



How we teach English at Sheepscombe School

The overarching aim of the English National Curriculum is to promote high standards of language and literacy by equipping pupils with a strong command of the spoken and written word, and to develop their love of literature through widespread reading for pleasure. This document details how English is taught at Sheepscombe School.

At our school, English is taught through:

1. Phonics
2. Reading
3. Writing
 - a) Transcription: spelling and handwriting
 - b) Composition (including oracy and performance)

The knowledge and skills that our children learn in English lessons enable them to communicate their learning and thinking in other subjects across the curriculum, in performance and to our wider community.

1. Phonics

Aim:

Research shows that when phonics is taught in a structured way – starting with the easiest sounds and progressing through to the most complex – it is the most effective way of teaching young children to read.

We believe children who receive good teaching of phonics will learn the skills they need to tackle new words. They can then go on to read any kind of text fluently and confidently, and to read for enjoyment.

We know that children who have been taught phonics also tend to read accurately.

At Sheepscombe we use DfE validated school Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised scheme to support early reading. Starting in Little Lambs Nursery, children receive phase 1 phonics. In Reception children are taught phases 2-4 and consolidation units. In year 1 children are taught phase 5 and consolidate their phonics before moving on to spellings patterns.

Implementation:

- All staff are trained in the use of The Little Wandle scheme and use the 7 features of effective phonics practice.
- A phonics session will take 20-25 minutes following carefully the schema set out in the programme



- A 5 week teaching sequence is assessed at the end of 5th week (catch up sessions for new arrivals are used to close gaps and daily catch up takes place for children that need it)
- Data is analysed by staff and a catch up / reteach programme is implemented as part of scheme for children not on track; for the 20% who are exceeding Big Cat books are provided to offer stretch and challenge
- Children read banded books matched to the data provided by Little Wandle assessment. Where appropriate children taught in book band groups
- Each book is read 3 times a week with separate foci (decoding, prosody , comprehension)
- Schema involves 4 day sequence followed by consolidation session
- Homework sheets reinforce learning on a weekly basis
- Support provided by staff to parents to triangulate the use of the scheme
- Progress is rapid with blending starting from week 3 at which point a blending support book is sent home
- Letter formation takes place alongside each phonics session and in addition to this 10 minute daily sessions are used to rehearse and develop early letter formation

2. Reading

Aim

We believe that all children should have the opportunity to be fluent, confident readers who are able to comprehend and understand a wide range of both fiction and non-fiction texts. We want them to develop a love of reading, a good knowledge of a range of authors and be able to understand more about the world in which they live, through the knowledge they gain from texts.

We achieve this through a consistent approach of phonics and reading teaching throughout the school. We encourage a home school partnership which enables parents and carers to understand how to support the skills taught in school. Crucially, we believe we have created a reading culture where reading is enjoyed and its relevance appreciated. At the heart of this culture is our long-standing association with the Reading Teachers = Reading Pupils programme, run by the Cheltenham Literature Festival

Implementation:

- Our children are read to frequently by staff. Books are chosen from high quality fiction and non-fiction, much of which is recent. Staff align texts to topics in many cases, children's interests and there is the expectation that staff keep up to date with book reviews to select high quality, topical reading material. This is monitored by the English lead.
- We do not use a term on term reading curriculum, preferring to keep to use range of excellent texts and parts of texts that will enthuse children and keep teaching fresh
- Children are given access to whole texts through this whole class reading
- We have adopted the Aiden Chambers approach to reading, as set out in the Reading Teachers = Reading Pupils programme of which we are part, where children talk about what they like and don't like about a book, patterns they can see and questions they have



- Children in years 1-4 read at least once a week to a trained adult to develop fluency, language awareness, prosody and textual analysis. Target children will be listened to more frequently
- Reading ability is matched to the Big Cat book series which links in with our Little Wandle scheme to create continuity.
- In addition, children are encouraged to read widely outside this scheme to encourage breath, diversity and personal interests
- Our class libraries are regularly updated to provide new books, high quality reading material. This is often funded by FOSS (Friends of Sheepscombe School).
- Children in years 1-6 receive guided reading once a week. These lessons develop comprehension skills which are set out in our curriculum maps and shared with children in the form of AFL (Assessment for Learning) ladders (see below).
- The strands for these skills are –
 - Making sense of what I read
 - Retrieving facts
 - Reading between the lines
 - Explaining how a text is organised
 - Explaining how a writer uses language
 - Explaining the purpose of a text
- Children use AFL ladders in their lessons setting out the strands of their learning to provide a clear understanding of different reading skills and their progression
- Children are given access to outstanding authors on a regular basis, either through our involvement with the Cheltenham and Stroud literature festivals or by author visits to school
- Home – school reading links are established through our Reading Champions programme and the use of school-home-school reading records where children record their reads and staff and parents are able to communicate about reading (Year 6s record the number of books they have read)
- Our reading culture is in part created by our involvement in the RT=RP scheme in upper KS2
- Our reading culture is reinforced by well-read staff who make personalised reading recommendations
- Our reading culture means peer recommendation of excellent books is a frequent occurrence

