracy

Oracy is assessed through everyday classroom interactions, structured discussion, questioning and observation.

Teachers consider children's developing ability to speak clearly, use appropriate vocabulary, organise ideas, reason, listen and respond to others.

Assessment is formative and informs modelling, scaffolding and opportunities for further practice. No additional written tracking is required.

6.6 Summative Assessment and Pupil Progress

Summative assessment complements ongoing teacher assessment, providing additional information about children's attainment and progress.

Teacher Assessment and Insight

Teachers record their assessments on Insight every half term, alongside relevant standardised assessment scores. This enables teachers and leaders to monitor attainment, track progress over time and identify children who may require additional support or challenge.

Standardised Assessments

In Years 2–5, children complete NFER assessments at the midpoint and end of the academic year.

These assessments provide standardised information about children's attainment and help teachers evaluate progress against age-related expectations.

Following each assessment, teachers complete **Question Level Analysis (QLA)** to identify gaps in knowledge, common misconceptions and areas requiring further teaching. Findings are used to inform planning, targeted support and opportunities to revisit essential learning.

Pupil Progress Meetings

Termly pupil progress meetings provide opportunities for teachers and leaders to review attainment and progress, evaluate the impact of teaching and intervention, and identify priorities for the following term.

Discussions draw on teacher assessment, standardised scores, QLA and evidence from pupils' everyday learning.

The focus is not simply on identifying children who are falling behind, but on understanding **why** and agreeing the most effective actions to help them make progress.

6.7 Monitoring and Evaluation

The English Lead and senior leaders evaluate the quality and impact of reading, writing and oracy through lesson visits, book monitoring, pupil voice, assessment information and professional discussion.

Monitoring focuses on the quality of teaching, the security of foundational knowledge, consistency of implementation and the progress pupils make over time.

Findings are used to identify strengths, support staff development and agree focused priorities for improvement, without creating unnecessary workload.

7. Partnership with Families

At St John Fisher, we recognise the vital role families play in developing children's language, literacy skills and attitudes towards reading and writing. We aim to build strong home-school partnerships, ensuring parents and carers feel confident and equipped to support their children's learning.

7.1 Supporting Early Reading

In EYFS and Key Stage 1, we hold reading meetings for parents and invite them into school to observe Read Write Inc. Phonics lessons. These opportunities help families understand how early reading is taught and how they can support their children at home.

In Year 1, the class teacher also delivers a **Phonics Play meeting**, providing parents with practical strategies and activities to support their children in developing phonics knowledge and preparing for the Phonics Screening Check.

7.2 Promoting Reading at Home

Across the school, families are encouraged to share books, stories and conversations, support regular reading and celebrate their children's achievements.

We promote reading for pleasure and encourage children to develop positive reading habits beyond the classroom.

In Years 3–6, children are encouraged to complete an additional 30 minutes of Reading Plus each week at home. An after-school Reading Plus club provides further opportunities for children to access the programme.

7.3 Communication and Partnership

We maintain regular communication with families about children's progress, achievements and next steps.

Where children require additional support, we work with parents and carers to share appropriate strategies and encourage consistent approaches between home and school.

We recognise that strong partnerships between families and school play an important role in helping every child develop confidence, independence and experience success.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

8.1 Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for delivering high-quality teaching in reading, writing and oracy, following the school's agreed curriculum approaches.

They assess children's learning, identify barriers to progress and adapt teaching to meet individual needs. Teachers promote a positive reading culture and provide regular opportunities for purposeful talk, independent reading and writing.

8.2 Teaching Assistants and Tutors

Teaching assistants and tutors support the delivery of the curriculum and provide targeted additional support where appropriate.

They follow agreed approaches, communicate regularly with teachers about children's progress and encourage pupils to develop confidence and independence.

8.3 English Lead

The English Lead is responsible for maintaining a coherent and progressive approach to reading, writing and oracy across the school.

This includes supporting staff development, monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, reviewing assessment information and identifying priorities for improvement.

The English Lead works alongside senior leaders to evaluate the impact of the curriculum and ensure that all children have opportunities to succeed.

8.4 Senior Leaders and Governors

Senior leaders support the implementation of the policy through curriculum oversight, staff development, monitoring and the allocation of appropriate resources.

Governors provide strategic oversight and challenge, ensuring that the school's approach to English reflects its vision and supports positive outcomes for all pupils.

9. Policy Review and Implementation

This policy sets out the agreed principles and expectations for the teaching of reading, writing and oracy at St John Fisher Catholic Primary School.

It should be read alongside the school's Assessment, SEND, Feedback, Safeguarding and Homework Policies.

The policy will be shared with relevant staff to ensure a consistent understanding of expectations and will be reviewed in accordance with the school's policy review cycle.

Its implementation and impact will be evaluated through ongoing monitoring, assessment information, pupil voice and professional discussion.