



Milecastle Primary School

English Policy

Reviewed: January 2024

Introduction

At Milecastle, we believe that literacy and communication are essential life skills. Through the English curriculum we will help children develop the skills and knowledge that will enable them to communicate effectively and creatively through spoken and written language and equip them with the skills to become lifelong learners.

Literacy is at the heart of all children's learning. It enables children both to communicate effectively with others for a variety of purposes and to examine and give meaning to their own and others' experiences, feelings and ideas. As literacy is central to children's intellectual, emotional and social development, it has an essential role across the curriculum and helps pupil's learning to be coherent and progressive.

We want children to enjoy and appreciate literature and its rich variety.

Aims

The overarching aim for English in the National Curriculum is to promote high standards in language and literacy by equipping pupils with a strong command of the spoken and written word, and to develop their love of literature through widespread reading for enjoyment, both across the curriculum and at home. As a school, we aim to ensure that all pupils:

- read 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.

We also aim to:

- establish high expectations for teachers and pupils
- promote continuity and coherence across the school.

Implementation

At each Key Stage a detailed programme of study sets out what pupils should be taught. Lesson content is based on the National Curriculum for England (2014).

The programmes of study for reading at Key Stages 1 and 2 consist of two dimensions:

- word reading
- comprehension (both listening and reading).

The programmes of study for writing at Key Stages 1 and 2 are constructed similarly to those for reading:

- transcription (spelling and handwriting)
- composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech and writing).

Spelling, vocabulary and grammar are embedded within our programmes of study. Opportunities for teachers to enhance pupils' vocabulary will arise naturally from their reading and writing and, as a school, we aim to provide rich learning experiences where children's reading, writing, spelling and grammar flourish.

The programmes of study for English with the National Curriculum are set out year-by-year for Key Stage 1 and two-yearly for Key Stage 2. The single year blocks at Key Stage 1 reflect the rapid pace of development in word reading during these two years.

Spoken Language

The National Curriculum for English reflects the importance of spoken language in pupils' development across the whole curriculum - cognitively, socially and linguistically. Spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing. The quality and variety of language that pupils hear and speak are vital for developing their vocabulary and grammar and their understanding for reading and writing. Teachers should therefore ensure the continual development of pupils' confidence and competence in spoken language and listening skills. Pupils should develop a capacity to explain their understanding of books and other reading, and to prepare their ideas before they write. They must be assisted in making their thinking clear to themselves as well as to others and teachers should ensure that pupils build secure foundations by using discussion to probe and remedy their misconceptions. Pupils should also be taught to understand and use the conventions for discussion and debate.

All pupils should be enabled to participate in and gain knowledge, skills and understanding associated with the artistic practice of drama. Pupils should be able to adopt, create and sustain a range of roles, responding appropriately to others in role.

They should have opportunities to improvise, devise and script drama for one another and a range of audiences, as well as to rehearse, refine, share and respond thoughtfully to drama and theatre performances.

Aims

In a variety of contexts we aim to teach children to:

- justify ideas with reasons
- ask questions to check understanding
- develop vocabulary and build knowledge
- negotiate
- evaluate and build on the ideas of others
- select the appropriate register for effective communication
- give well-structured descriptions and explanations
- speculate, hypothesise and explore ideas
- organise their ideas prior to writing
- speak clearly and confidently
- articulate their views and opinions.

Guidelines

We teach that children need to express themselves orally in an appropriate way, matching their style and response to audience and purpose.

Pupils will experience a variety of opportunities to use talk for learning. These include:

- talking about their own experiences, recounting events
- participating in discussion and debate
- Talk For Writing strategies
- retelling stories and reciting poems
- expressing opinions and justifying ideas
- listening to stories read aloud
- the use of talk partners
- participate in School Council
- presenting ideas to different audiences
- taking part in school performances
- responding to different kinds of texts
- talking to visitors in school
- listening to ideas and opinions of adults and peers
- role-play and other drama activities across the curriculum
- using dramatic techniques, including work in role to explore ideas and texts
- creating, sharing and evaluating ideas and understanding through drama.

- expressing their opinions and sharing their idea with subject leaders

Reading

Teaching pupils to read is arguably the most important aspect of primary education, enabling children to gain insight into the powerful world of imagination and access to the full curriculum. Success in reading has a direct effect on the progress made in most areas of the curriculum; therefore it is crucial that we help children to develop their independence, self-confidence and motivation in reading.

