



## *English Policy*

### **Vision statement**

#### **Our Vision**

"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

Matthew 5:14-16.

We believe that everyone is precious and loved by God.

We aspire to let our light shine in all that we do.

We nurture and empower one another to flourish.

Together we shine in our world by showing compassion and by serving others.

Let God's light shine through us.

#### **Our Mission**

St Mary's is a small, caring Church of England Primary School. It is committed to supporting our pupils to be happy, successful and fulfilled throughout their lives. We believe that everyone is precious and loved by God. We aspire to be a high achieving school that provides an excellent education:

- promoting the high standards of teaching and learning
- being inclusive, celebrating diversity and valuing all religions, faiths, cultures and backgrounds
- providing a rich and stimulating curriculum that will inspire and challenge
- being a happy, healthy and safe school
- providing excellent care, guidance and support with a strong partnership between school, parents and the community.

We seek to promote six Christian values of wisdom, hope, peace, compassion, love and thankfulness, each linked by our school vision and bible verse. We believe these help to prepare our children to show the "St Mary' Way" and to live a successful and fulfilling life being:

- considerate and respectful with excellent manners
- confident, happy, independent and self-motivated
- co-operative and collaborative
- honest and trustworthy
- resilient, hardworking and determined
- highly principled with moral, spiritual, cultural and social awareness, including shared British Values.

### **Rationale**

This policy describes our practice in the teaching of English: reading, writing, phonics, spelling, grammar, punctuation and oracy. It is defined by current national guidance on best practice and it contributes to the school's philosophy of teaching and learning as expressed through the Mission Statement.

It has been revised in Autumn 2022 in light of our school priority of improving the quality of teaching and learning in reading across the school.

We strive to produce children who are fully literate and articulate, and are prepared for their secondary education and later life. Through engaging lessons, we aim to foster a love of English and language and an enjoyment of learning. We challenge children of all abilities and in order to make good progress in all areas of the English National Curriculum. They are encouraged to have a growth mind-set and to develop the skills of perseverance and resilience. Through reading in particular, pupils are given a chance to develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually.

## **Aims**

- create fluent readers and writers with all the skills and knowledge they need to be confidently literate in life
- make sure our students leave St. Mary's with a life-long reading habit and a love of books for both pleasure and information
- develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information
- acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language
- appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage and cultural capital
- ensure children progress to write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting their language and style in and for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences
- use discussion in order to learn; they should be able to elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas

## **Planning**

Lesson planning is modelled on the work of the 2014 National Curriculum, leading literacy consultants and organizations such as the National Literacy Trust and the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education 'Power of Reading'.



Wherever possible, writing is linked to the wider curriculum, e.g. history or science. Editorial skills needed for writing (spelling, grammar, punctuation and handwriting) are taught within real contexts wherever possible and teachers plan creative and relevant links to their class topics as a stimulus for writing. There is a balance between fiction, non-fiction and poetry with an emphasis on whole texts rather than extracts and worksheets.

## **Oracy – learning to talk and learning through talk**

At St. Mary's, we believe that language provides the foundation of thinking and learning and so ensure that all classrooms are language-rich, with children engaged in high-quality dialogue. We create structured opportunities for meaningful 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.

Much of our teaching is dialogic, so that children are actively involved in their learning, with a range of strategies used for checking understanding and taking responses such as pick sticks, talk partners and cold-calling. Through oracy, children learn how other people make sense of the world, how language is used to reason, how emotions and identities are expressed, and how to work together to solve problems.

## What does oracy look like at St Mary's?

### Across the school:

- Use of class discussion and talk partners.
- Listening to and participating in stories, poems, rhymes and songs.
- Use of sentence-stems to scaffold oral responses in class.
- Questioning across the curriculum (Bloom's taxonomy).
- Reciting and reading aloud.
- Drama activities to enliven and enrich children's learning (Power of reading strategies)
- Re-telling and role-play.
- Opportunities for children to talk about and discuss their reading and writing.
- Debating.
- Collaborative work and reporting back following group work.
- Presenting in front of an audience.
- Promotion of key and enhanced vocabulary (word aware strategies).

### Reading

Our priority is both the teaching of reading skills and the enjoyment of literature, enabling children to become lifelong, confident readers. We know that for all our children to become fluent readers and writers, phonics must be taught through a systematic and structured phonics programme.

We use the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised programme to plan and provide daily engaging phonics lessons. All staff (teachers and teaching assistants) are involved in the teaching of phonics are fully trained in this scheme and receive regular updates as needed. In phonics, we teach children that the letters of the alphabet represent sounds, that these can be used in a variety of combinations and are put together to make words. The children learn to recognise all of the different sounds and combinations that they might see when they are reading and writing.



We also model these phonic strategies in shared reading and writing both inside and outside of the phonics lesson and across the curriculum and school.

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 a high quality story at the end of each and every day.

Children are expected to read every night at home and take home a phonically decodable book that matches the sounds taught in school, as well as one or two shared reading books to enjoy with adult support. In younger classes, children write in their reading records to share ideas about books and to keep a record of what they are reading.

## What does reading look like at St Mary's?

### The teaching of reading in EYFS:

- In Reception, children follow the progression within the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised programme. Phonics is taught daily with regular review sessions.
- Children in Reception apply their phonics knowledge by using a full matched decodable reader in a small group reading practice session.
- The children then take the same book home to ensure success is shared with the family, alongside a 'Shared Reading' book to enjoy with adult support.

