

Hernhill Church of England Primary School



ENGLISH POLICY

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INTRODUCTION AND ETHOS



*Our school community is rooted in
Jesus' promise of life in all its fullness;
where all are truly welcome.*

Reading, writing, speaking and listening together form the key components of human communication. We learn from one another through our ability to communicate, and so it is undeniably true that English lies at the heart of all learning at Hernhill C of E Primary School.

INTENT - Igniting Passion and Imagination

"A child who is read to will have an inner kingdom of unicorns, talking spiders and a knife that cuts into other worlds." (Pie Corbett).

Our reading philosophy goes far beyond basic literacy - at Hernhill, we live and breathe BOOKS in every possible way! Our mission is to nurture children who don't just read, but who fall deeply in love with the magical worlds hidden between pages. We achieve this through an immersive, exciting approach that makes reading an adventure:

Our Reading Experiences Include:

- A magical, fairy-tale themed library
- A cosy reading cabin on the playground
- Regular access to the visiting library bus
- Red reading suitcases with hot chocolate and biscuits
- Author and poet visits
- Enjoying whole class reads together, read by the teacher
- World Book Day celebrations and a school book fair.

We want every child to discover that reading is not just about decoding words - it's about exploring new worlds, understanding different perspectives, and unleashing their own creativity.

By the end of Key Stage 2, our pupils will:

- Read and write with confidence, fluency, and genuine enjoyment
- Develop independent strategies for monitoring and editing their work
- Enhance speaking and listening skills through:
 - *Drama*
 - *Assemblies*
 - *Structured speaking activities*
- Explore and appreciate a wide range of texts, genres and authors
- Write accurately in diverse styles, adapting their writing for different audiences and purposes
- Build a rich, expansive vocabulary that enables them to:
 - *Articulate ideas clearly*
 - *Elaborate on complex thoughts*
 - *Continue developing their language skills*
- Communicate confidently through formal presentations, discussion, dialogue and debate.

Subject Organisation:

Our English curriculum ignites a love for language through creative exploration and secure learning foundations. Each term, classes share carefully selected, high-quality texts that serve as both mirrors and windows. These books reflect our pupils' experiences while offering glimpses into diverse worlds and perspectives. We're committed to showcasing a range of authors and characters, exploring stories from various cultures, and challenging stereotypes. This approach not only broadens horizons but also nurtures empathy and understanding, making English a vibrant, inclusive journey for every child.

Foundation Stage

In Reception Class, children have daily discrete phonics lessons following the Phonics Shed programme. Children have opportunities to develop their communication, language and literacy skills on a daily basis in both adult-led and child-initiated activities. To develop a love of literature and reading fluency, an adult regularly shares high-quality texts including books, stories, rhymes, songs and poetry.

Key Stage 1

In Key Stage 1, daily discrete phonics lessons following the Phonics Shed programme continue and are taught through a combination of whole-class and small-group sessions. Children take part in shared, group and individual reading sessions and have regular story times to develop a love of reading. English skills are developed across the curriculum including through rhyme, poetry and songs.

From Year 1, children participate in whole-class reading sessions using the VIPERS reading comprehension strands (Vocabulary, Inference, Prediction, Explanation, Retrieval and Sequencing/Summarising).

Key Stage 2

Spelling and grammar skills are taught discretely before being embedded within the curriculum. From Year 2 onwards, we use Spelling Shed, a scheme of work that gives progression through the Spelling and Grammar objectives outlined in the English National Curriculum.

Additional English sessions include whole-class reading (using the VIPERS strands), spelling, grammar, punctuation and comprehension.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Approaches to speaking and listening

We recognise the importance of spoken language in pupils' development across the whole curriculum – spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing. Children are encouraged to develop effective communication skills in readiness for later life. Opportunities to develop these skills include leading prayers, annual class assemblies, celebration assemblies, response partners, school plays and productions.

We recognise the need for all pupils to speak, read and write Standard English fluently and accurately, while acknowledging that a pupil's own dialect or home language is also valued and respected.

It is our school policy to model and encourage the use of Standard English within the classroom and when speaking with adults across the school day. This helps pupils develop confidence in using formal language in appropriate contexts.

