



Subject Policy

English

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INTENT

Aims

At Debden Church of England Primary Academy, all of our curriculum disciplines are used to underpin our school vision, which is to ensure that the children in our care:

- Progress exceptionally well academically, across a broad and knowledge-rich curriculum;
- Develop into confident compassionate, well-rounded individuals, in a safe, caring, Christian environment;
- Become equipped with the learning skills needed to deal with future challenges;
- Create happy, positive memories of their childhood.

Our English curriculum has been carefully constructed through close consideration of both the expectations of the National Curriculum and the vision and contextual requirements of our school and its children. Through our English curriculum, we aim for children to:

- Develop positive attitudes towards books so that reading is a pleasurable activity
- Read a varied selection of texts whilst gaining an increased level of fluency and understanding
- Develop a range of reading strategies for approaching reading: using and applying phonological, contextual, grammatical and graphic knowledge
- Use reading as a means of gathering information to support their learning throughout the entire curriculum
- Enjoy writing in different contexts and for different purposes and audiences, including themselves
- Write with increasing awareness of the conventions of grammar, punctuation and spelling
- Form letters correctly, leading to a fluent and legible, cursive handwriting style
- Develop listening and comprehension skills through a variety of means including reciprocal and nonreciprocal situations
- Express opinions, articulate feelings and formulate appropriate responses to increasingly complex questions and instructions;
- Speak confidently and with clarity to a range of audiences, developing enhanced levels of articulation.

Statutory Requirements

Statutory requirements for the teaching and learning of English are laid out in the National Curriculum in England: English Programmes of Study – Key Stages 1 and 2 (2013) and in the Communication and Language and Literacy sections of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2017).

In EYFS (Reception) children are given opportunities to:

- Speak and listen and represent ideas in their activities;
- Use communication, language and literacy in every part of the curriculum;
- Become immersed in a language rich environment.

At Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2) children are given opportunities to:

- Learn to speak confidently and listen to what others have to say.
- Learn to read and write independently and with enthusiasm.
- Learn to use language to explore their own experiences and imaginary worlds.

At Key Stage 2 (Years 3-6) children are given opportunities to:

- Learn to change the way they speak and write to suit different situations, purposes and audiences.
- Read a range of fiction, non-fiction and poetic texts and respond to different layers of meaning in them.
- Explore the use of language in literary and non-literary texts and learn how the structure of language works (using grammatical terminology).

Planning and Sequencing

English learning has been carefully plotted in order to ensure that children continuously develop their reading, writing, SPAG and speaking and listening knowledge and skills throughout their time at our school.

Our curriculum maps detail the individual texts and units that children are exposed at different points in their education. Units of learning have been meticulously aligned - for example, in writing, children across the school learn corresponding text types simultaneously, meaning that the subject leader can provide CPD to ensure strong subject knowledge for all before teaching, and to ensure that we gather a clear overview of progress through the school during moderation. Furthermore, the diet of content that children receive has been thoughtfully considered (e.g. in reading, we have mapped the range of high-quality texts that children are exposed to throughout their time at the school).

In order to ensure that children's skills are enhanced throughout each stage of our English curriculum, we have developed skills maps (these can be found on the English curriculum pages of our website). Skills maps help teachers to have a clear idea of the skills to be developed throughout the age phase that they teach. In line with the expectations of the National Curriculum, these skills fall into the broad categories of:

Reading - Word reading

Reading - Comprehension (listening and reading)

Writing – transcription (including spelling and handwriting)

Writing – Composition

Writing – Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation

Furthermore, we have created knowledge organisers detailing the knowledge that children should acquire within every writing unit, every reading text and every year of their SPAG learning. These are used by teachers as a foundation for planning and end of unit assessment, are presented to children at various points throughout units of

learning, and are sent home to parents so that they can support children’s English learning from home.

As with all of our subject disciplines, our English curriculum has been tailored to meet the unique context of our school and children. Examples include local/ religious-themed texts in whole-class reading (we are a C of E school) and military narrative/ poetry units in writing (we have a high proportion of Barracks-based children).

IMPLEMENTATION

READING

Phonics

The Rose Report (2006) highlights the need for 'high quality phonic work' to be taught systematically and discretely as the prime approach used in the teaching of early reading. At Debden Primary Academy, all children in Reception and Year 1 learn to fluently decode texts through the teaching of phonics from entry to the school. We follow the 'Letters and Sounds' framework, and ensure that all children in these year groups (and selected others who have not exceeded the standard required in the Phonics Screening) receive at least 20 minutes of high-quality phonics provision on a daily basis.

