

ST. HELEN'S CATHOLIC INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL



English Policy

Written by	Date	Ratified by	Date
L. Simmons	2026	Governors	2026

To be reviewed	Annually	Every 3 Years
Reviewed on	Reviewed by	Next review date
		2029

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as a family.*

Subject Intent

At St. Helen's Catholic Infant and Nursery School, our intent for English is to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which develops children's ability to listen, speak, read and write for a wide range of purposes, including the communication of their ideas, views and feelings. This equips children to express themselves creatively and imaginatively as they become enthusiastic and **lifelong** readers of stories, poetry and drama and non-fiction texts.

- To ensure a **broad and balanced curriculum** we use key texts from 'The Power of Reading' as starting point in each year group and teachers map other topics around it to ensure full coverage of the English Curriculum. In Nursery, we use key texts from 'Foundations for a Love of Reading'.
- We celebrate **diversity** by ensuring our chosen texts from 'Foundations for a Love of Reading' and 'The Power of Reading' represent different ethnicities, genders and cultures throughout the academic year. For example, in Nursery we use a range of picture books that reflect life in current society. In Reception children will study traditional tales from other cultures when reading 'The Old Woman and the Red Pumpkin' and will also celebrate different ethnicities and cultures in 'Handa's Surprise'. In Year 1 children will study 'Grace and Family' and 'Lila and the Secret of Rain' which celebrate different ethnicities and cultures. In Year 2, children discuss gender roles in the 'Princess and the White Bear King' and Black History when studying Martin Luther King. All year groups also make links between the English Curriculum and events in our cultural calendar, such as Black History Month where children study important figures such as Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King.
- **To enrich the curriculum**, we provide extra curricular activities such as the termly school newspaper which encourage children to enquire about the world they live in and apply their taught skills independently.

Legislation and Guidance

This policy reflects the requirements of the National Curriculum programmes of study, which all maintained schools in England must teach.

This policy acknowledges the requirements for promoting the learning and development of children set out in the Early Years EYFS (EYFS) statutory framework.

It also reflects requirements for inclusion and equality as set out in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2014 and Equality Act 2010, and refers to curriculum-related expectations of governing boards set out in the Department for Education's Governance Handbook.

Roles and Responsibilities

The coordination and planning of the English curriculum are the responsibility of the English Leader, who also:

- Support colleagues in their teaching, by keeping informed about current developments in English and by providing a strategic lead and direction for this subject;
- Give the Head Teacher an annual summary report in which they evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in English and indicates areas for further improvement;

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- Use specially allocated time to review evidence of the children's work, scrutinise planning and to observe English, Phonics and Reading lessons across the school
- drives the early reading programme in our school. This person is highly skilled in teaching Phonics and Reading, and they monitor and support colleagues, so everyone teaches with fidelity to the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* programme.

All members of staff are responsible for promoting the following key areas:

Speaking and Listening

We believe that Speaking and Listening forms an integral foundation for learning in English. Children are encouraged to develop effective communication skills in readiness for later life. We aim for children to be able to speak clearly and fluently and to be able to listen attentively with understanding.

We achieve this by:

- By valuing the conversations and opinions of the children and encourage confidence in themselves as speakers and listeners. We encourage a respect for the views of others.
- Being aware that as adults, we model speaking and listening in our day-to-day interactions with children and with other adults in our school. We strongly encourage all adults to consistently model speaking in **Standard English**, and have the confidence to encourage children to speak in **Standard English** as well.
- Helping children to articulate their ideas and provide purposes and audiences for talk within a range of formal and informal situations and in individual, partner, group and class contexts. We also provide opportunities for performances to a larger audience where children's efforts are acknowledged by staff, parents, carers, visitors and peers..
- By providing a range of experiences where children can work collaboratively and participate in opportunities to reflect on talk and explore real and imagined situations such as role play, hot-seating, drama and discussions.
- By developing the children's ability to listen with attention and understanding in all areas of the curriculum and, where necessary, asking and responding to questions appropriately.

Writing

At St. Helen's Catholic Infant and Nursery School, we strive to create an environment that encourages a love and a celebration of writing. In order to encourage children to become confident writers, we encourage a variety of experiences that promote writing. We use Foundations for a Love of Reading in Nursery or Power of Reading in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 or as a start point to allow children to become independent and resilient learners. Children have the opportunity to write every day across all subjects, including the use of ICT to support writing skills. All staff also have high expectations and standards of writing.

