

# Rowdown Primary School

## English Policy



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### **Introduction:**

Our English Policy addresses the need to promote language and writing skills through a love of reading in a community where reading, can be challenging for families. With low EYFS baselines in Literacy and poor spoken language, a significant percentage of our young learners lack essential literacy skills upon entry. Recognising the critical role of language development in cognitive growth, we are committed to delivering a curriculum that gives children the opportunity to immerse themselves in high quality experiences that provides them with the tools they need to become successful readers, writers, and speakers. Through evidence-based strategies, including targeted literacy interventions and vocabulary enrichment approaches, we aim to cultivate a love for not only reading but language and effective communication. Our goal is to empower each child with linguistic tools, ensuring a robust foundation for academic success and lifelong learning, charting a course towards a brighter future.

## **Teaching and Learning:**

### **Writing**

Our goal is to instil a love for English in all children, fostering enthusiasm for reading, writing and self-expression. To achieve this, we have implemented Talk for Writing (TFW) as a comprehensive school-wide strategy, which offers a systematic approach to teaching English.

Talk for Writing focuses on nurturing children's development as writers, going beyond mere writing skills. It empowers them to generate ideas, draw from their reading experiences, and write with confidence for diverse audiences and purposes. This methodology operates in three stages: Imitation, Innovation, and Independent Application.

During the Imitation phase, children become intimately familiar with a text through oral recitation, dramatic exploration, and detailed examination of vocabulary, comprehension, and literary techniques. In the Innovation stage, a collaborative writing process reinforces fundamental skills such as handwriting, phonics/spelling and grammar, tailored to the specific text types being studied. The Independent Application phase, encourages children to independently draft, edit, and publish their own versions of the text, fostering independence and creativity in their writing. Throughout their time at Rowdown, children gradually build a collection of familiar texts, enriched by a diverse array of literary works such as picture books, novels, poetry and non-fiction.

Teachers will plan and deliver lessons focusing around specific 'tools' taken from the Talk for Writing toolkits assigned to each genre of writing.

### **Reading:**

Reading is a fundamental skill that secures the foundation for a child's academic success and lifelong learning. Particularly in the primary school years, the ability to read fluently is crucial for students to comprehend, analyse, and communicate effectively. One highly regarded approach to teaching early reading skills is the Read Write Inc systematic phonics programme. This method focuses on the essential skills of blending and decoding words which provides students with the tools required to become fluent readers. As students' progress through the Read Write Inc programme, they transition into becoming fluent early readers. These reading skills empower them to explore and engage with various genres within their class library.

All children gain access to a diverse range of literature, fostering a love for reading and expanding their comprehension across different subject matters. Reading records are sent home to encourage parents, carers or older siblings to engage in the child's home reading. Children receive positive praise and use of the school's behaviour policy allows children to move up the class podium for showing responsibility in their reading.

Throughout the school, children are read to daily using a specifically chosen text from the reading spine which compliments the Talk for Writing unit. Children are encouraged to actively listen then 'magpie' vocabulary and ideas which they can begin to implement into their own writing and spoken language.

## Phonics & Early reading

The Read Write Inc programme employs a systematic and structured approach to phonics, recognising the importance of breaking down the complexities of language into manageable components. By teaching children to understand the relationships between letters and sounds, the programme equips them with the ability to blend these sounds together and decode words with confidence. This early emphasis on phonics lays a solid foundation for reading, enabling students to tackle a wide range of texts with increasing proficiency.

Through Read, Write Inc lessons children will:

- learn 70+ sounds and the corresponding letter/letter groups using simple picture prompts
- learn to read words using 'Fred Talk' (sounding words out) to begin with, then as they progress without 'Fred Talk'
- read stories featuring words they have learned to sound out
- show that they comprehend the stories by answering questions
- learn to write the letters/letter groups which represent 70+ sounds
- learn to spell words by saying the sounds in 'Fred Talk'
- write simple and complex sentences

Children who are at an early stage of reading (either due to their age, developmental level, assessed baseline entry to the school in KS2 or if they are new to English), will take part in daily, Read, Write Inc lessons. Children continue to access Read, Write Inc lessons until assessment shows that they are confidently using 70+ sounds to decode and are able to read both real and 'nonsense' words of multiple syllables. Set 1 Speed Sounds are first introduced in the Summer term of Nursery. These sounds are then revisited once the children start Reception in the Autumn term.

