



Downlands Community School

English Policy

November 2025

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 to deepen 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.

At Downlands, children are taught at their stage, not their age, ensuring that every learner receives the right level of challenge and support to make progress as a writer and reader.

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 promote 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. 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.

Children are taught the reading national curriculum objectives during topic 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 'PAWSOM 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 school into a fluent, legible and individual style that can be adapted for a range of purposes and will support their spelling and composition.

EYFS use the Squiggle Me Into A Writer Programme, which uses gross motor movements and repetitive practice to help form letters correctly. Key Stage One and Key Stage Two then progress to use the Twinkl cursive handwriting style (see below). This ensures that there is a continuity of handwriting style from the Early Years Foundation Stage through to the end of Key Stage 2. It enables them to develop a neat style with the added benefit of encouraging accurate spelling.

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, 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 (Key Stage One) and termly (Key Stage Two) 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. We encourage children to use and apply their learning in other areas of the curriculum.

Inclusion

At our school, we teach English to all children, whatever their ability or individual needs. English forms part of our broad and balanced curriculum, ensuring that every child receives a high-quality education and the opportunity to make good progress.

We recognise that children develop their writing skills at different rates, and therefore we teach and support pupils according to their *writing stage*, not their age.

The writing stages used in our school are: **Early Writer**, **Novice Writer**, and **Growing Expertise Writer**. Children are supported within these stages through a range of tailored strategies, including writing scaffolds, targeted teaching assistant (TA) support, small group work, visual and auditory aids, and carefully designed tasks that meet their specific writing needs.

Pupils who are identified as Early Writers within Key Stage 2 may, depending on their needs, receive additional English support in a small group setting to help them build confidence and fluency.

We provide support for all pupils, including those with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), those who are learning English as an additional language (EAL), and those working at greater depth. We take all reasonable steps to ensure that every learner is able to access the curriculum and achieve success.

The progress of children in English—across Reading, Writing, and Spelling—is closely monitored through a range of assessment methods. Where progress is less than expected, interventions are implemented using an Assess-Plan-Do-Review approach to address individual gaps and next steps in learning.

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.