

# ST JOHN XXIII CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL



## English Policy

## **St John XXIII English Policy**

This policy describes our aims and our practice in the teaching of English: reading, writing, spelling, grammar and speaking and listening. It is defined by current national guidance on best practice, in-service training, staff discussion and professional judgement.

### **Aims for our policy:**

- ❖ To provide a language rich environment that promotes a culture of reading and writing;
- ❖ To develop in pupils a love of books and high-quality literature that will not only support their learning across the curriculum, but also extend beyond the classroom environment and enrich their lives;
- ❖ To explicitly teach reading skills throughout the school that continually develop children's understanding and enjoyment of texts;
- ❖ To teach children the craft of writing in order to develop the confidence and skills to write well for a range of purposes and audiences;
- ❖ To teach the basics – spelling, grammar, handwriting and punctuation – well so children have all the necessary tools;
- ❖ To foster in pupils the confidence, desire and ability to express their views and opinions both orally and in writing;
- ❖ To value and celebrate diversity in culture and language.

## **Planning – Learning and Teaching Strategies**

Knowledge, understanding and skills are taught daily within the English lesson. Lesson planning is guided by the St John XXIII Literacy Curriculum, which is modelled on the work of the 2014 National Curriculum, leading literacy consultants and organisations such as the National Literacy Trust and the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education. Teachers plan in modules towards a longer writing outcome that is linked to reading, drama and other shorter writing tasks. As much as possible, writing is linked to the termly class topic and therefore the wider curriculum. There is a balance between fiction, non-fiction and poetry and an emphasis on whole texts rather than extracts and worksheets.

Teachers use a variety of interactive teaching methods to deliver the curriculum and achieve set learning objectives.

Teaching and learning takes place within a whole class setting and, in the main lesson, differentiation is by outcome and through setting different expectations. However the teacher will lead smaller ability led guided reading and writing groups of approximately six children during the lesson. Within guided groups, teachers move children forward by focusing specifically on reading and writing issues which are particular to that group of children.

Teachers are also expected to plan time within certain writing lessons for children to reflect on their marked work, and independently respond to teacher prompts to improve their writing.

## **Speaking and Listening**

At St John XXIII, we believe that speaking and listening form the foundations of all learning in English. In formal and informal situations, we create and facilitate opportunities for conversation, discussion and talk around learning. Questioning forms the basis of our teaching and we strongly encourage children to be inquisitive and to share their thoughts confidently in a supportive environment.

## **What does this look like at St John XXIII?**

- ❖ Questioning and taking risks with language;
- ❖ Presenting in-front of an audience;

- ❖ Reciting and reading aloud;
- ❖ Re-telling, role-play and drama productions ;
- ❖ Listening to and participating in stories, poems, rhymes and songs;
- ❖ Drama activities to enliven and enrich children’s understanding of character;
- ❖ Talking the text – opportunities for children to talk about and discuss their reading and writing;
- ❖ Debate;
- ❖ Collaborative work and reporting back following group work;
- ❖ Presentations.

## **Reading**

Our priority is both the teaching of reading skills and the enjoyment of literature, enabling children to become lifelong, confident readers. As children begin to read, we focus on decoding, primarily through phonics in addition to other strategies e.g. whole word recognition, rhyme and context. As children build fluency, comprehension skills become our main area of focus and questioning looks at skills such as re-telling, inference and prediction. We believe that high-quality literature is key to motivating children to read and instilling in children a love of literature and children throughout the school are read to at the end of each and every day.

## **What does this look like at St John XXIII?**

### **The teaching of reading**

- We have a structured early learning programme. The teaching of early reading skills begins in the Nursery. A wide selection of early reading books are banded into the PM Benchmark ‘colour steps’ and children progress through these, hopefully ‘off the scheme’ by the age of 7;
- Children are taught during shared and guided group sessions using structured and repetitive ‘big books’ and guided reading texts in ability groups;
- Teachers and teaching assistants also read on an individual basis with children: how often is based on assessment of progress;

- Teachers and teaching assistants assess children's progression in reading regularly using the PM Benchmark scheme. A percentage result indicates whether the child is secure at that level and thus ready to move up;
- Phonics is taught systematically from the Nursery following the Jolly Phonics and Letters and Sounds 'phased' programme. Children have regular short whole class sessions until the end of Year 2, learning sounds, actions and letters , games and activities to support sounding out, segmenting and blending for reading and writing;
- Those children who are not making progress are withdrawn for one to one support;
- We are flexible with our use of scheme books. If a child is 'stuck' at a level and losing motivation, we will always look for alternatives, for example read aloud plays, to re-ignite enthusiasm.