Aims

We aim to create "readers for life" - children who develop a love of books, who enjoy reading and read for pleasure.

In developing children's reading skills we are aiming to:

- foster an enjoyment of books
- promote reading for pleasure
- cultivate successful, confident readers who are equipped with a range of strategies with which to decode print and interpret a wide variety of texts independently
- help every child to become a "reader for life"
- enable children to read fluently and with expression
- make reading meaningful
- develop imagination
- encourage children to be selective in terms of choice
- give them access to high quality texts
- help children to read for meaning, appreciating and understanding the ideas communicated in the reading matter
- help children to develop insights into the lives of others
- explore a range of emotions within the safe parameters of a story
- offer children the framework within which they can organise their experiences, sequence their ideas and communicate them to others
- encourage children to read in order to gather information
- develop the skills of skimming and scanning
- keep a profile of the child's reading development and to monitor and record progress at regular intervals
- help children to develop higher order reading skills, whereby they learn to infer and deduce meaning beyond the literal.

Guidelines

- To provide a rich and stimulating environment in which children have access to a wide range of books presented in an attractive and inviting way.
- To encourage parents to participate and share in their child's reading.

- To provide individual children with support to help develop their confidence and independence.
- To ensure there is a structured approach to the teaching of reading.
- To provide children with reading books at the appropriate level for their development and in particular to provide decodable reading books for children in the early years and key stage one.
- To ensure there is rigorous regular and ongoing assessment to identify individual needs.
- To provide opportunities for children to hear stories read aloud and to allow them to reflect upon their own experiences and the language of the text.
- To provide opportunities for children to ask questions about the text, retell the story and predict what will happen next.
- To help children to develop successful strategies for tackling print independently.
- To ensure that children have opportunities to discuss books they have read, express simple preferences and compare authors.
- To provide opportunities for children to read their own and other children's texts aloud to the class.
- To ensure that children have opportunities to read silently and to reflect critically upon their reading.
- To provide opportunities for children to find information in books and data bases and to be able to pursue an independent line of enquiry, sometimes drawing upon more than one line of enquiry.
- To provide children with opportunities to read different types of texts with different purposes and intended audiences, e.g. newspapers, advertisements, letters, etc.

Teaching of early reading and phonics: Early Years/Key Stage 1

Early reading and phonics are crucial in providing young children with the confidence and skills required to become lifelong readers. In the early years and key stage one, phonics and early reading are taught hand in hand. Phonics is taught using the Sounds-Write programme. This is a highly structured, synthetic phonics programme. As part of this programme the children will be taught to:

- understand the way the alphabet code works;
- learn the letters and letter combinations most commonly used to spell sounds;
- read words by sounding out and blending their separate parts;
- study written representations of a sound and how it looks;
- read and spell polysyllabic words;
- recognise on sight vocabulary identified as 'High Frequency Words'/ 'Every Day Words'.

Alongside this, children are provided with decodable reading books at the appropriate stage to their phonic development. These books are 100% decodable to ensure that pupils become confident, fluent readers.

Assessment is carried out regularly and any children requiring additional support are identified immediately. These children receive intervention sessions led by a trained teacher or teaching assistant. 'Keep-up' intervention sessions are used to support children identified through formative assessment in order to prevent them from falling behind. 'Catch-up' interventions are put in place to support children who require further teaching of already covered knowledge and skills.

In Early Years and Year 1, children read 1:1 with either a teacher or a teaching assistant at least once each week. Whole class reading begins in year 2. Children also continue to read 1:1 once each week with either a teacher or a teaching assistant. Once pupils are reading fluently, and have sufficient code knowledge they are able to choose their own non-decodable reading book (real book).

Key Stage Two

Similarly, the majority children in Key Stage 2 are given the responsibility of choosing their own reading books within an appropriate range. This helps to promote reading for pleasure and provides children with ownership over their own reading development. Children who still require teaching of phonics are taught in intervention groups led by a trained teaching assistant. Regular and thorough assessment of phonics continues. These children continue to receive decodable reading books for as long as necessary.

Whole school

Throughout school, reading is taught through modelled reading, shared reading sessions, whole class reading sessions, individual reading and opportunities to practise and consolidate skills through independent reading. During these sessions, teachers/teaching assistants will use a wide range of strategies to enhance the teaching of reading. Some of these are outlined below:

- modelling and discussing the features of written texts through shared reading of texts;
- giving direction to develop key strategies in reading;
- demonstration - e.g. how to use punctuation when reading, using a shared text, how to apply decoding strategies;
- explanation to clarify and discuss e.g. need for grammatical agreement when proof reading;
- questioning - to probe pupils' understanding of a text;
- investigation of ideas - to understand, expand on or generalise about themes and structures in fiction and non-fiction;
- discussion and argument - to justify a preference;

- provision of a wide range of fiction and non-fiction genres for the children to choose from.