### The teaching of reading in KS1:

- Y1 phonics continues through the Little Wandle progression
- Children in Year 1 continue to apply their phonics knowledge by using a full matched decodable reader in a small group reading practice session.
- The children then take the same book home to ensure success is shared with the family, alongside a 'Shared Reading' book to enjoy with adult support.
- Children are also taught during shared and guided group reading using structured and repetitive guided texts and short stories.
- Teachers, teaching assistants and volunteer readers read on an individual basis with children as necessary
- In the autumn term of Y2, Phase 5 phonic lessons are recapped in daily lessons with the class – following the model of Little Wandle and plugging specific gaps identified through assessment.

### The teaching of reading in KS2:

- Teachers and teaching assistants continue to monitor children's reading progress through a combination of reading practice.
- Guided and whole class reading practice takes place daily in KS2 classes. The teacher and teaching assistant read with a focus group and the wider class complete a follow up activity and reading for pleasure.
- Opportunities for independent reading are provided to encourage children to develop reading stamina and reading for pleasure.
- Phonic strategies continue to be taught and referred to when reading and writing.
- Children who continue to need phonics support following the model of Little Wandle and plugging specific gaps identified through assessment and taught in intervention/booster lessons.



### Developing a love of reading

To ensure children leave us with a life-long reading habit and a love of books, reading for pleasure is prioritised across the school and books are central in our classrooms and teaching.

- Rich and varied opportunities for reading are provided across the curriculum: topic books, news articles, blogs, class magazines, specific websites etc.
- Storytelling forms a key part of our teaching and we have a group of favourite storytellers who visit regularly.

- We have a dedicated book corner area in each classroom where high-quality, appealing, diverse books are readily available.
- Class teachers read a class novel at the end of a day. Much thought goes into the selection of texts to ensure exposure to high level vocabulary and exciting plotlines.
- We hold book fairs and always celebrate World Book Day.
- Teachers also promote reading competitions and challenges such as the Islington Reading Road Map and Summer Reading Challenge.

## **Writing**

At St. Mary's, we strive to create an environment that will promote both reading and 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.

In class, teachers plan structured shared reading and write model pieces so children understand the characteristics of different genres. Additionally, for each piece, children are taught a suitable grammar concept which helps them to write accurately and learn the correct terminology to discuss writing with precision.

### **What does writing look like at St Mary's?**

#### **Across the school:**

- A purpose and audience for each piece of writing is decided from the outset.
- We provide stimulating first hand experiences, e.g. trips, storytellers and drama.
- Writing is taught as a carefully sequenced activity.
- We ensure progression in knowledge, complexity of tasks and expectations year on year.
- Genres are chosen to match the writing expectations from the National Curriculum and build on prior learning.
- We build stamina for writing by providing opportunities to write independently and for extended periods.
- Editing and reviewing form a large part of lesson time – with age-appropriate strategies for green-pen response marking used across the school.
- Peer marking is encouraged as an additional 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 and allowing them to exercise their long term memory. Spelling plays a significant part of standardised assessment and is taught throughout the school. We use the 2014 National Curriculum as a guideline as to which spellings should be taught in which year group.

## What does spelling look like at St Mary's?

### The teaching of spelling in EYFS and KS1:

- In Reception, Little Wandle Letters and Sounds visuals are available on tables showing images to remind children of trickier digraphs they want to write.
- Children learn sounds and letters rigorously through the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds progression, which supports sounding out, segmenting and blending.
- Children having a go at writing by sounding out words and recording the sounds they hear.
- From Year 1 onwards, children follow National Curriculum's spelling guidance.

### The teaching of spelling in Y2-6:

- Throughout KS2, a spelling rule or new letter sounds are introduced weekly and relevant spellings are taught in class before being practised at home for a weekly test.
- Key word banks, high frequency words, dictionaries and word pattern visuals scaffold children as necessary.
- Where additional spelling support is needed, children work in small groups with an adult to reinforce spelling patterns, alongside their whole-class word lists.

## Grammar

An understanding of how to use grammar correctly, use relevant meta-language and identify 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 grammar teaching look like at St Mary's?

### Across the school:

- 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 and adverb) and use this understanding in their writing.
- 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.
- We link our grammar lessons with the texts we read in English lessons and sometimes we teach it during separate SPAG sessions

## Handwriting & presentation

We place value on children taking pride and care over their work and handwriting is a key part of this. Having a fluent, comfortable handwriting style is crucial for children to develop writing stamina and feel proud of their work. In EYFS, 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 handwriting look like at St Mary's?

#### Across the school:

- We use Nelson handwriting scheme as a basis for our teaching, which builds a consistent style across the school.
- We take the view that handwriting should be taught little and often – at least 2 X 15 minutes in Key Stage One and at least once every week in Key Stage Two.
- Our end goal for all children is to have a fluent cursive script and so we encourage children to join their writing as soon as they are forming their letters correctly from Year 2.



#### Impact

The impact on our children is clear: progress, sustained learning and transferrable skills. By the end of KS2 the majority of our children have made considerable progress from their starting points in EYFS. With the implementation of the writing journey being well established and taught thoroughly in both key stages, children are becoming more confident writers and by the time they are in upper Key Stage 2, most genres of writing are familiar to them and the teaching can focus on creativity, writer's craft, sustained writing and manipulation of grammar and punctuation skills. Our children are also becoming more confident readers and they realise the importance of reading for pleasure along with reading for information.

As all aspects of English are an integral part of the curriculum, cross curricular writing standards have also improved and skills taught in the English lesson are transferred into other subjects; this shows consolidation of skills and a deeper understanding of how and when to use specific grammar, punctuation and grammar objectives. We hope that as children move on from us to further their education and learning that their creativity, passion for English and high aspirations travel with them and continue to grow and develop as they do.

Approved by teaching staff and senior leaders: Summer 2022

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