Pupils' work within ability groups across the school. Read, Write Inc groups are organised using on-going assessments carried out every half term. The reading lead will group the children based on the outcomes of the individual assessments. Struggling readers and those at risk of falling behind, are taught by the most skilled members of staff.

Parents' meetings are held during the Autumn term of Reception to introduce parents to RWI, and the way in which we teach their children to read. Parents are also given the opportunity to buy sound cards and green/red words to support their child at home. More parent meetings are held throughout the year in preparation for the National Phonics Screening check, for various year groups, including Reception, Year 1 and those resitting in Year 2.

Any child who is not making expected progress within RWI, will be given additional 1:1 tutoring in phonics. These interventions follow a set structure based on the RWI 1:1 Interventions set out in the RWI Handbook. Reading Leads specify the children who require interventions based on half termly analysis of RWI assessments.

## Echo reading

Echo reading is a guided reading strategy designed to help students develop fluent reading skills by modelling all three components of fluent reading; **Accuracy**, **Rate** and **Prosody**.

As a form of assisted reading, Echo Reading enables students to understand print concepts and build confidence in their reading abilities. With these components in mind, we have implemented Echo Reading at Rowdown Primary to ensure that all students develop these essential skills in a purposeful and systematic manner.

We have incorporated the Echo Reading strategy with our reading comprehension programme for pupils in Key stage 2 and those in Key stage 1 who have completed the phonics programme. Our reading sessions follow a structured 5-day lesson plan:

- **Day 1–4:** Students learn to read the text fluently, explore new vocabulary, answer comprehension questions, and prepare for a whole-class performance.
- **Day 5:** Students independently read a similar text and apply the comprehension skills taught during whole-class reading. They then self-assess their answers using a purple pen, promoting reflection and self-correction.

We use **high-quality, age-appropriate, engaging and interesting texts** from a variety of genres, covering a wide range of topics. These texts are carefully selected for each year group to improve students' general knowledge, foster a love for reading and make meaningful **cross-curricular links**.

## The love of reading

At our school, we are developing a deep love of reading amongst our students through a variety of engaging and innovative initiatives. We understand that a love of reading is crucial to a child's development, impacting not only their literacy skills but also their cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Reading opens doors to new worlds, enhances vocabulary, and strengthens comprehension, which are fundamental skills needed across all areas of the primary curriculum. Moreover, a passion for reading nurtures curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking, essential traits for lifelong learning and success in life beyond school.

We run reading competitions across the trust; encouraging children to read at home. As they progress to the next reading level (based on the entries in the home reading record), they earn the opportunity to attend fun events at one of the trust schools. This programme not only motivates students but also builds a community of enthusiastic readers.

A number of assemblies are held throughout the year, which focus on raising the enjoyment of reading. We may focus on events such as book fairs and World Book Day, and we regularly invite authors and poets to speak in assemblies. These assemblies excite students about the world of books and the joy of reading. Each week, a member of the school community is invited into the whole school celebration assembly to share a recommended read.

We have created engaging book corners in every classroom. These corners are organised by genres and authors, and include a variety of text types. Students have time to review books and share their favourites; making reading a collaborative and enjoyable activity. Book corners are accessible to all and are accessed regularly to enable students to change their current pleasure reading books.

The school has recently established an indoor Reading zone which is accessed by Key Stage 2 children during lunchtimes. We also offer a reading after school club which runs weekly.

Our book swap programme allows children to donate old books and take new ones home. This initiative promotes a culture of sharing and ensures that every child has access to a variety of books. We organise whole school mixed reading events, where children can share their favourite books with peers from different classes and age groups. These events create a sense of community and allow students to explore diverse literary interests.