More information about our approach to Phonics can be found in our Phonics Policy.

Whole Class Reading

We employ whole class reading from years 2-6, as our principal mechanism for exposing children a wide-range of high-quality and challenging fiction, non-fiction and poetry texts. This is a well-researched and highly-effective approach (see Doug Lemov, *Reading Reconsidered*, 2016) that was adopted after a successful trial period in spring 2020. This change was prompted by our self-identified need to implement more rigour in teaching reading towards the KS2 SATs paper, to expose children to a wider range of high-quality texts and authors throughout their time at our school, and because it allows for the heavy focus that we know is needed on vocabulary for understanding across all subjects.

At Debden, whole class reading is facilitated twice per week for 45 minutes for year 2 children (as a transitional year) before being utilised every day for 45 minutes throughout Key Stage 2. Sessions are organised as shown below:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Whole Class Text	Themed Text 1	Themed Text 2	Themed Text 3	Whole Class Text
-Read aloud by teacher -Vocabulary learning -Retrieval -Prediction, sequence or summarise	-Read aloud by children -Vocabulary learning -Retrieval -Inference -Explain or summarise	-Read aloud by children -Vocabulary learning -Retrieval -Inference -Explain or summarise	-Read aloud by children -Vocabulary learning -Retrieval -Inference -Explain or summarise	-Read aloud by teacher -Vocabulary learning -Retrieval -Prediction, sequence or summarise

The range of themed texts that children study were initially based on Ashley Booth’s KS2 reading curriculum model

<https://theteachingbooth.wordpress.com/2020/06/28/a-ks2-reading-curriculum/>), however we have now heavily adapted the plans to meet the needs of our own context and curriculum. For example, we have created our own 'Essex' themed unit, sourcing local books and authors, to align with local historical study in history/ geography and have added religious-themed units to reflect our standing as a Church of England school. We have also expanded the curriculum down into Year 2 (e.g. with introductions to authors such as Roald Dahl and David Walliams) to provide children with the foundation comprehension skills required to make rapid progress.

Our whole class texts are meticulously researched by the teachers in order to ensure that they are challenging and appropriate within the context of children's broader learning (e.g. they link to other areas of the curriculum, thus aiding the development of schemata). These texts are read from start to finish (during the Monday and Friday whole class reading sessions for KS2) and at the end of most schools days for the final 10-15 minutes. They are also used in writing sessions in conjunction with developing children's wider literacy skills. Such is their importance at the centre of our curriculum, these texts are named within our long-term planning (between 6-12 novels per year, depending on book length and age-group).

Individual Home-School Reading

When children join Debden Primary Academy, their Reading Age is quickly assessed using the Hodder Education 'Salford Reading Tests', alongside notes and data from the child's prior school (where applicable). Each reading age corresponds with a selection of colour-banded books that are appropriate to the stage of the child's reading development. These books are drawn from the Oxford Reading Tree and Collins Big Cat reading schemes, and a visual chart is provided to each teacher to clarify the equivalent bands within each scheme.

Children are heard reading their independent books in school regularly, with children who are identified as falling behind expected standards heard more frequently. This is dependent on a number of factors, for example the age of the children, the other opportunities in the class to hear children read (e.g. in whole class reading) and the number of adults available in the classroom - however we endeavour to hear all Reception and KS1 children read their independent books weekly, and KS2 children monthly.

Books are also sent home for children to practice with their parents, who log their reading within reading records. Teachers check children's home reading on at least a monthly basis, and factor in a number of incentives and rewards for those children who demonstrate an excellent commitment to home reading.

We target as many children as possible to reach the end of the banded reading scheme and become 'free readers' by the beginning of year 5. Our year 5 and 6 staff carefully research appropriately challenging books for children who have reached the free reader stage, and we stock a range of these books within the classrooms and school library.

Reading for Pleasure

The case in favour of reading for pleasure is compelling and has been well-documented (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/284286/reading_for_pleasure.pdf). Reading for pleasure throughout childhood is strongly correlated with a wide range of academic, personal, social and even health benefits. These include (but are not limited to):

- Significantly improved academic attainment across the curriculum (Allen, Snow and McNamara, 2015);
- A vastly increased knowledge base (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003);
- Far higher academic outcomes in writing (Langer & Flihan, 2000);
- Improved understanding of text structures (Snyder, 2010);

- Increased motivation (National Endowment for Arts, 2007);
- The development of a range of personal/social qualities, including empathy and teamwork (McLean et al, 2010);
- Development of personal identity (Jesweak, 2015);
- Lowers stress levels (University of Sussex, 2009);
- Increases life expectancy (Yale University, 2017);

At Debden Primary Academy, we implement a range of strategies and measures to promote reading for pleasure across our student population. These include:

-Reading displays and reading corners: Each classroom within school has a reading for pleasure display and a book corner / library that focuses on a love of reading and promotion of books (e.g. via book review displays, displaying topic books / information, class book covers);

-School Library Access: We are proud to have a relatively large and well-stocked library for a school of our size. Children are given time each week to visit the library, and are encouraged to borrow books to read at home.

