



Bracken Hill School

English Policy

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Policy Type: Whole School

This policy is reviewed biennially to ensure compliance with current regulations

The Governors of the school recognise that all staff play a vital role in the achievement of high standards and in providing our pupils with the best opportunities matched to their needs.

INTENT

At Bracken Hill School, our English curriculum is designed to be inclusive, accessible, and engaging for all learners, recognising the diverse needs of our students across our three pathways – explorers, adventurers and pioneers. Our intent is to develop communication, language, and literacy skills in a way that is meaningful and functional, enabling every student to access learning at their individual level and make progress in their personal development.

We aim to:

- Foster a love of stories, language, and communication through a rich and varied curriculum that includes spoken language, reading, writing, and multi-sensory engagement.
- Provide a differentiated curriculum that meets the needs of all learners, ensuring appropriate challenge and support to maximize each student's potential.
- Develop functional literacy skills that support independence, confidence, and life skills, equipping students for adulthood.
- Use high-quality, engaging texts, including traditional tales, picture books, sensory stories, and real-life materials, to inspire curiosity and creativity.
- Support students' communication development through speech, sign (Makaton), and symbols, ensuring every child has a voice.
- Create a nurturing environment where students feel safe to take risks, explore language, and express themselves in ways that are meaningful to them.
- Embed a systematic, synthetic phonics approach using Pearson's Bug Club Phonics, ensuring a structured and engaging progression of phonics learning. This approach supports early reading skills through interactive, multi-sensory resources tailored to the needs of our learners.
- Provide additional interventions and scaffolding where needed, using Bug Club Phonics decodable texts and interactive resources to enhance reading fluency, comprehension, and confidence.
- Follow, as far as possible, the Development Matters and Early Learning Goals and the National Curriculum.

Our English curriculum is ambitious yet flexible, designed to celebrate each student's achievements while providing the foundational skills they need to access the wider world. Through a structured, holistic approach, we strive to empower our students to believe, achieve and enjoy.

IMPLEMENTATION

We implement our English curriculum through a carefully structured, inclusive, and multi-sensory approach, ensuring all learners, regardless of their needs, can develop essential communication, language, and literacy skills. Our curriculum is differentiated to support each of our pathways, providing engaging and meaningful learning experiences that promote progress and confidence in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

To achieve this, we:

- Deliver a structured phonics programme using Pearson's Bug Club Phonics, following a systematic, synthetic approach to phonics instruction. This ensures all students have access to a clear and progressive pathway for developing early reading skills.
- Use Bug Club Phonics decodable books and digital resources to provide interactive and engaging opportunities for students to apply their phonics knowledge in a structured way.
- Differentiate phonics instruction to meet individual needs, providing additional interventions, small-group sessions, and one-to-one support where necessary.
- Integrate multi-sensory teaching strategies, including visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic approaches, to support engagement and retention of phonics and literacy skills.
- Use high-quality texts, including traditional tales, picture books, sensory stories, and real-world materials, to foster a love of reading and enhance comprehension skills.
- Develop communication skills through a total communication approach, incorporating speech, Makaton, and symbols to ensure all students can access and express language in ways that suit their needs.
- Work with communication specialists and speech and language therapists to seek the best possible advice in relation to meeting the communication needs of our students.
- Embed writing opportunities in meaningful contexts, ensuring students can develop their fine motor skills, mark-making abilities, and written communication at a level appropriate to their ability.
- Promote a literacy-rich environment, with accessible books, visual supports, and immersive storytelling experiences to encourage engagement with reading and writing throughout the school day.
- Assess students' progress regularly, using formative assessments, teacher observations, ensuring that learning is tailored to individual needs and next steps are clearly identified.
- Provide Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 students with the opportunity to achieve a recognised qualification that reflects their progress, equipping them with essential literacy skills for life beyond school.

Through this structured and flexible approach, we ensure that all students, regardless of their starting point, develop the literacy and communication skills necessary for independence, confidence, and lifelong learning.

English is at the heart of our curriculum, fostering a love of reading, writing, and communication at every stage of our pupils' development. Our approach is carefully structured to meet the needs of all our learners, ensuring progression, engagement, and, most importantly, enjoyment.

Environment and Resources

Our English environment comprises physical setting and the atmosphere within a classroom. There are a range of reading areas set up across the school where children have opportunities to sit and enjoy books either by themselves or with others. These have been developed to instil a love of reading within our learners.

We aim to create an atmosphere that will enable children to gain confidence, make mistakes and learn from them, take risks, experience success and encourage curiosity. Teachers and staff will do this by techniques such as making mistakes and developing positive relationships to help children thrive on feedback and next steps in line with our marking and feedback policy.

In our settings, it is important that our classrooms are well equipped yet organised so that our learners can access resources they need to enhance their learning making them more independent, whether that is phonics mats or previous learning on a working wall. Our spaces must again meet the needs of the learners, some need stimulation for engagement while others will need calm to enable them to focus.

We encourage a vocabulary-rich environment where communication and language skills are nurtured. Each year, to celebrate World Book Day, classes design creative book-themed window displays, showcasing their enthusiasm for reading.

A huge strength at Bracken Hill School is a wealth of experienced teachers and TAs that are positive and happy to help everyone. They offer a wealth of creative solutions to any situations and sharing any professional development wherever they can. All staff need to have the knowledge for what they are teaching and if they don't, they must know how to acquire it, this will ensure children are taught correctly.

