



Bracken Hill School

English Policy

Authors: Mrs Bramley and Mrs Austin

Policy Type: Whole School

This policy is reviewed bi-annually 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, we believe that the acquisition and use of language and communication skills is essential to everyday life and underpins every subject of the National Curriculum and is present in all activities and Schemes of Work undertaken by our pupils. In return, other subjects offer opportunities and purpose for the reinforcement of these skills. The development of social and life skills presents the necessary practical contexts for the use of language in all its forms.

English at Bracken Hill aims to develop student's knowledge, skills and understanding across three main areas of learning: Reading, Writing and Communication, Vocabulary, Grammar and Punctuation. There is a real focus on developing children's understanding and application of skill to different situations and how important English is to everyday life. Learners are split into our three pathways and will be taught in different styles to meet the needs of those learners – Explorers, Adventurers and Pioneers. Experiences will be personalised to match the situations in which our learners will need their English skills.

At Bracken Hill School we follow, as far as possible, the New National Curriculum (2014) and the Early Years Framework where appropriate. It is recognized that the New English Curriculum goes much further than the previous curriculum. We also follow an accredited phonics scheme with learners that can access this, at a pace that suits their needs.

WITHIN COMMUNICATION, VOCABULARY, PUNCTUATION AND GRAMMAR

- Use Makaton signs and symbols as a means of pre-verbal communication.
- Use Makaton signs and symbols with specific hearing-impaired students to aid communication.
- Sit still and listen to others, take turns, be part of a group.
- Want to communicate with others and to enjoy being with other people.
- Communicate orally, clearly and appropriately, to a variety of audiences and in a range of situations.
- Have the ability to use oral language, in stressful situations, in order to avoid physical confrontation.
- Acquire those skills necessary for life during transition from and after school.
- Be aware and have experience of the use of Standard English.
- Develop awareness of using vocabulary for different reasons and in imaginative ways.
- Develop understanding of a range of punctuation in writing across the curriculum.
- Develop awareness of grammar in order to produce a variety of sentences and texts for different purposes.

WITHIN READING

- Read and comprehend Makaton symbols and respond to them.
- Specific hearing-impaired students to use and comprehend Makaton signs and symbols.
- Read and comprehend the written word, in book form or on the screen, and act upon it in a range of situations.
- Have access to a range of texts.
- Read accurately, fluently and with expression.
- Be aware of and read print in the wider environment in order to promote life skills and to keep safe.
- Enjoy reading and to use this skill in whatever area the pupils have most interest e.g. football, computers or dinosaurs.

WITHIN WRITING

(Writing is defined as the communication of ideas and information in written form. Handwriting and spelling are component skills in writing but do not together constitute the ability to write).

- Communicate meaning through the use of Makaton symbols.
- Communicate meaning through the use of pen or pencil to paper.
- Write legibly for a variety of audiences and purposes.
- Acquire those writing skills necessary for life during transition from and after school.
- Use a range of word processing packages.
- Use alternative means of mark making and writing if fine motor skills are very poor.
- Develop motor skills and mark making skills needed for handwriting through Write Dance intervention where appropriate.

WITHIN PHONICS

- To establish consistent practice, progressions and continuity in the teaching and learning of phonics and spelling throughout the school.
- To differentiate phonics and spelling work according to the needs of pupils, so that all pupils are given sufficient challenge at a level at which they can experience success.
- To give children word work strategies that will enable them to become fluent readers and confident writers.
- To develop sight reading skills if phonics is not appropriate for certain children.
- To develop concentration and attention skills.

IMPLEMENTATION

English is studied by all pupils at Bracken Hill School, from Foundation to Post 16. It is a core subject in the National Curriculum, a specific area in the EYFS and must be studied by all pupils up to Key Stage 4 inclusive. At Bracken Hill School English is also included in the Post 16 curriculum as part of their Life Skills and within the Functional Skills Awards.

Planning

Planning at Bracken Hill school begins by ensuring a good coverage of a broad English curriculum, split into the three areas although these overlap. Children are motivated through different methods and opportunities to include the Characteristics of Effective Learners (engagement, motivation and thinking) are identified and harnessed. Planning is sequential and skills build throughout lessons and over a series of lessons. Children will be given the time to revisit and practice the previously taught skills and knowledge so that learning becomes embedded. Where appropriate, mainly in phase 1 and 2, the use of topic specific books are used to encourage links across different areas of the curriculum.

