

St James' Lanehead Church of England Primary School



English Policy

Date of Policy:	November 2025
Person Responsible:	Mrs H Gregory & Miss L Wren
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Our Mission

Our church school seeks to inspire each individual to flourish, grow and learn with Jesus
at the heart of all we do.

St James' Lanehead C of E (VA) Primary School English

Curriculum Policy

Our Vision

At St James' Lanehead C of E Primary, we place great emphasis on good speaking and listening skills. We aim for all our children to become clear communicators and to achieve success as confident readers and writers. English and Literacy is at the forefront of our priorities as a means of impacting on a broad and balanced curriculum.

Aims

We aim to develop pupils' abilities within an integrated programme of spoken language, reading and writing. Pupils will be given opportunities to incorporate the teaching of English across the curriculum, with opportunities to consolidate and reinforce literacy skills. We aim for pupils to be able to:

- read and write with confidence, fluency and understanding, orchestrating a range of independent strategies to self-monitor and correct
- have an interest in books and read for enjoyment
- have an interest in words, their meanings; developing a growing vocabulary in spoken and written forms
- understand a range of text types and genres – be able to write in a variety of styles and forms appropriate to the situation
- develop the powers of imagination, inventiveness and critical awareness
- have a suitable technical vocabulary to articulate their responses

The Daily Teaching of English

Phonics

Our pupils learn to read and write effectively and quickly using the Read Write Inc. Phonics programme. They progress onto Read Write Inc. Spelling once they can read with accuracy and speed.

Read Write Inc. Phonics

The programme is for:

- Pupils in Year R to Year 2 who are learning to read and write
- Any pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 who need to catch up rapidly
- Struggling readers in Years 5 and 6 follow Read Write Inc. Fresh

Start. 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 Year R 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. We make sure they write every day.

Pupils write at the level of their spelling knowledge. The quality of the vocabulary they use in their writing reflects the language they have heard in the books the teacher has read to them; they have also discussed what the words mean.

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.

Reading

At St James' Lanehead, we believe that reading is an important life skill and we strive for all children to enjoy and value it. We recognise that enjoyment in reading arises from deriving meaning from text. It is our aim to develop and create passionate readers for life.

Guided reading takes place daily in Key Stage 2 and children are provided with support where necessary. Pupils are encouraged to take their own meaning from each text, becoming independent and critical thinkers. Comprehension activities are designed to help children to infer, summarise, question, clarify, predict and argue a point of view. The children also make connections between texts and their own experiences.

Pupils are taught to articulate their thoughts and ideas out loud and to communicate what they know and understand. Pupils answer questions 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.

Each child takes home a reading book every day with a reading record and all children have the opportunity to select a book of their choice from our class library to enjoy in school. The adult asks questions relevant to the interest of the child and encourages predictions when discussing home

reading books. We use a standardised reading test, NTS Assessment, so that we can ensure that the gains our pupils are making are age-appropriate. Additionally, we use Pie Corbett's 'Reading Spine' daily to encourage children's enjoyment of literature. This is read daily in each class, with a book of a slightly higher standard than the children would access independently.

Writing

At St James' Lanehead, we believe that the mastery of written language is one of the most powerful gifts that we can provide to our children. We believe that writing should be purposeful, rich and enjoyable for all. Teachers will seek to take advantage of opportunities to make cross-curricular links. They will plan for pupils to practise and apply the skills, knowledge and understanding acquired through English lessons to other areas of the curriculum. Opportunities to use ICT to support teaching and learning in English will be planned for and used as appropriate.

At St James' Lanehead, we use Pathways to Write to support our teaching of writing from Year 1 through to Year 5. The units of work develop vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing skills through the use of high-quality texts. In Year 6, the children are taught through a text and consolidate and master the skills already taught through school.

We firmly believe that a sound understanding of grammar will lead to an improved understanding of English and how the written and oral language works. We believe that the teaching of grammar should, as far as possible, feed into the writing activity that the children are undertaking. Children are taught and encouraged to use the correct grammatical terminology from Key Stage 1 onwards. Pupils are taught the importance of using grammar correctly, so they can communicate clearly and convey their meaning effectively. All grammar is taught within the context of the texts being studied to ensure it is meaningful for children.

Handwriting

At St James' Lanehead, it is an expectation that all children demonstrate good posture when writing and hold their pencil/pen accordingly. High standards of handwriting are expected across all subjects. In Early Years, children practise manipulative skills in order to prepare them for writing.