Other initiatives ensure that children are provided with many additional opportunities to read within school, for example through additional 1:1 reading with an adult, reading buddies with older pupils supporting younger peers and the Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) initiative which promotes reading for pleasure. It is also essential that pupils read regularly at home and are provided with opportunities to select their own choice of texts, including ICT, and read in other subjects.

Intervention Strategies

Assessment of reading is rigorous and ongoing. Any children identified as requiring additional support have early interventions implemented by class teachers or teaching assistants.

Reading for Pleasure

Children are provided with a wide variety of activities and experiences to promote a love of literature and reading for pleasure. These include: family reading events; DEAR time; use of the school library; daily story time in every classroom; participation in national events, such as World Book Day.

Writing

At Milecastle, we believe that the ability to write with confidence and accuracy is an essential life skill. With this in mind, we aim to develop in children an extensive range of writing skills needed for effective participation in society. Writing is a complex process that draws upon more than handwriting and spelling. It is the ability to effectively communicate ideas, information and opinions through the printed word in a wide range of contexts. Skills, including grammar and punctuation, are explicitly taught in a systematic and rigorous way. We aim to equip children with the skills necessary to achieve this throughout the curriculum. The teaching of reading and writing are closely linked - we read as writers and write as readers.

The writing process breaks down into a number of steps that are taught and practised regularly:

1. planning
2. drafting
3. revising
4. editing
5. publishing

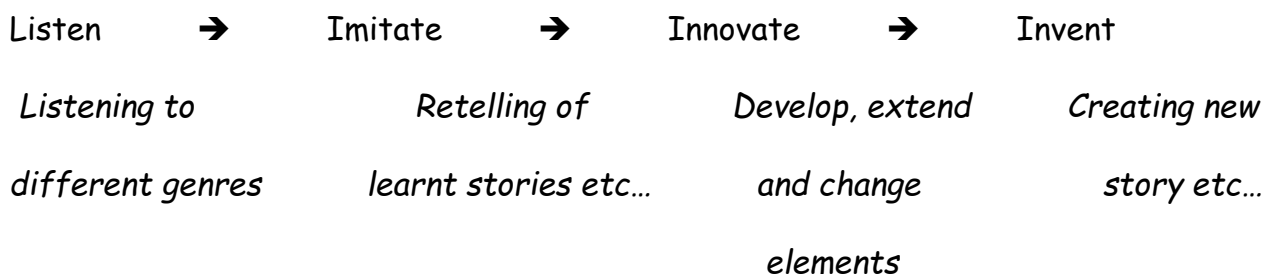
Aims

In developing children's writing skills we aim to:

- ensure progression of writing skills across the school
- develop positive attitudes towards and stamina for writing
- provide meaningful writing experiences using the contexts inspired by quality texts
- enable children to demonstrate the ability to choose the appropriate form and content to suit the audience and purpose
- enable children to write in a range of genres and develop a clear understanding of the structure and language features of them
- teach children to write confidently and independently using correct grammatical conventions
- promote the development of an increasing range of vocabulary in all children and its use in their speech and writing
- model a high standard of writing to secure high expectations and inspire writers
- develop confident writers who are able to review and edit their own writing
- ensure that opportunities for writing are available in all areas of the indoor and outdoor environment.

GUIDELINES

Throughout the process of teaching writing across school we:



Writing in Early Years Foundation Stage

In EYFS we aim to:

- provide opportunities for children to see adults writing for different, real purposes and for children to write for a variety of purposes