Assessment to inform planning is key. Often our learners have had periods of absences which can often leave gaps in knowledge and understanding and our staff understand that in order to teach the next stage, the children have a good understanding of previous learning.

Teaching and Learning

In Phase 1, we aim to provide different styles of learning for different pathways – Explorers, Adventurers and Pioneers. Classes will generally have children that learn in similar styles although classes can have a mix of pathways.

Our Explorers learn in a way more reflective of the EYFS with lots of sensory and play-based learning, being active, creative and critical thinking. Activities will be engaging and where possible related to the topic and the children's interests. Adventurers will have an element of this style of learning but will also begin to move towards more focused and explicit learning, with an increased focus on independence and a more directed outcome. Lesson's will still be practical, active and engaging, and have lots of opportunities to build on skills and knowledge already obtained. Our Pioneers lesson should be more formal to achieve greater depth for many of our learners, with the application of their

skills and knowledge to a range of situations. Although classes can have a mix of students on different pathways, the learning styles of our different children will be carefully considered in the provision they experience.

In Phase 2, our learners are streamed into smaller groups, with some of our Year 9 students (working with in P12-18) to begin their GCSE in English. Our school focus on the Characteristics of Effective Learning (Engagement, Motivation and Thinking) will be applied to all of our learners and consideration for the style of learning needed will be paramount within each smaller group.

For our KS3, KS4 and KS5 learners we begin to consider the importance of qualifications to help prepare them for their lives and future employment.

Our learners are streamed at KS3 (phase 2) are taught in a more formal way than across phase 1. The essential English skills and foundations are solidified and then built upon in order to develop and apply skills and knowledge.

In Phase 3 (KS4), for learners working with P4 – P8 will follow the yellow pathway towards an OCR unit Awards in English, while our P8 – P18 learners will follow the blue pathway, with P9-P11 will begin working towards OCR Entry Level English and P12-P18 will begin work towards their OCR GCSE English.

In Phase 4 (KS5), our yellow pathway (P4 – P8) continues onto further AQA unit Awards and our blue pathway learners move on with our P9-P12 learners working at Edexcel's Entry Level and our P13-P18 learners working at Edexcel's Level 1 and 2.

COMMUNICATION, VOCABULARY, PUNCTUATION AND GRAMMAR

Pupils will be taught to: -

- Watch others and play copying games.
- Share and cooperate with others.
- Take turns.
- Use PECS and Makaton signs and symbols if appropriate.
- Listen to and discriminate everyday sounds.
- Listen to and discuss rhymes, stories and poetry.
- Listen for meaning and act upon what has been heard.
- Listen to and recall information.
- Listen attentively to speakers and respond appropriately.
- Follow oral instructions.
- Extend the range of vocabulary.
- Participate as both a listener and speaker/ pre-verbal communicator.
- Ask questions of a range of listeners.
- Speak to larger/ more varied audiences.
- State clearly personal details.
- Communicate individual needs in a comprehensible manner using a preferred method, to other children, teachers, parents, visitors etc.
- Use the telephone to obtain information.
- Be an effective participant in an interview situation.
- Accept and have experience of the use of Standard English as a means of wider communication.
- Use a range of punctuation marks in different contexts.
- Use a range of grammatical structures in different contexts.

NB Teachers will have regular meetings with the SALT (who visits the school once a week) in order to promote continuity in the development of oral or pre-verbal skills.

READING

Pupils will be taught to: -

- Share and have a love of reading.
- Acquire book-handling skills.
- Understand Makaton symbols and use them to develop reading skills.
- Know that print carries meaning and is read in English from left to right and top to bottom.
- Access a range of reading materials both within and outside school.
- Read social signs and notices.
- Develop a range of reading skills; including phonic, sight words, the use of context and picture clues.
- Gain information from non-fiction books and a range of sources.
- Say the alphabet.
- Be familiar with all types of print and have the ability to read, with fluency and comprehension, for pleasure and the acquisition of knowledge.
- Use the ability to read in practical social situations.
- Develop reading skills through the use of ICT.