In EYFS, all classrooms and outside areas are language rich environments with a variety of opportunities for children to write and mark make independently. To ensure children become fluent writers, the children have regular opportunities to work with an adult to support their first steps in more formal writing opportunities. In EYFS children are expected to write simple sentences which can be read by themselves and others.

In Key Stage 1, all classrooms build on the language rich environments in EYFS by providing opportunities for children to write in a variety of subjects. When writing, children are encourage

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to use their developing speaking skills to rehearse sentences before recording. Children are encouraged to read work aloud to talk partners to ensure their writing makes sense, and enhance their writing if appropriate. As children progress through the key stage, more opportunities for independent writing are encouraged as children's stamina for writing develops.

The handwriting policy includes more information in relation to expectations on how children's work is presented.

Children should be applying taught skills in English lessons to other curriculum areas and staff should be encouraging this at all times. Writing should be of a high standard in all subjects.

Phonics (reading and spelling)

At St Helen's Catholic Infant and Nursery School we believe that all our children can become fluent readers and writers. This is why we teach reading through *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised*, which is a systematic synthetic phonics programme. We follow the [Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised progression](#), which ensures children build on their growing knowledge of the alphabetic code, mastering phonics to read and spell as they move through school.

As a result, all our children are able to tackle any unfamiliar words as they read. At St Helen's Catholic Infant and Nursery School, we also model the application of the alphabetic code through phonics in shared reading and writing, both inside and outside of the phonics lesson and across the curriculum.

Comprehension

At St Helen's Catholic Infant and Nursery School, we value reading as a crucial life skill. By the time children leave us, they read confidently for meaning and regularly enjoy reading for pleasure. Our readers are equipped with the tools to tackle unfamiliar vocabulary. We encourage our children to see themselves as readers for both pleasure and purpose.

Organisation and Planning

English is a core subject in the National Curriculum. We use the National Curriculum as the basis for implementing the statutory requirements of the programme of study for English.

We carry out the curriculum planning in English in three phases (yearly overview, topic overviews and short-term plans) using the Foundations for a Love of Reading scheme (Nursery) or Power of Reading Scheme (Reception and KS1). The National Curriculum English programmes of study and EYFS Statutory Framework detail what we teach in the long-term. Our yearly teaching programme identifies the key objectives in English that we teach to each year.

Our topic overviews, which we also base on the National Curriculum and EYFS Statutory Framework give details of the main teaching objectives for each term. These plans define what we teach, and ensure an appropriate balance and distribution of work across each term. The English Leader is responsible for reviewing these plans.

Class teachers complete a weekly (short-term) plan for the teaching of English following the scheme and supplement it with appropriate grammar lessons and opportunities to practise writing skills. This lists the Learning Objective (LO) and Success Criteria (SC) for each lesson, and gives details of how the lessons are to be taught including key questions and possible

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opportunities for mini plenaries. Class Teachers annotate and adapt planning for next lesson as necessary. It also includes details of what each group of children will be learning. The class teacher keeps these individual plans in a central location, and the class teachers and subject leaders often discuss them on an informal basis.

We plan the activities in English so that they build on the children's prior learning. While we give children of all abilities the opportunity to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding, we also plan progression into the scheme of work, so that there is an increasing challenge for the children as they move up through the school.

Teaching reading: Reading practice sessions

We teach reading practice sessions. These:

- are taught by a fully trained adult to small groups
- use books matched to the children's secure phonic knowledge
- are monitored by the class teacher, who rotates and works with each group on a regular basis.

Each reading practice session has a clear focus, so that the demands of the session do not overload the children's working memory. The reading practice sessions have been designed to focus on three key reading skills:

- decoding: teaching children to use phonic knowledge to read words
- prosody: teaching children to read with understanding and expression
- comprehension: using dialogic talk to help children to understand the text.

In Reception, these sessions start in Week 4 of teaching at the latest. Initially, children will read wordless books. In these sessions, children review GPCS and are taught blending using teacher-led blending. Once children can blend, they progress onto decodable books matched to their secure phonic knowledge.

