



# Downlands Community School

## English Policy

### January 2024

#### **Mission Statement**

At Downlands Community school, we aim to inspire the imagination of children through a love of creative writing and reading for pleasure. We encourage children to develop their own natural voice through writing in different styles and develop their understanding of the real and imaginary world through reading. Children are encouraged to explore language and develop their understanding of vocabulary through the exploration of a range of texts. We strongly believe that 'If you can say it - you can write it'. Therefore, we encourage children to verbally share ideas and use discussion to develop sentence structure and help plan their writing. We prompt both a love of writing and reading and hope to inspire literary passion in all children.

#### **Aims for all pupils:**

- to enable children to speak clearly and audibly, and to take account of their listeners;
- to encourage children to listen, in order to identify the main points of what they have heard;
- to show children how to adapt their speech to a wide range of circumstances and demands;
- to teach children effective communication, both verbal and non-verbal, through a variety of creative mediums;
- to help them to become confident, independent readers, through an appropriate focus on word-, sentence- and text-level knowledge;
- to develop enthusiastic and reflective readers, through contact with challenging and substantial texts;
- to foster the enjoyment of writing, and a recognition of its value;
- to encourage accurate and meaningful writing, be it narrative or non-fiction;
- to improve the planning, drafting and editing of their own written work.

## **8 Classroom routines to establish:**

1. Everyone can learn to speak, write and read;
2. If 'you can't do it', 'you can't do it yet';
3. Mistakes are valuable (it is ok to make mistakes);
4. Creativity is important;
5. Everyone knows what makes a successful writer and reader (WAGOLL);
6. Everyone can use the skill of reading and writing across the curriculum;
7. Quality rather than quantity;
8. 'If you can say it, you can write it'.

## **Curriculum Design**

Teachers use the National Curriculum 2014 as a starting point for creating their medium term English plans. These medium term plans follow the five key aspects of English teaching: familiarisation with the genre and text type; capturing ideas; teacher demonstration; teacher scribing through supported and guided writing and finally, independent writing to create a teaching sequence. This is used as a basis for short term planning and adapted according to the needs of the children.

Clear objectives and success criteria are set for each session and are shared with pupils. Teachers differentiate according to the needs of the pupils and use intervention programmes for targeted support. Whilst we give children of all abilities the opportunity to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding, we also plan progression through subject intent documents, so that there is increasing challenge for the children as they move up through the school.

Children are taught the reading objectives (National Curriculum) during foundation subject lessons, English lessons and set guided reading. They explore and develop their fluency of reading through 'Sounds Write' -a systematic synthetic phonics programme - and move on to learn about the key comprehension skills using the 'PAWSOME Gang'. The reading dogs help children to develop their skills in retrieving, understanding vocabulary, using inference, summarising, commentating, predicting and deducing the impact of the author's voice. Children are encouraged to read on a regular basis at home with their parents and discuss the texts they are enjoying.

## **Handwriting**

It is our aim to encourage the progression and development of each child's handwriting throughout the schools into a fluent, legible and individual style that can be adapted for a range of purposes and will support their spelling and composition.

The school use the Twinkl cursive handwriting as our agreed writing style. This ensures that there is a continuity of handwriting style from Early Years Foundation Stage through to the end of Key Stage 2. It enables pupils to develop a neat approach with the added benefit of encouraging accurate spelling. Handwriting is explicitly taught

throughout the school and supported with fine motor activities ('finger gym' and 'dough disco') in FS1, FS2 and KS1 within the class and as an intervention in KS2.

### **Sounds Write**

Sounds Write is an expertly structured synthetic phonics programme based on the science of reading. This multisensory, code-oriented, comprehensive approach to literacy teaches children the key three areas of decoding text: segmenting, blending and phoneme manipulation. Children are taught the initial code in reception, extended code (units 1-26) in year 1 and extended code (units 27 - 49) in Year 2.

### **Lesson structure**

At Downlands School, we use a variety of teaching and learning styles, in our English lessons, in order to meet the needs of individual learners. Our principal aim is to develop children's knowledge, skills, and understanding of the English language. We do this through a range of activities including; guided reading and writing, shared reading and writing as well as providing many opportunities for independent learning. Children's learning in English is underpinned by literary sources from a variety of genres, which allows their learning to have cross curricular links and maximises enjoyment.

Children receive regular phonics teaching in the Foundation Stage and KS1 through 'Sounds Write'. In KS2, children receive frequent punctuation and grammar lessons within English which are taught alongside texts and writing outcomes. Children learn a spelling rule each week, which is practised at school and at home. Whilst there is a high proportion of whole-class and group teaching, the independent activity gives an opportunity to talk and collaborate in order to embed and enhance their learning. They have the opportunity to experience a wide range of texts, and to support their work with a variety of resources such as dictionaries, thesauruses and phonic paddles. Children are also provided the opportunity to write at length with both their assessed pieces of writing and weekly (KS1) and termly (KS2) 'Big Writes'.

Children are provided with appropriate resources to help support their development of English and ensure the curriculum is accessible to all. Children use ICT in English lessons where it enhances their learning, as in drafting their work and in using multimedia to study how words and images are combined to convey meaning. Children are encouraged to use and apply their learning in other areas of the curriculum.

### **Inclusion**

At Downlands Community School, English is taught to all children, whatever their ability and individual needs. English forms part of the overall curriculum offer, which provides a broad and balanced education. Through our English teaching, we provide learning opportunities which enable all pupils to make good progress. We support pupils with special educational needs, those with disabilities, those who are learning English as an

additional language as well as those working at greater depth and we use reasonable adjustments to achieve this.

The progress of children in English (reading, writing and spelling) is monitored through a variety of assessment methods. Where progress is less than expected, interventions are delivered to address gaps, using an Assess/Plan/Do/Review approach.

### **Feedback:**

- Oral and written feedback is provided to pupils according to the school's assessment and feedback policy;
- There is an emphasis on assessment for learning and ensuring that pupils engage with all forms of feedback given;
- Children are guided to improve their work through an editing process, self-assessing against the success criteria;
- Each independent write is assessed against the national curriculum objectives;
- The school engages with local and regional moderation activities to ensure that any formally assessed written pieces are accurately and fairly judged;
- Each child has a checklist of reading national objectives, which can be assessed during guided reading, whole class reading and independent 1:1 reading. These objectives are used to plan the guided reading.

### **Subject Development**

Teachers continue to plan using the Assess/Plan/Do/Review approach to ensure their literacy lessons are relevant and fresh. Staff are given opportunities to attend training, observe lessons and engage in coaching in order to support the development of the English across the curriculum. English is a main curriculum area and its development is at the core of our school development plan. Actions and plans are reviewed throughout the school year during SEF weeks on a Assess/Plan/Do/Review two year cycle. Monitoring consists of book looks, pupil voice activities, learning walks, team planning, team teaching, coaching conversations and pupil and parent surveys. All of these activities help to consistently improve and promote the English curriculum.