Early Reading

In our Explorers classes, children experience a rich variety of early reading opportunities. They listen to and sing songs, enjoy shared story times, and are surrounded by books in their environment. These foundational experiences cultivate a love for stories and language from an early age.

Phonics

Phonics is systematically taught across phases 1 and 2, and where appropriate, phase 3. We follow the Bug Club Phonics scheme, adapting it to suit the diverse needs of our pupils. Children are streamed within each phase to ensure they receive the right level of challenge and support. Our robust assessment framework identifies any gaps in learning, allowing targeted interventions to support progress.

Reading

We expose children to a diverse range of engaging fiction and non-fiction texts that align with their interests and developmental levels. Higher-level reading skills are embedded within English lessons, ensuring that texts are carefully chosen to match reading ability, comprehension, and engagement. Where possible, we link reading materials to other curriculum areas to enhance learning. Staff receive ongoing support and have the flexibility to adapt their approaches to best suit their pupils' needs.

Reading Scheme Books

These are located on shelves outside Thorsby Classroom. These books start with the decodable 'Bug Club Phonics' books and then move on to 'Independent Readers' books also from Pearsons. The older students are also encouraged to read using age-appropriate material such as magazines, comics, football cards or the computer. The school continues to research and source reading schemes for those older students who find it difficult to read but want topics that are appropriate for their age group and gender.

Fostering a Love of Reading

A love of reading is central to our ethos. Children have access to a broad range of books throughout the school. The library bus visits each half term, allowing children to select books for independent reading. Teachers also have access to the ELS to provide texts to support their teaching in English and other areas of the curriculum. Our classrooms are equipped with Yoto players, enabling pupils to listen to stories of interest, fostering independence and engagement with literature.

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Early Writing

We support early writing development through activities such as Dough Disco and mark-making opportunities. Pupils are encouraged to explore different ways of expressing their ideas through writing, developing both their fine motor skills and confidence.

Writing Development

As pupils progress, they are supported to develop both the physical skills required for writing and the quality of their written content. Children are given ample opportunities to unpick features of a range of text types and are then supported in writing in a range of styles which consider the range of text types. Talk for Writing is one of many approaches that are used across the school to support our learners in their writing. Our approach ensures that writing is purposeful, engaging, and meaningful to each learner.

Communication

Recognising the vital role of communication, we work closely with speech and language therapists and communication specialists. Communication books are consistently and effectively used where needed, alongside signs and symbols to support understanding and expression.

Application of Skills Across the Curriculum

Reading and writing skills are embedded throughout the curriculum. This cross-curricular approach ensures that pupils apply and reinforce their English skills in a meaningful way, deepening their learning and confidence.

Pupil Voice

We actively listen to our pupils. Regular pupil voice exercises provide opportunities for children to discuss their English work and share their reading experiences. Feedback shows that pupils enjoy their English lessons and can articulate what they have learned and enjoyed.

Accreditation and Qualifications

At Key Stage 4, pupils work towards OCR Entry Level English, providing them with a recognised qualification that reflects their progress. In Key Stage 5, pupils continue their journey by working towards Edexcel Functional Skills in English, equipping them with essential literacy skills for life beyond school.

Assessment

We are currently refining our assessment framework to ensure it accurately reflects the progression and expectations within our curriculum. These updates allow for deeper, more personalised learning journeys, ensuring that every small step of progress is recognised and celebrated. Within Key stage 4 and Key Stage 5 children work towards OCR Entry Level English and AQA Functional Skills in English (retrospectively). For those pupils who cannot access these accreditations, AQA Unit awards are worked towards.

IMPACT

The impact of our English curriculum is measured by the progress our students make in their communication, language, and literacy skills, ensuring they develop the confidence and ability to engage with the world around them. By implementing a structured, inclusive, and engaging approach, we empower students to reach their full potential in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

The success of our curriculum is evidenced through:

- Improved phonics knowledge and reading fluency, as students make measurable progress through Pearson's Bug Club Phonics programme, demonstrating increased confidence in decoding words and applying phonics skills in reading.
- Increased engagement with reading, as students develop a love for books and stories, accessing high-quality, age-appropriate texts suited to their individual needs and abilities.
- Enhanced communication skills, with students using spoken language, signing (Makaton), or symbols, to express their thoughts, needs, and ideas more effectively.
- Development of functional literacy skills, enabling students to apply reading and writing in real-life contexts, supporting their independence and preparation for adulthood.
- Personalised progress, monitored on Solar through ongoing formative and summative assessments, and teacher observations, ensuring every student is supported in their next steps.
- Increased confidence and participation, as students engage in literacy-based activities, storytelling, and discussions, demonstrating a willingness to communicate and interact with others.
- A literacy-rich environment that fosters curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, with students accessing books, print, and communication supports across all areas of school life.
- High-quality teaching strategies, ensuring that staff are well-equipped to deliver effective phonics, reading, and writing support, leading to sustained progress for all learners.

The ultimate impact of our English curriculum is that every student, regardless of their level of need, gains the essential literacy and communication skills to enhance their quality of life, access learning opportunities, and develop greater independence. Through our structured and nurturing approach, we ensure that literacy is not just a subject, but a tool for lifelong success.

The subject co-ordinators monitor progress in English through analysis of Solar data, test results, book scrutiny, long term planning and pupil interviews, learning walks and teaching observations.

The Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher also monitor progress in English.

All children will have the knowledge and skills they require to thrive in the modern world, as independently and confidently as possible.

EVALUATION

This policy will be review biennially – March 2027