Children read each book three times to develop phonemic awareness, vocabulary and comprehension as well as book behaviours.

In Year 2, we ensure children complete reading the core programme decodable books (up to Phase 5 Set 5). To exit the programme, we complete the final fluency assessment to ensure children can read with adequate speed and accuracy: approximately 60 words per minute with 90%+ accuracy.

Teaching reading: Fluency programme

We teach reading to children in Year 2 and above who have exited the core programme using Little Wandle Fluency.

The structure of every lesson is the same:

- A pre-read to practise reading words and to support vocabulary
- Children read aloud for ten minutes and the teacher 'taps in' to hear every child read
- Focussed teaching of prosody, repeated reading and comprehension through discussion.

We assess reading speed and accuracy every 12 weeks and use these assessments to monitor progress and allocate books.

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We also use Assessment for Learning (AfL) and our professional judgement to assess each child's progress in reading, so we can ensure that they have the right books to meet their needs.

Comprehension is taught through dialogic talk and teachers use their AfL to quickly address misconceptions and develop children's curiosity and engagement with each book.

Home reading

The decodable reading practice book is taken home to ensure success is shared with the family.

Reading for pleasure books also go home for parents to share and read to children.

We use the [Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised parents' resources](#) to engage our families and share information about phonics, the benefits of sharing books, how children learn to blend and other aspects of our provision, both online and through workshops.

Foundations for Phonics in Nursery

We provide a balance of child-led and adult-led experiences for all children that meet the curriculum expectations for 'Communication and language' and 'Literacy'. These include:

- sharing high-quality stories and poems
- learning a range of nursery rhymes and action rhymes
- activities that develop focused listening and attention, including oral blending
- attention to high-quality language.

We ensure Nursery children are well prepared to begin learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and blending in Reception.

Little Wandle Foundations is aligned to the non-statutory guidance on Development Matters and Birth to 5 Matters as well as the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework. We use it as part of our wider provision for Communication and Language, and Literacy. It supports children to:

- develop their phonological awareness, including rhyme, alliteration, syllables, initial and voice sounds, and oral blending
- love stories and rhymes, and learn by heart a bank of familiar favourites
- increase their vocabulary and confidence to talk
- improve their listening and ability to take part in back-and-forth conversations.

We believe that the priority in Nursery should be to build the foundations for phonics for all children. Research tells us that disadvantaged children start Nursery behind their more fortunate peers. By leaving formal phonics teaching to Reception, Foundations allows us to devote more time to working with children who need extra help to develop the skills and behaviours that underpin successful reading.

Daily phonics lessons in Reception and Year 1

We teach phonics for 20-30 minutes a day. In Reception, we build from 10-minute lessons, with additional daily oral blending games, to full-length lessons as quickly as possible. Each Friday, we review the week's teaching to help children become fluent readers.

Children make a strong start in Reception: teaching begins in Week 2 of the Autumn term.

We follow the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised expectations of progress:

- Children in Reception are taught to read and spell words using Phase 2 and 3 GPCs, and words with adjacent consonants (Phase 4) with fluency and accuracy.

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- Children in Year 1 review Phases 3 and 4 and are taught to read and spell words using Phase 5 GPCs with fluency and accuracy.
- Keep-up lessons ensure every child learns to read.

Daily phonics and spelling in Year 2

Year 2 begins by using assessment to ensure that children have completed the Little Wandle Year 1 progression. Any gaps in teaching are addressed through daily phonics lessons until the programme is completed.

Once all the Year 1 content has been taught and assessed, we teach a five-week Phase 5 review. This ensures that children secure the trickier elements of Phase 5 and can apply this alphabetic knowledge in both reading and spelling.

We timetable daily phonics lessons for any child in Year 2 who is not at age-related expectations for reading, who has gaps in their phonic knowledge or has not passed the Phonics Screening Check.

Resources

Teachers are responsible for ensuring that children have the appropriate scaffolds and tools to assist children in becoming independent learners. These will be stored in clearly labelled trays that the children can access.