Our annual book fair promotes reading by offering books at discounted prices and raises funds for the school in order to purchase new books. This event makes books more accessible to all students and encourages them to read more.

We celebrate World Book Day with activities designed to encourage enjoyment and a love of reading. Students have the opportunity to bring books to life, share their literary interests, meet authors, and even become authors themselves. This day is a highlight in our school year, promoting a lifelong love of reading.

### **Spelling, punctuation and grammar:**

Our school teaches spelling, punctuation, and grammar (SPaG) through a structured programme divided into six stages, utilising Spelling Shed as a key resource. In Key Stage 2, each year group has dedicated SPaG lessons at least three times a week. These lessons focus on essential elements such as word usage, sentence structure, text coherence, and punctuation. Additionally, SPaG is seamlessly incorporated into our Talk for Writing and Echo Reading sessions, ensuring students get ample practise and reinforcement.

In Key Stage 1, SPaG is taught explicitly every day as a warm-up to the English lesson. This ensures a consistent focus on foundational skills. As in Key Stage 2, SPaG is also embedded in the Talk for Writing and Echo Reading sessions for comprehensive learning. Most children in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 follow the Read, Write Inc programme, where spellings are taught during daily phonics sessions. Additional spelling practice is encouraged by identifying and using spelling rules, helping students reinforce their learning.

Classrooms have spelling displays that model the spelling rules taught each week. These serve as a visual aid and preparation for the scheduled Friday Spelling test. By integrating SPaG into various aspects of our curriculum and providing consistent, focused instruction, we ensure that students develop strong spelling, punctuation, and grammar skills. Teachers are able to monitor the coverage, teaching and learning of SPaG by referring to the Pie Corbett, Talk for Writing progression document.

### **Handwriting**

Our primary school is dedicated to helping children develop fluent handwriting skills through a structured and supportive approach. We focus on teaching children the correct size and orientation of each letter, ensuring they form letters accurately from the beginning. We provide ample time and opportunities for children to practice their handwriting, helping them move from writing accurately to writing fluently. We do not rush children into joined-up handwriting, waiting until they have a sound foundation in individual letter formation.

Developing fine motor skills and the correct pencil grip is fundamental to handwriting development. We emphasise the correct pencil grip and accurate letter formation, with attention given to progressing towards fluent handwriting. Handwriting is part of our daily schedule, with each session lasting 5 to 10 minutes to ensure children practise their skills every day. We aim to make the physical process of writing enjoyable from the start. By using mnemonics (memory pictures), we help children visualise letters or joins before writing them, fostering a positive attitude towards writing.

Children practise handwriting under the guidance of a teacher or adult to prevent the development of incorrect habits which can be difficult to correct later. We ask that children do not copy letters or words until they are confident with each letter join, focusing instead on forming their own letters and joins correctly. We follow a two-stage approach based on the Ruth Miskin method. In Stage 1a, children practise correct letter formation. In Stage 1b, they learn where to place letters on the writing line and master the two basic joins: the arm join (diagonal) and the washing line join (horizontal), along with their variables.

To support this process, we provide handwriting resources and support during parent workshops in the foundation stage, during phonics workshops, and on our website. Additionally, letter formation resources are sent home in the foundation stage or for children who may still be struggling to form letters correctly before they learn to join. By adhering to these principles, we aim to ensure that each child develops strong, fluent handwriting skills that will support their overall literacy and academic success.

### **Equal Opportunities, Adaptations, and SEND Offer**

As educators, we must recognise and respond to the diverse learning needs of all pupils, including those for whom English is an additional language (EAL), those with learning difficulties, and those identified as able, gifted, and talented.

The Talk for Writing approach supports different learning styles through visual, kinaesthetic, and auditory methods. Tasks are often differentiated, and children may have access to visual cues and resources such as sound mats, high-frequency word mats, and red word mats to support their learning. The use of Widget symbols is incorporated into lesson presentations and on tasks for books to aid understanding and accessibility. Additionally, Widget symbols are used to support texts in echo reading slots, and texts in echo reading sessions can be simplified to meet individual needs.