### **Developing a love of reading**

- ❖ We do masses of reading across the curriculum: topic books, news articles, class magazines etc.;
- ❖ We have a dedicated library area in each classroom;
- ❖ We set up visits to the local library
- ❖ All class teachers are encouraged to read a class novel at the end of day. Much thought goes into the selection of texts;
- ❖ Teachers are supported in these choices by a group called 'Tried and Tested' where staff meet to discuss good books;
- ❖ Lots of talk and discussion about reading in a variety of contexts, both formal and informal;
- ❖ We have an annual Scholastic school Book Fair and we celebrate World Book annually with a week of activities celebrating our pupils' love of books.

Children are expected to read every night at home, writing in their reading record books to share ideas about books and to keep a record of what they are reading. This is monitored daily by support staff who feedback to class teachers if it is not happening.

## **Writing**

At St John XXIII we strive to create an environment that will promote both reading and writing. Teachers carefully plan writing to link to the termly topic, ensuring that there is a purposeful outcome to each piece of writing. In order to ensure that all pupils learn to be confident writers we encourage children to write creatively whilst teaching key writing skills explicitly and systematically. Writing takes place daily within English lessons and in other lessons is linked to the wider curriculum. Extended writing is encouraged and developed at all times.

### **What does this look like at St John XXIII?**

- ❖ A purpose and audience for each piece of writing is decided from the outset;
- ❖ Writing is displayed all over the school;
- ❖ We provide stimulating first hand experiences e.g. trips;
- ❖ Writing is taught as a sequenced activity;
- ❖ Teachers provide regular helpful feedback through marking
- ❖ Time is planned into lessons for children to respond to literacy marking and feedback;
- ❖ Writing is, in the main, linked to class topics to promote engagement;
- ❖ We ensure progression in complexity of tasks and reading material year on year;
- ❖ We build stamina for writing by providing opportunities to write for extended periods;
- ❖ Some pieces will be 'published' i.e. re-drafted in neat and displayed on classroom walls;
- ❖ Responsive marking is carried out as a way for children to respond to writing.

## **Spelling**

Understanding how to spell correctly is important in supporting children to organise their thinking around language. Knowing how to apply spelling rules and recognising key words is empowering for children. Spellings play a significant part of standardised assessment and is taught throughout the school. At Lower Phase, a new spelling rule or phonic sound is introduced weekly and relevant spellings taught e.g. through mnemonics, word sorting and spelling games.

## **What does this look like at St John XXIII?**

- ❖ Lower Phase pupils work are encouraged to 'have a go' in their first drafts and refer to class word banks when writing;
- ❖ We use the 2014 National Curriculum as a guideline as to which spellings should be taught in which year group. In addition to this, Lower Phase focus on high frequency 'tricky' words;
- ❖ From Year 2 upwards, children have personalised spelling banks in the back of their literacy books where they add words that they have spelt incorrectly;
- ❖ Children practise three spelling corrections in their literacy books - chosen by their teacher as 'ones they should know' - as part of their response to marked work;
- ❖ We link handwriting to common spelling patterns;
- ❖ Children learn to spell explicitly in weekly spelling lessons;
- ❖ From Year One, children are actively encouraged and taught to proof read their writing for spelling errors;

In addition to in-class focus on a spelling, the focus spellings are also given to children as part of their homework;

- ❖ Children learn spellings for weekly spelling tests;
- ❖ Support staff use a system of repetitive over learning called 'Precision monitoring' to support those children who need extra help.

## **Handwriting**

We place value on children taking pride and care over their work and handwriting is a key part of this. In the early years there is a big emphasis upon fine motor skills and we use a range of resources to practise these basic skills. This moves into correct letter formation with a focus on both upper and lower case letters.