- encourage writing by having well organised writing areas both indoors and outdoors that includes a variety of different resources for mark making and writing such as large sheets of paper, coloured paper, notebooks, diaries, postcards, clipboards, whiteboards, pens, pencils, interactive displays, messages and examples of children's writing. These resources should all be available for the children to use independently.
- have mark-making materials available in all areas of provision as well as in the designated writing areas
- allow children to experiment through making their own marks and symbols using a variety of media (e.g. gloop, mud, sand, crazy foam, squirty bottles, ribbons etc) leading to conventional script
- help children understand that writing is an important part of communication that links to reading and speaking and listening
- read and display children's writing so they feel it is valued
- have puppets, props and small world available for role-play
- plan activities to develop children's fine and gross motor skills are provided e.g. building wrist strength by twirling ribbon sticks, practising writing patterns with big brushes and water, making letters in the sand
- have inviting book corners with a good variety of well organised quality books - hard cover, soft cover, fiction, non-fiction and rhymes
- make use of displays to celebrate children's achievements and support children's future learning, being interactive where appropriate (also include typed and handwritten text and captions from adults and children)
- teach a daily whole class phonics session using Sounds-Write and 3 sessions each week of Drawing Club
- give each child a Literacy book in which both directed literacy activities and child-initiated literacy activities are recorded

Key Stage 1

The teaching of writing always begins with modelled, shared and then guided or independent writing. It is important that an appropriate amount of time is allocated to these activities.

Teachers should model the thought processes involved in writing including an awareness of the audience and purpose for the writing and use of the correct grammatical terms and variety of punctuation appropriate to the year group. Discrete spelling and grammar lessons are used to introduce and reinforce taught skills, although these skills should also be taught as part of everyday writing lessons.

In writing lessons we:

- use talk for writing strategies
- use familiar texts as models for children's shared and guided writing
- use quality texts to inspire writing for a variety of purposes
- develop awareness of the specific differences between the spoken and written word
- sequence and recount events with accuracy, imagination and detail

- structure a story (openings, characters, settings, sequence of events, endings), a play or a poem
- reproduce the structure and language styles of N/F texts read
- model application of strategies taught through Sounds-Write
- use grammatical principles applied to writing
- apply the skills taught during phonics sessions
- plan, draft and review work
- read work aloud with expression to confirm punctuation and sense
- use knowledge of phonics, high frequency words and spelling strategies
- provide opportunities for children to write for extended periods of time.

In drafting we teach:

- how to organise and sequence writing
- how to put ideas into sentences and paragraphs
- how to punctuate, vary sentences and create cohesion.

In revising and editing we teach:

- how to use success criteria to edit and improve
- how to explore and evaluate vocabulary choices
- how to develop more adventurous and imaginative vocabulary
- how to check and correct grammatical and spelling errors.

In guided writing teachers support groups/individuals to:

- develop own ideas linked to shared writing
- make decisions about what to write
- plan writing taking account of content, punctuation, text features, purpose and audience
- compose using correct grammar, punctuation and text organisation
- proof read and edit their own and other's work
- orally rehearse their writing, encapsulating what they want to say sentence by sentence.

Key Stage 2

Pupils will draw on their knowledge and experiences from Key Stage 1 and further develop skills previously taught, as well as learning new ones.

In teaching writing, teachers should continue as in Key Stage 1 with these additional aims:

- develop initial ideas in relation to the purpose and audience i.e. structure, layout, organisation, style of genre
- develop ideas from a plan into a structured written text

- alter and improve in terms of layout, organisation, style of genre by use of ambitious vocabulary choices, variety of sentence structures
- present a neat, correct and clear final copy where appropriate
- provide opportunities for children to write for longer extended periods of time.

In guided writing pupils will further develop their knowledge and experiences from Key Stage 1 using a wider range of vocabulary, punctuation and sentence structure as in shared writing.

Use of ICT to support writing.

Literacy lessons can be taken in the ICT suite or using iPads in the classroom and pupils may use class based PCs within literacy to develop writing skills.

ICT resources, including interactive whiteboards and specially purchased software, are used to enhance literacy skills and experience. Specific web sites are visited.

Resources are regularly updated and a list of useful web sites is kept. Children can also use ICT to present, record and prepare their own writing. (See also Computing Programmes of Study for digital literacy).

Literacy across the curriculum.

Pupils should always use their literacy skills in other curriculum areas and be encouraged to produce work at the same standard of English in every subject.

For example:

- research tasks
- writing and following instructions
- expressing views and opinions
- verbal and written instructions
- role play and hot seating
- debate, discussion and arguing a case
- recognising fact and opinion
- recounts and explanations
- letters, fliers, posters and leaflets.

Handwriting

Handwriting is a complex movement skill requiring a great deal of practice in order to acquire fast, fluent, legible and attractive handwriting. It is paramount that children are rigorously taught correct letter formation from the very beginning of their time in school.