WRITING

Pupils will be taught to: -

- Ascribe meaning to the marks they make and be encouraged to enjoy using mark making materials of all descriptions.
- Develop fine motor skills to develop pencil control.
- Form letters correctly.
- Write legible personal details.
- Think about what they want to say, before writing.
- Write independently in a legible manner.
- Find key words/symbols around the room and on key word charts.
- Spell correctly common usage and phonetically regular words.
- Write in simple sentences.
- Use alphabetical order.
- Use word banks, books and dictionaries.
- Use a spell check.
- Use simple punctuation appropriately.
- Where appropriate, to write independently for a range of purposes.
- Plan, draft and improve their work.
- Widen the range of understanding and the use of language through the use of ICT and other media.
- Develop writing skills through the use of word processing packages.
- Develop handwriting, mark making and writing skills through the use of Write Dance intervention.

HANDWRITING – the school does not use one single handwriting scheme as we believe that our pupils, who can find writing incredibly hard, need to be encouraged to want to write for a useful purpose and for enjoyment and to insist on a particular way of forming letters may de-motivate many of our children. Those children who do acquire the skills for writing are expected to write legibly and neatly but content and independence are considered more important than appearance. Pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties will be supported in developing their motor skills required for handwriting and mark making using early writing methods.

PHONICS

Pupils will be taught: -

- Systematically to follow a careful programme, reinforcing and building previous learning to secure children's progress in recognising grapheme-phoneme correspondences.
- To apply the highly important skills of blending (synthesising) phonemes in the order in which they occur, all through a word to read it.

- To apply the skills of segmenting words into their constituent phonemes to spell.
- That blending and segmenting are reversible processes.
- In a broad and rich curriculum with multi-sensory approaches where applicable, to enliven core learning.
- In phases that fit the child's ability and need for repetition, not their year group or age.
- For those who struggle to learn to read through phonics, the use of a sight-reading intervention to be in place.

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 as a way 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.

A huge strength at Bracken Hill School is a wealth of experiences teachers and TA's that are positive and happy to help everyone. They often offer a wealth of creative solutions to any situations and sharing any professional development where ever 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.

Big Books

Big books are stored in a cupboard near the resource room categorised into topics. The big books are used where teachers feel it is appropriate to the learning objectives and the pupils they are working with. The more complex pupils need individualised resources to encourage English skills.

Library Books

The school accesses the Education Library Service. Each pupil has a library book from the mobile library van, changed each half term. Teachers also have access to the ELS to provide texts for English lessons and also other areas of the curriculum to support their teaching and pupils' reading.

Reading Scheme Books and Support Materials

These are located on shelves outside Bestwood Classroom, although some teachers have class-based schemes. The type of pupils now attending Bracken Hill has changed over the last few years and it has become more apparent that one single reading scheme to cover all pupils is not appropriate. Teachers are encouraged to use their knowledge of a pupil to find the correct reading book that will develop confidence and motivation. Popular mainstream reading schemes such as 'Oxford Reading Tree' and guided reading packs are used where appropriate, but the school also uses a Makaton reading scheme, class made reading books and special interests to develop reading and language skills. For pupils being taught phonics through the 'Phonics Bug' scheme, there are reading books that coincide with this. The older students are 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.

ICT Resources

Software is kept in the ICT resource room or in classrooms. Every classroom has an interactive whiteboard and teachers are encouraged to use these and the numerous websites available to promote English skills and motivate students to learn and be active members of English sessions. Teachers also use the 'Smart Board' software to produce their own English resources.

Assessment

Children's work is marked and feedback in accordance with our school policy. As this is used consistently throughout school, children become very familiar with the Bubble and Block strategy, and become increasingly independent at responding to feedback.

Although teachers will use their own methods for their formative assessments, our school method is via SOLAR and should be updated at least once every half term to reflect the progress the children are making. This data is then used to identify any children, groups of children, or staff that are thriving or having difficulties and need support. This data is also used to identify any children in need of interventions. We also use moderation where we work within our phases and compare the children's work to ensure they are working at the level reflected on SOLAR.

We also have pupils that access various accreditations and qualifications at KS4 and KS5, see above, as part of our summative assessments.

Each pupil has an individual reading record and reading and early reading is carried out in a way that staff think appropriate for the child or young person.

Home Learning

Home learning is sent home weekly, and every third week should include an English focused activity. This should reflect previously taught learning and revisit skills or knowledge already approached in school. It is expected that this should be a shared activity and parents are highly encouraged to work with their children where possible.

IMPACT

The subject co-ordinators monitor progress in English through analysis of Solar data, test results, book scrutiny, long term planning and occasional 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 bi-annually – September 2024