

# Our English Curriculum at St. Mary's Primary School

The national curriculum for English aims to ensure that all pupils:

- Read easily, fluently and with good understanding
- 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
- 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
- Are competent in the arts of speaking and listening, making formal presentations, demonstrating to others and participating in debate

## Intent

At St. Mary's Primary School, our intent is to provide an inspirational English curriculum for our children that allows them to develop into confident, creative writers, readers and communicators.

We understand that developing strong literacy skills in primary school plays a key role in the ability of children to successfully navigate the later years of their school life, and indeed, the years beyond education.

Here at St. Mary's, it is our aim to do this by immersing children in a fun, engaging curriculum that is tailored to their needs, responsive to the different speeds at which children learn and sensitive to the challenges that all children face on their learning journey.

Having a well-planned, carefully structured progression of skills that runs from the beginning of Foundation Stage to the end of Year 6 allows us to have high expectations of all children.

At the heart of this is the intention of all staff here at St. Mary's to instil a love of reading, writing and discussion in our children that will have a positive impact on their development during their time here and a lasting impact on their lives.

## Implementation

In all classes at St. Mary's, English lessons are taught in units that are planned around high-quality, challenging texts. The children are immersed in this engaging narrative (or non-fiction text), over several weeks, exploring characters, settings, storylines and themes. The writing skills developed in these lessons are carefully selected so that they form part of a whole-school skills progression. This allows children to master age-appropriate skills quickly and enables the teachers at St. Mary's to provide timely challenge or support where it is needed. The teaching of these skills takes place every day. Within these English lessons, teachers use the chosen text to analyse and model positive writing techniques through a huge variety of activities, challenges, discussions and games. The children adopt these skills and gradually learn to apply them in fun and exciting ways.

Grammar is taught within these lessons, carefully embedded in the units so that children learn the correct use of grammar while engaged in the class book. For example, they will learn about the use of inverted commas while

building conversations between their favourite characters. This avoids grammar being taught as a detached, abstract part of the writing process and helps children to retain what they have learned.

When giving feedback, teachers may use green highlighter in books so that children know what they need to do to make progress. They enjoy responding to these marking prompts in black pen (KS2) or purple pencil (KS1) as a part of their editing process. Anyone identified as working above or below age-related expectations is given support or challenges to help them take the next step on their learning journey.

Reading is an integral part of most English lessons at St. Mary's, but it is also taught in additional reading sessions that take place every day. Through whole-class discussions and shared reading activities, these guided lessons provide a deeper understanding of, what characters are thinking, how they are feeling and why they act the way they do. Through careful questioning, children learn how stories and non-fiction writing is constructed and in doing so, develop their comprehension skills and their ability to better understand and interpret the texts they read. Reading is fundamental to everything we do at St. Mary's. We are aware of the impact it has on the development of children in all subjects. Each classroom is equipped with an inviting reading area with a range of books, featuring different authors and genres. Additionally, our school library is well-stocked and use is encouraged by all staff. Our Year 6 Librarians, an exciting role desired by many, ensure that the library is cared for, organised and attractive.

At St. Mary's, we recognise the importance of the teaching of phonics and spelling, which happens daily across the school. We utilise the 'Essential Letters and Sounds' scheme, which is a Systematic Synthetic Phonics programme validated by the Department for Education, across Foundation Stage and KS1 to plan and deliver engaging phonics sessions. ELS is designed to teach children how to read through the act of decoding and blending. The programme teaches children the link between the sounds of our language (phonemes) and the written representation of these sounds (graphemes) or the spellings of the sounds contained within the English language. We regularly revisit the teaching of phonics across KS2 as the children move onto understanding spelling patterns through etymology.

We show pride in our work through our presentation; this is something that we care about at St. Mary's. In order to develop a consistent approach, we follow the Letter-join scheme across the school. This scheme, which covers all requirements of the National Curriculum, ensures accurate letter formation and neat presentation.

## Impact

By immersing children in high quality texts and focusing on skills and the enjoyment of English, children develop an enthusiasm for the subject. They enjoy talking about their favourite books, discussing the texts they're writing, and sharing their achievements with other children.

Children's books show that they continually adopt new writing skills as they progress through the school while drawing inspiration from the books they read in class. Children's writing is assessed regularly through regular extended pieces of writing. This formal assessment complements the day-to-day assessment that takes place in classrooms and in books.

Children are also encouraged to review, edit and assess their own work. Evaluating their own progress and comparing their writing to their displayed "best piece" in the classroom often feeds their eagerness to reach new targets and enables children to talk freely and enthusiastically about their next steps.