Assessment and monitoring:

- The impact of reading is assessed continually and update on Insight
- The impact of teaching is benchmarked through these termly assessments of the children using NFER tests and teacher judgements
- These assessments are evaluated by the Teacher and by the Head teacher and English lead during pupil progress meetings
- Regular meetings between staff and the SENDCO are used to match interventions where necessary e.g. use of colour overlays, extra 1-1 reading, dancing bears and/or dyslexia screening where appropriate



Writing: Transcription – spelling

Aim:

There is the expectation that by the time children leave our school they should be able to spell accurately in line with the standards set out in the National Curriculum. Accurate spelling is an essential part of communication on paper and error correction evidence of an individual's pride in their work.

Implementation:

- From Year 1 onwards, spelling patterns and rules are taught and tested through the use of Spelling Shed.
- Whole class teaching of common exception words also takes place regularly
- Spellings are sent home on a weekly basis and practised in school
- Children are taught a 'tool box' of methods to support learning including syllable chunking, noting silent letters, highlighting sound patterns, multi-sensory approaches, etc.- these methods are shared with parents to support home-school learning

Assessment:

- Children are tested on a weekly basis on their set words
- Children are expected to learn to spell personalised spellings (see marking policy)
- Progress of spelling in written work is assessed using our progression maps on a continual basis
- Children are tested termly through NFER tests.
- Results are reviewed by the head, English lead, SENDCo and staff and interventions put in place where necessary

Writing - Transcription – Handwriting

Aim:

By the time children leave Sheepscombe in year 6 there is the expectation that they have joined, swift and neat handwriting of which they are proud.

Implementation:

- In Reception letter formation takes place alongside each phonics session using the Little Wandle font



- In addition to this, 10 minute daily sessions are used to rehearse and develop early letter formation
- From year 1 from September 2023 we will use the scheme developed by Debbie Hepplewhite [Debbie Hepplewhite Handwriting](#)
- Pen licences are awarded when hand writing is joined, swift and well presented.

Assessment:

- Handwriting is assessed against the national criteria laid out in our progression maps
- What hand writing should look like at a given phase of learning is shared with pupils

Writing -Composition

Aim

By the time a child leaves Sheepscombe in year 6, they are expected to be able to write for a range of purposes and different audiences. To have learnt how writing is a form of communication through which they can express their opinions, creativity, to inform and record information. Our curriculum is built around the stepping stones needed to get to this point.

Implementation:

- Teachers at Sheepscombe use the research it (acquire the success criteria and information necessary to write a text); write it; improve and edit it; publish it sequence to create continuity through the school
- Sentence skills are taught through Sheepscombe sentences (an adaptation of Alan Peat sentence progression)
- SPAG skills are taught discretely and reinforced in whole text writing.
- High quality texts are frequently used as a spring board for writing
- Teachers regularly used the look at one, share one, write one model
- Our curriculum maps are used to set out the word, text and sentence level skills expected of each age group
- This is triangulated with children through the use of age-related writing AFL ladders
- Based on the research of the EEF, a significant amount of writing, incorporating our topics, is used to make writing relevant to our children
- Children are given regular opportunities to write independently (in KS1 and Early years, weekly 'news writing' and through choice in child initiated learning; in KS2 Pobble, Literacy Shed, real life stimuli etc)
- Early years writing also uses 'Greg Bottrill drawing club' to expand opportunities for writing at this stage [Drawing Club - "CAN I GO AND PLAY NOW..?"](#)

Assessment and monitoring:

- 1) We assess writing on a continual basis against our progression map criteria set out on Insight



- 2) We conduct termly book looks to moderate assessments and provide a critical friend culture
- 3) We use local cluster moderation events to bench mark our work
- 4) Pupils peer assess their work regularly

Working with authors:

Direct involvement with authors inspires children to write and provides role models that the children can relate to. To this end, we ensure that children get to work with an author at least once a year. This might be through our involvement with the Cheltenham Literature Festival, the RT=RP project or inviting authors into school

Oracy and Performance

Aim:

Research shows that high quality talk and opportunities to perform raise standards and build confidence (EEF 2019). To this end we build opportunities into the curriculum for children to develop vocabulary, to share their ideas through conversation and to perform within school and across wider communities.

Implementation:

Opportunities for performance include:-

- Dragon's Den pitches
- School assemblies
- The Nativity
- The School Summer Musical (whole school)
- The Stroud Mock trials (Upper Key Stage 2)
- RT=RP Everyman Theatre Event

The Mad Hatter's Cake Eating Book Club, reading their work on stage to author Katya Balen in 2022.