They are taught to hold a pencil effectively and form recognisable letters. In Key Stages 1 and 2, handwriting is taught using the RWI handwriting programme. Our aim is that the majority of pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 are writing in pen in a neat, fluent style. By Year 6, children should be experienced in using pens for handwriting and be developing their own style. Teachers should ensure that writing in the classroom and in pupils' books mirrors the agreed style and provides a model for the children to aspire to.

Read Write Inc. Spelling:

Read Write Inc. Spelling is for pupils in Year 2 to Year 6 who can read with accuracy (they recognise the alternative graphemes for sounds).

Read Write Inc. Spelling ensures spelling success for children who are fluent readers. Children are taught spelling rules as well as the common exception words for Years 1 and 2 and the words from the National Curriculum for Key Stage 2. Children are assessed after every 2 or 3 spelling rules which allows for more teaching and practising of the rule if required. The children are also assessed every half term on the spelling rules taught so far as well as those from previous year groups.

Outcomes for children Assessing and tracking progress

We assess all pupils following Read Write Inc. Phonics using the Read Write Inc. Assessments. We use this data to assign them to either Read Write Inc. Phonics or English lessons, along with Read Write Inc. Spelling. 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 pupils 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.

In addition, we use a standardised reading test, NTS Assessment, so that we can ensure that the gains our pupils are making are age-appropriate. We aim for all children to be accurate and speedy readers by the time they enter Key Stage 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 tutor them for 15 minutes every day, using the Read Write Inc. One-to-one tutoring programme. If a child arrives in Key Stage 2 reading below their chronological age or with English as an additional language they are taught Read Write Inc. Phonics or Fresh Start until they too catch up with their peers.

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.

For those on the Read Write Inc. Spelling programme, pupil progress is assessed through six practice tests and an end of year test. These tests inform planning and any additional support needed. A tracker is used to collate individual pupil progress.

Children write a number of independent pieces in their 'Write and Shine' books each half term. These independent pieces are from their English work as well as from across the curriculum. Teachers assess this writing using the expectations for each year group which informs next steps and planning for the next unit of work.

Writing is moderated for accuracy every half term. This is either through the Writing Lead, planned into professional development meetings or with other schools.

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 1, 2 and 3, which take place half termly. 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 extra 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. programmes have 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 tutoring for 10 to 20 minutes, in addition to their group session in the morning. This tutoring helps us to meet their individual needs. Once these pupils have learnt to read they will receive additional support when learning to spell.

Feedback and marking

We emphasise constructive feedback. For example, we praise pupils for how hard they work together to ensure that their learning is successful.

We have clear systems for marking pupils' work. Pupils know their teacher's expectations for each activity. We mark short activities with the pupils in the lesson. Extended pieces are marked afterwards. We discuss the outcomes with the group and individuals so that the marking is genuinely used to take forward pupils' learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils have very positive attitudes to reading and writing. Their good behaviour and the virtual absence of low-level disruption in lessons contribute to the progress they make. We support this behaviour by using silent signals for gaining their attention, for setting up partner routines, and for managing the way pupils move around the classroom. Everyone uses the same signals. The teachers are encouraged to use these strategies in other lessons, too, so that the approach to behaviour is consistent throughout the day.

We believe that the partner work and the homogeneous groupings organised to teach Read Write Inc. Phonics, help the pupils learn to work together. Pupils are taught the manners and behaviour that are necessary to work with adults and other pupils. Adults are expected to demonstrate positive attitudes and good manners, and to act as role models for pupils.

Praise for hard work and good behaviour is fundamental to pupils' progress. The values of courtesy, consideration and kindness are at the heart of every lesson, taught through the programme and embedded in other lessons. All the staff use the same positive strategies for behaviour management across the school. Working well together, as part of a team, is at the core of the school's work – for staff and pupils.

Attendance

The programmes are intensive and cumulative, so poor attendance severely disrupts the progress of any pupils who are absent, for however short a time.

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 further Development Days every year to ensure we are aware of up-to-date practice.

Home/school links

At St James' Lanehead, we value the relationship with parents in supporting their children's English skills. We support pupils to select appropriate books to take home. Pupils also take home stories and non-fiction that they cannot yet read for themselves but that have been read to them. Pupils also take home picture books so that they can re-tell the story out loud and recall details and vocabulary.

Parents are involved in their children's learning by:

- Providing regular parent's evenings, which give them verbal information on their child's progress and their targets for the future.
- Sending reading books and home/school record books to monitor progress at home and school.
- Providing meetings when appropriate to inform parents on how we teach reading/writing/phonics and how they can help.
- Inviting parents to Family Friday sessions and parent workshops.

This policy will be reviewed every year or in the light of changes to legal requirements.