## **What does this look like at St John XXIII?**

- ❖ We use the Collins Handwriting scheme as the basis for our teaching, which links handwriting to common spelling patterns;

- ❖ We take the view that handwriting should be taught little and often – at least 4 X 15 minutes in the Lower Phase and 2 x15 minutes every week in the Upper Phase;
- ❖ We use cursive script and encourage children to join their writing as soon as they are forming their letters correctly;
- ❖ Extra handwriting groups occur in classes throughout the school where the class team feel that additional handwriting support is needed.

## **Grammar**

An understanding of how to use grammar correctly, use relevant meta-language and identifying word classes and sentence types is taught both in the context of a piece of writing and explicitly in whole class work. Linked to the National Curriculum guidelines for year groups, grammar is taught and planned to fit in with relevant genres of writing.

## **What does this look like at St John XXIII?**

- We start with the basics of sentence construction including full stops and capital letters;
- Children begin to identify word classes early on (noun, verb, adjective, adverb);
- We follow the 2014 National Curriculum as guidance as to what is taught in each year group and from this, have devised a specific structure for our school detailing expectations year by year.

## **Inclusion**

We aim for all children to participate in mainstream lessons. Work is differentiated and extra support is in place for children with S.E.N. including a 'My Plan' and adult support. Where it is felt necessary, a pupil is withdrawn from class to receive specialist help from school devised intervention programmes, or support from the Language and Communication Service. We aim to provide a range of resources that reflect the diversity of culture and language within our school community and the wider local community.

## Appendix 1 - Assessment

### Formative assessment in Reading

- ❖ In Nursery and Reception, children are assessed in their early literacy development against the 'Development Matters' goals;
- ❖ From Year One onwards, teachers regularly set guided group reading targets and related objectives that are shared with children in this context;
- ❖ In Lower Phase, books are provided until a child reaches the level expected for their age. They can then make independent choices on the book they wish to read.

### Summative Assessment in Reading

- ❖ Year 1 take the end of year **Phonics** test in June;
- ❖ Children in Year 2 and Year 6 take end of Key Stage national tests which examine a range of reading comprehension skills;
- ❖ NfER Reading tests are carried out across the whole school. Children are tested at the beginning of school year. Tests are diagnostic, providing children with a reading age which takes into account their actual age at the time of testing and a standardised score with '100' being our goal for every child i.e. their reading is at an age appropriate level. Pupils giving cause for concern are tracked and re-tested in the Spring Term. All pupils are retested in the Summer Term. Full data sets are kept in the Head's Office and analysed against national patterns.

### Formative Assessment - Writing

- ❖ **Success criteria:** for every piece of written work, children are given differentiated 'Steps to Success' (success criteria) which they can use to help them reflect on the structure and language features of their own writing. These comprise of 4-8 specific criteria which will help to make the piece of work a success e.g. 'I have used a range of sentence openers' or 'I have used drop in clauses to develop my sentences'. These criteria are numbered

and the children are expected to code where they think they have used them in the text. There is an additional target in the steps to success that the child decides for themselves.

#### ❖ **Writing samples**

Each term a writing assessment week is identified. These are in November, March and June. Every class from Year One to Year Six carries out an agreed independent writing task in their Writing Assessment books. The sample is marked using the Ros Wilson Criterion Scale. Class teachers complete a class writing tracking sheet which shows previous attainment and expected attainment.

#### ❖ **Writing Targets**

Writing targets are formed through teacher assessment of extended pieces of (mainly independent) writing. These are then turned into Next Steps (NS) within literacy books: the detailed assessment of the termly writing sample may provide an overarching writing target in addition to this throughout the term. Children are then grouped in writing sessions linked to their writing targets and ability. These groups are fluid and assessment is regular.

### **Summative Assessment in Writing**

- ❖ Since 2013, final grades at both the end of Key Stage 1 and 2 in writing are teacher assessed. There is no external assessment of composition, however we routinely ask our Local Authority consultant to moderate our levels. As we do termly assessments these, along with the children's literacy books, help to form a profile for final teacher assessments at the end of Year 6;
- ❖ An externally set and assessed Spelling and Grammar ('SPAG') test take place in Year 6.