Aim

Our aim is to teach pupils to develop a legible, fluent and swift style and to present written work clearly and neatly in order to communicate meaning effectively. Through multi-sensory activities, pupils will develop correct habits of letter formation leading to a consistency in style across school. As children become more fluent, individual styles are encouraged and at all stages children are encouraged to show they have taken pride in their work.

Guidelines

We use a structured approach to teaching handwriting using the Letterjoin scheme. This begins in reception and continues throughout the school.

In Early Years Foundation Stage pupils should be taught:

- good gross and fine motor control
- a recognition of pattern
- a language to talk about shape and movements
- the main handwriting movements involved in the three basic letter shapes as exemplified by *l, c, r*
- to start and finish letters correctly
- how to form lower case and upper case letters and numbers
- how to hold a pencil
- to write from left to right and from top to bottom of the page.

In KS1, pupils should be taught:

- how to hold a pencil
- to write from left to right and from top to bottom of the page
- to start and finish letters correctly
- to form letters of regular size and shape
- to put regular spaces between letters and words
- how to form upper and lower case letters
- how to join letters according to the school handwriting policy
- to produce clear ascenders and descenders.

In KS2, pupils should be taught to:

- join letters correctly
- write legibly in both joined and printed styles with increasing speed and fluency
- use different forms of handwriting for different purposes (e.g. print for labelling maps or diagrams, a clear, neat hand for finished, presented work, a faster script for notes)
- use a range of word processing skills.

Provision for children joining school

Key Stage 1 - Children to adopt the school script.

Key Stage 2 - Children allowed to continue in their script if not joining. Adopt school script for joining letters.

Provision for children with specific learning difficulties or dyslexia

For these children, reading a joined script can exacerbate their difficulties. Therefore, for children diagnosed with or suspected of having a dyslexic profile, we use the comic sans font. This is used in all resources specific to these children.

Provision for bi-lingual children

Bi-lingual children may also need support with letter formation and orientation, if they are familiar with writing other alphabets.

The language related to letter formation may be unfamiliar to them and their understanding of instructions limited. Work may need to be carried out on vocabulary related to letter formation.

E.g. up/down left/right big/small top/bottom

Straight/curved/round finger space/lower/upper case

Initial/capital letter sit/line/below/above ascender/descender

Teaching and organisation of handwriting across the school

The frequency and length of handwriting lessons will vary according to age and competence of the pupils. With young children, short, regular lessons are taught, while for older pupils one longer session takes place each week. Extra lessons may be required when joins are being introduced.

For Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 children, handwriting practice should be 'little and often', allowing children to develop accuracy, fluency and speed with a significant focus on formation, orientation and pencil grip.

As the children pass through the school, groups of children who have similar difficulties with a particular formation can be formed for temporary, specific instruction.

Spelling, vocabulary, grammar and punctuation

At Milecastle, we recognise the importance of the explicit knowledge of grammar for all children as it allows more conscious control and choice in spoken and written language. We believe that building this knowledge is best achieved through a focus on grammar embedded within the teaching of reading, writing and speaking, as well as discrete in grammar lessons.

Knowledge of the use of correct grammar and punctuation is taught directly in line with medium term plans and through speaking, reading and writing activities. Skills are consolidated through formative marking in line with school's marking and feedback policy. Programmes of study for each year group clearly outline the key skills to be introduced at each phase. It is also understood that key concepts introduced in earlier years will be further embedded and consolidated.

Spelling

Children should recognise that the written word plays an important part in communicating and that spelling must be standardised to ensure that it is accessible to all. Accurate spelling aids effective communication of meaning and needs to be taught.

Aims

- To provide children with a wide range of spelling strategies to enable them to be confident, competent and independent spellers.
- To use the Sounds-Write programme to deliver daily phonics sessions.
- To deliver the spelling objectives outlined in the National Curriculum for each year group.
- To draw on the new initiatives to enhance the teaching and learning of spelling.
- To provide a wide range of auditory, visual and kinaesthetic activities and experiences in spelling in order to meet the learning styles of all children within the classroom.

Guidelines

- Spelling will be systematically taught using the Sounds-Write programme.
- Visual strategies will be made explicit to the children.
- Children will be encouraged to spell independently from the earliest stages.
- Children will be taught to apply their knowledge of phonics strategies and breaking words into syllables
- Children will be taught to be analytical about their own spellings, identifying the types and parts of words they find difficult.

- Children will be encouraged to use dictionaries as a reference and to develop individual strategies.
- The teaching of spelling and handwriting will be linked wherever appropriate using the National Curriculum objectives.