-Quiet Reading: 'Quiet Reading' slots are built into each class every day to allow every child dedicated time for reading for pleasure. All staff and children in the classroom are expected to take part.

-Incentives: Children are actively encouraged to read from home, and to ensure that their reading is signed for in their reading records by their parents/ guardians. Each class has their own incentive system to reward strong engagement with reading at home – e.g. the opportunity to go out for break 5 minutes early on a Friday. School achievement assemblies also highlight and reward children who demonstrate a commitment to reading at home.

-Book Share: Each class has their own methods of providing opportunities for children to share reviews of the books that they have been reading with their class. This helps to raise awareness of appropriate reading texts, and also develops children's oracy skills.

-Themed Days and Competitions: We put a great deal of thought and effort into themed days such as World Book Day, working purposefully activities to capture children's imaginations and raise engagement and enthusiasm for reading. In addition to this, we periodically run reading-focused competitions, for example community reading challenges and 'extreme reading.'

WRITING

The Debden Writing Cycle

Our writing cycle depicts the effective strategies and stages that we would expect to utilise within of a unit of learning in writing. It has been formulated using what we have found are the most effective aspects of other writing processes, for example those detailed in Pie Corbett's 'Talk for Writing' and Jane Considine's 'The Write Stuff.'

The model is cyclical to represent the ongoing learning of writing throughout school and later life; writing forms and techniques are revisited throughout a child's time at our school, allowing children the opportunity to gradually display a greater level of skills and understanding within each cycle. A visual representation of the writing cycle can be found in the Appendix below, whilst the features of each stage are detailed here:

1.Starting Point

Teachers swiftly ascertain what children already know from their prior study and experiences. Teachers may carry out 'knowledge harvest' sessions, AfL activities or ask children to complete 'cold writing' tasks as a part of this

process. The unit of learning should be introduced with creative hooks and contextual information to stimulate the children's appetite for learning.

2.WAGOLL

Children should be given opportunities to see and engage with model texts – 'reading as a reader' (comprehension and vocabulary) and 'reading as a writer' (considering the purpose, audience and text type of the writing, and contemplating the strategies and techniques used by writers to achieve desired effects). Younger children may 'text map' to visually depict text structures, and there may be more focus on then learning and imitating effective writing that they have collectively analysed.

3.Break it Down

A considerable proportion of the unit is allocated for focusing on the specific ideas, tools and techniques to be effectively deployed in this writing type. This is likely to be influenced by the teacher's prior assessment of student needs and gaps, and may include more generic writing/ SPAG concepts (e.g. effective use of punctuation or deploying specific, precise verbs) or techniques specific to the writing form/purpose/audience, (e.g. rhythm and metre in poetry, or the use of rhetorical questions and lists of three in persuasive writing). At each stage, children should be exposed to model examples and should be 'enabled' to apply what they have learnt within sentences and paragraphs.

4.Link Ideas

At this stage, children begin to utilise the various ideas, tools and techniques in combination, connecting concepts together to begin to form more extended sections of writing. Collectively-worked models and 'sentence stacking' techniques are school-approved approaches that may be deployed, in order to aid writing structure and whole-text cohesion.

5.Apply

Scaffolds are gradually withdrawn, as children move towards planning and composing their own independent writing pieces. These 'hot tasks' should be a culmination of all of that has been learnt throughout the unit, where children can showcase their understanding of the content (subject matter, ideas, authorial intent etc.) language (tools, techniques, devices etc.) and structures (paragraphing, cohesiveness etc.)

6.Reflect

Children are expected to continuously evaluate their writing successes and development areas throughout the learning process. Teachers complete rounds of whole class feedback at least weekly in English, noting and communicating achievements (staff often use visualisers or photographed examples to highlight these), misconceptions and targets. This also informs their subsequent planning. we provide opportunities for them become skilled in editing and re-drafting their work to improve its overall quality.

Whilst not every unit will be sequenced in this particular order, all units of writing will contain the vital elements of each stage.