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and those with EAL will be fully included in lessons, with appropriate support in place. Pupils identified as having special educational needs will receive tailored support and further guidance which can be found in the school's SEN policy.

Provision for able, gifted, and talented pupils will be addressed through careful planning within the weekly planning format. Teachers will incorporate suitable strategies and activities, such as higher-order questioning and appropriately challenging tasks. Further details can be found in the school's Gifted and Talented policy.

### **Assessment**

In the Foundation Stage, children are assessed in the areas of learning as stated in the Early Learning Goals, via observation and adult interactions. The staff will also aim to capture exceptional learning experiences on the Evidence me platform.

Half termly, children who are accessing the Read, Write Inc programme will be assessed by either the Phonics or English lead and then assigned to their new phonics group or moved off the programme.

In the summer term of Year 1 (and for those who did not pass in year 2) children's decoding and blending skills will also be checked in accordance with the Government Phonic Screening Check.

At the start of each Talk for Writing unit a child's 'Cold task' will be reviewed by the class teacher in which a whole class capture sheet will be used to track focus spellings. Alongside this, weekly spelling tests take place in years 1 to 6 and teachers track progress using an analysis grid. Spelling champions are celebrated during our whole school weekly celebration assemblies.

Assessment for learning underpins teaching and learning in English. Children's work is regularly assessed through observation, discussion, scrutiny of work and evaluating outcomes. Assessment of children's reading is observed and evaluated in the following ways:

- Termly Pupil Progress Meetings are used to track the progress of each child in reading and writing across the year.
- Pupil Trackers are updated regularly electronically.
- End of year GLD outcomes in Reception.
- Baseline in Foundation
- Phonics screen in Year 1
- Weekly Spelling test Years 1-6
- Year 2 SATs tests.
- Years 1, 3, 4 and 5 optional tests Head start comprehension.
- Year 6 SATs tests.
- Half-termly Read Write Inc assessments for children accessing RWI
- Daily Phonics check through Read Write Inc lessons - spelling and reading.
- Children's writing outcomes including their cold & hot tasks
- Cross curricular writing outcomes
- Reading records.

For further support see the Assessment Policy.

#### Management/monitoring:

Regular book looks will be conducted to review students' work across different year groups. This involves examining the quality of writing, comprehension tasks, and the progression of skills over time. Leaders will look for evidence of curriculum coverage, differentiation, and feedback provided by teachers.

Teachers and leaders will actively monitor children's home reading record books to ensure regular reading at home. By maintaining close oversight of these records, we aim to encourage and support consistent reading habits outside of school hours, fostering a strong reading culture among students at Rowdown Primary School. Home reading trackers will also be utilised to engage parents in the monitoring process, ensuring students are reading regularly outside of school hours.

Monitoring the sales and attendance at book fairs will provide insight into students' interests and engagement with reading. Higher attendance and sales figures can indicate a positive reading culture, while lower figures might highlight a need for additional encouragement or more appealing book selections.

Regular learning walks by school leaders will allow them to observe English lessons in action. These walks focus on teaching strategies, student engagement, and the learning environment. Feedback from these observations will be used to support and develop teaching practices.

The English Lead will attend borough meetings to stay informed about the latest developments in English education and share best practices. These meetings provide opportunities to network with other schools, discuss common challenges, and bring back new ideas to implement at Rowdown Primary School.

Collaboration with other schools through cross-trust moderations ensures assessment practices are standardised and the delivery of the English curriculum remains consistent.

Engaging in consultancy days and training sessions allows teachers and leaders to enhance their skills and stay updated with advancements in English education. Participation in Talk for Writing forums

provides insights into effective strategies for teaching writing skills and fostering creativity among students.

These methods collectively ensure a comprehensive assessment and improvement of the English curriculum at Rowdown Primary School, fostering a supportive learning environment where students thrive in English language skills.

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