These include, but are not limited to:

- Finger spacers
- Phonic sound mats- EYFS will have Phase 2 and 3 sound mats, Year 1 will have Phase 3 and 5 sound mats
- Word mats linked to topics being covered
- Common Exception Words (Year 1 and 2)
- High Frequency Words (All year groups)
- Dictionaries/ Thesauruses (Year 2)
- Library book boxes with fiction and non-fiction books
- High quality texts to support English teaching

Inclusion

We endeavour, where possible, to ensure that quality first teaching allows children to have their needs met. Teachers set high expectations for all children. They will use appropriate assessment to set ambitious targets and plan challenging work for all groups, including:

- More able children
- Children with low prior attainment
- Children from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Children with SEND
- Children with English as an additional language (EAL)

Teachers will plan lessons so that children with SEN and/or disabilities can study every area of the curriculum, wherever possible, and ensure that there are no barriers to every child achieving. Teachers will also take account of the needs of children whose first language is not English. Lessons will be planned so that teaching opportunities help children to develop their English, and to support children to take part in all subjects.

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When progress falls significantly outside the expected range, the child may have special educational needs. Intervention through Additional Support may lead to creation of individual targets which relate to English. Discussion between class teachers and SENCO through the use of one plans is used to create these targets.

Where appropriate, Learning Support Assistants can be used to assist children who may need further support. Learning Support Assistants are given clear guidance by class teachers to provide help and are trained in the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised programme.

Monitoring Arrangements

Assessment for Writing

Teachers assess children's work in English in three phases.

- Short-term assessments- that teachers make as part of every lesson help them to adjust their daily plans. They match these short-term assessments closely to the learning objectives. All children are encouraged to make judgements about how they can improve their own work through the use of success criteria. These short term assessments are focussed so that children are aware of their immediate next steps to improve their writing. The feedback can be written or verbal. If feedback is written, it must be concise, relevant and in line with the Marking Policy.
- Half termly assessments- Teachers use assessments each half term to measure progress against the key objectives of writing, and to help them plan for the next unit of work. All class teachers have a copy of appropriate assessment criteria taken from their programmes of study to assist with this. EYFS use EYFS statutory framework, Year 1 use a curriculum assessment criteria and Year 2 use the end of KS1 Framework to assess progress. Children's independent work should form the basis of half termly assessments.
- Long term assessments- Teachers make long-term assessments based on end of year tests or teacher assessments towards the end of the school year, and they use these to assess progress against school and national targets. With the help of these long-term assessments, they are able to set targets for the next school year, and to summarise the progress of each child before discussing it with the child's parents or carers. The next teacher then uses these long-term assessments as the planning basis for the new school year. Children in EYFS are assessed against the Early Learning Goals in Communication & Language and Literacy from EYFS statutory framework at the end of the year. Children in Year 2 do not sit the optional SATs, their work is judged by teacher assessment.

Teachers meet regularly (at least once a half term) to review individual examples of work against the national exemplification material in Year 2, curriculum assessment criteria in Year 1 and assessed against the Early Learning Goals in Communication & Language and Literacy from EYFS statutory framework and national exemplification material in EYFS. Teachers complete regular internal and external moderation.

Reading/Phonics

It is the responsibility of the class teacher to assess children's reading at least once every half term.

Summative assessments are uploaded onto the Assessments tracker for Reception and Year 1. These are used:

- to generate visual reports (pupil heatmaps, pupil trends and books levels, and a summary analysis) for individual children, classes and whole year groups

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- by teachers, English Leader and SLT who drill down and look at the data at GPC, word, tricky word and sentence level
- by SLT to scrutinise and plan how to narrow the attainment gaps between different groups of children and to put in place any additional support for teachers.
- If children are not on track then more frequent assessment occurs.

Fluency assessments measure children's accuracy and reading speed in short one-minute assessments. They are used:

- in Year 1 and Year 2, when children are reading the Phase 5 Set 3, 4 and 5 books
- for children in Year 2 and above who are taught Little Wandle Fluency. These assessments identify the best Fluency book level for each child. We assess the children every term (every 12 weeks or so).

A **placement assessment** is used:

- with any child new to the school in Reception and Year 1 to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and to plan and provide appropriate extra teaching.

Statutory assessment

Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics Screening Check. Any child not passing the check resits it in Year 2.

Links with Other Policies

The English Policy has links with the marking policy, handwriting policy, and any other policy where reading, speaking and listening and writing is a key skill.

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