The teaching of writing units within the parameters of our writing cycle should of course be age-appropriate. For

example, we have found that a stricter adherence to the guiding principles of 'Talk for Writing' are more effective for many of our Key Stage 1 children, whilst a slightly more unconstrained approach has proven to be more effective for children in Key Stage 2.

Spelling

Phonics: As detailed above (and within our phonics policy), in EYFS and Year 1 and our pupils follow a high-quality, systematic programme of phonics teaching following the Letters and Sounds (DfE 2007) teaching programme. Our phonics teaching makes strong links between blending for reading, segmenting for spelling and handwriting. We encourage all of our pupils to apply their phonic knowledge when spelling.

By the end of Year 1, it is our expectation that the vast majority of our pupils will be secure at spelling Phase 5 words. Pupils who do not secure Phase 5 by the end of Year 1 are given additional support and intervention. The National Curriculum spelling objectives for Year 2 work in line with Phase 6 of Letters and Sounds.

Spelling Sessions: From Year 2 onwards, students are taught the age-related spelling content using 'Spelling Shed', a published scheme that provides the word lists and teaching materials necessary for teachers to deliver high-quality spelling sessions. Every Monday, children are introduced to a new collection of spellings by their teacher or classroom assistant, who will spend time explaining the respective rules and patterns (note: children within the same class may receive different spellings from one another, depending upon their level of attainment). Throughout the week (at least 3 times per week) children are given activities relating to their spellings – this ordinarily takes place during morning registration. Some examples of activities that take place across the school include spelling tennis, spelling bees, crosswords, words without vowels and 'Look, say, cover, write, check.' Children also take their spellings home for additional practice, which is logged in their spelling books. Children are tested on their spellings either on the Friday or the following Monday.

Across the Curriculum: Teachers are expected to capitalise on opportunities to help children learn spelling conventions, patterns and rules in all subject disciplines. This includes the teaching of common exception words, high frequency words, statutory words and personal and topic spelling. In addition to applying their phonics knowledge and understanding of spelling patterns, children are provided with other tools and strategies to enable independence in spelling and a deeper understanding of words. For example, children are taught explicitly how to use a dictionary in order to spell, investigate word meanings, and explore origins.

Vocabulary, Punctuation and Grammar

We view the development of a rich vocabulary as vital to strengthening not only children's reading, writing and oral communication skills, but also their attainment across the curriculum. Each knowledge organiser across the school (in all subjects, not just English) contains 8-12 key words that we expect children to learn throughout the unit. This vocabulary has been carefully chosen and mapped out across each subject and phase, enabling them to construct schemata and understand concepts at a deeper level.

Research suggests that vocabulary, punctuation and grammar concepts are learnt best where children have the opportunities to immediately apply them into purposeful tasks (Hattie, 2008, Considine, 2016). Therefore, opportunities to develop vocabulary, punctuation and grammar skills are capitalised on by teachers across all subjects.

Furthermore, our SPAG curriculum maps have been designed to guide teachers towards teaching particular SPAG concepts at times when they are most likely to be utilised in other subjects. We favour vocabulary, punctuation and grammar being taught within English lessons (and wherever opportunities arise elsewhere) however we do advocate standalone SPAG sessions where a teacher's observations or feedback suggest a particular focus would be most beneficial.

Handwriting

Handwriting is a skill which, like reading and spelling, affects written communication across the curriculum. Children must be able to write with ease, speed and legibility. Cursive handwriting teaches pupils to join letters and words as a series of flowing movements and patterns. Handwriting skills at Debden are taught regularly and systematically, for a period of at least 20 minutes per week.

We use the Nelson Handwriting scheme to teach the correct letter orientation, formation and proportions. Please see our handwriting policy for further details.

DEVELOPING ORACY

Both the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework and the National Curriculum for English reflect the importance of spoken language in pupils' development – linguistic, cognitive and social – across the whole curriculum. In the Reception year, speaking and listening is at the core of the programme for developing communication, language and literacy as detailed in "Early Learning Goals" Pupils have opportunities to develop and practise their talk through play, to listen attentively and with increasing stamina and discrimination, to respond appropriately and confidently, and to inter-act with others. This provides a sound foundation for the programme of study for KS1.

Teachers in KS1 and KS2 should ensure the continual development of pupils' confidence and competence in spoken language. The quality and variety of language that pupils hear and speak are key factors in developing their vocabulary, grammar and understanding for reading and writing. Pupils should develop a capacity to explain their understanding of books and poems, and to prepare their ideas prior to writing. Pupils should also be taught to understand and use the conventions for discussion and debate. The ability to speak and listen is fundamental to pupils' language and social development. It is an essential tool for all areas of the curriculum, as talk underpins learning and thinking. It is vital that its significance is recognised by pupils, parents and teachers.

In order to promote high quality speaking and listening across the curriculum, teachers at Debden Primary Academy:

- model dialogue e.g. turn-taking, offering opinions and inviting response
- model listening e.g. the use of non-verbal communication, respecting, even if disagreeing with, the views of others.
- model values e.g. encouraging the participation of retiring or reticent pupils
- model participation e.g. recognising the value of being seen as a learner alongside the pupils
- provide a wide range of contexts for speaking and listening
- support the pupils by providing clear structures for tasks which require the pupils to learn through talk
- share roles with the pupils e.g. as questioner, the 'expert' on a particular topic

Pupils have a variety of opportunities to use talk to develop their learning. These include:

- playing an active role in directing their own learning, e.g. making decisions about how to approach a task, selecting appropriate resources
- engaging in speaking and listening in a variety of groupings and settings, e.g. reading out loud as an individual and a larger group during shared reading, working collaboratively on an investigation during group work, reporting findings as a newscaster during a plenary session,
- interviewing people as part of a research project, acting as a guide for a visitor to the school
- using language creatively and imaginatively, e.g. through role-play, hot-seating, storytelling
- demonstrating what they know and evaluating their understanding, e.g. involvement in plenary sessions, use of response partners.

INCLUSION

Debden Primary Academy is an inclusive school, and we fully embrace the entitlement of all children to receive a balanced, broadly-based curriculum. Our predominant approach towards ensuring that all children are included in all English activities is through a broad arsenal of high-quality teaching methods (see our Teaching and Learning policy). However, we do recognise that these strategies alone are not always sufficient to enable all children reach the expected standards of progress and attainment (particularly those who have specific learning needs or gaps that are difficult to meet in the classroom).

To enhance the progress of these children, we run a systematic programme of interventions groups, that are planned, implemented, and continuously monitored on a half-termly rolling cycle. These include English subject-related interventions such as speech and language tuition, Phonics catch-ups, SATs booster sessions, targeted daily readers and additional handwriting sessions.

The progress of children within these intervention groups is more finely monitored (using a range of objective-based tracking systems) to ensure that interventions are having the desired impact on children's progress.

IMPACT

Assessment

Outcomes in English are demonstrated primarily through the children's results in the Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 SATs assessments (in reading, writing and SPAG). The value-added measure that these tests provide us with offer the foremost gauge of their academic progress in the subject.

To track children's progress and attainment between these external benchmarks, children sit PIRA and GAPS tests 3 times per academic year (once in Autumn, Spring and Summer), and we hold both internal and external moderations of children's writing. In addition to this, English books evidence children's development of skills and their acquisition of identified key knowledge throughout each learning stage. We also track children's reading ages, their phonics score (in year 1) and their progression through our banded reading system. Children's raw scores and attainment levels in these assessments are plotted through our 'Insight' tracking system, inputted by their teacher at least once termly. The subject leader assesses this data, which is fed back to the teacher and informs future planning and the plotting of timely interventions.

Throughout EYFS, children's attainment in literacy and communication and language (in addition to the other five

areas of learning – which all impact upon their future success in English) is assessed in the first half of the Autumn term, as a part of our rigorous baselining procedures. Children’s progress in these areas is then continuously monitored throughout their Reception year. A significant number of the ELG statements provide the foundation for development in English. We set challenging targets regarding the number of children that we expect to reach the GLD, and ceaselessly and precisely monitor their progress towards these goals (setting appropriate interventions where necessary).

Monitoring and Feedback

As an ongoing measure of impact, our writing cycle is used across the school to enable children to visibly track their progress throughout English units of learning. Teachers use the whole class feedback approach (on at least a weekly basis) to provide accurate information regarding children’s learning successes and next steps, and children themselves increasingly review their achievements and target areas increasingly as they move up through the school.

The subject leader is responsible for ensuring that the implementation and impact of our English provision are aligned with this policy. On at least a termly basis, they conduct learning walks, look at English books and journals, interview children about their learning in the subject, and monitor subject data. At the end of each term, the Headteacher meets with selected groups of children from each class to ascertain the English knowledge and skills that they have developed over the course of the term (using the knowledge organisers and skills maps). Impact is moderated with our outstanding sister school (and other schools within the locality) on a regular basis, which also develops teacher consistency and subject understanding.

APPENDIX

The Debden Writing Cycle