Approaches to reading

Reading is prioritised across the school as the key to accessing the wider curriculum.

We use the Phonics Shed programme to deliver daily discrete phonics lessons in the Foundation Stage and KS1, enabling children to decode efficiently. Phonics books are carefully matched to the sounds children are

learning in class, ensuring that pupils practise reading with accuracy and confidence. Targeted phonics booster groups are used for children who require additional support. Toe by Toe and Spelling Tutor are also used throughout the school as structured interventions.

A range of reading schemes are used to support readers up to the end of Year 4. In the upper juniors, children are encouraged to select and read books independently to further promote a love of reading, alongside carefully chosen whole-class texts. For children who require extra support, Barrington Stoke books are available in the upper juniors, as well as access to schemes such as Wellington Square.

Fluency

At Hernhill, we firmly believe that children who read aloud with expression are more likely to comprehend deeply when reading independently.

With this in mind, adults across the school provide effective fluency instruction and intervention. Fluency is the ability to read with Expression, Automatic word recognition, Rhythm and phrasing, and Smoothness (EARS).

- Modelled fluent reading – teachers model reading strategies during shared reading sessions and whole-class reading lessons.
- Supportive or assisted (paired) reading - children have the opportunity to engage in fluent reading themselves as part of a group or with a more fluent partner (either an adult or peer).
- Wide reading – reading a text once with discussion and/or follow-up activities, before moving on to a new text.
- Repeated reading (close reading) – some children benefit from reading a text a few times to achieve fluency. Children rehearse and practise reading a text to deepen understanding and communicate meaning effectively.
- Rhythm and phrasing (echo reading) – adults and children practise reading aloud together to develop expression and meaning.

Home reading

A child's reading journey begins at Hernhill in Reception with our phonics programme, Phonics Shed. Children develop a love of reading and writing through this engaging, narrative-based programme, which includes memorable characters, songs and stories.

Phonics Shed continues through Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, and can also be utilised in the juniors where necessary. Children bring home books — either a paperback or a digitally assigned e-book — that have been carefully selected by the teacher to match the phonics sounds the child has been taught in school. In addition, children also bring home a book to share and enjoy with their family. This book may not be directly linked to their phonics learning, but is intended to nurture a love of reading.

All children also have the opportunity to choose a book from the class or school library, as well as from the visiting library bus.

Each child in the infant classes has a home–school reading contact book that staff, volunteers and parents can use to share information about a child's reading.

Parents and carers are encouraged to ensure their child reads at least five times per week, recording each session in the reading diary. Where a child is not reading regularly, the school will contact home to offer support and guidance.

Reading at home in KS2

In Key Stage 2, children choose books to take home and read. There are a selection of banded books in Years 3 and 4 to support appropriate text choices. Children who are still developing their reading skills have access to the Rapid series in the lower juniors and Barrington Stoke books in the upper juniors. These texts

are written for an appropriate interest age while remaining accessible for developing readers. These resources help lower attaining pupils and pupils with SEND to continue growing in confidence as readers, using texts that are engaging and age appropriate.

Children are expected to read at home at least five times a week and record this in their reading or homework diary. Where a child is not reading regularly, the school will contact home to discuss how best to support the child's reading development.

Reading together is more than just a learning activity - it's a chance to connect, explore, and grow. We actively encourage all our pupils to share books with their families, creating magical moments that develop critical thinking skills and nurture a deep, lasting love of reading.

Approaches to writing

We aim to develop the children's ability to produce well-structured, detailed writing in which the meaning is made clear and which engages the interest of the reader. Attention is paid throughout the school to the formal structures of English, grammatical detail, punctuation and spelling.

To support the teaching of writing, teachers use a range of evidence-informed approaches to help pupils understand how effective writing is constructed. Writing is taught through high-quality model texts, shared writing opportunities and structured scaffolding so that pupils develop confidence as writers.

Teachers regularly model the writing process, demonstrating how to plan, draft, edit and improve writing. These "modelled writing" opportunities allow teachers to verbalise the thinking behind writing decisions and help pupils understand how successful writing is crafted.

Where appropriate, pupils are shown high-quality examples of writing (WAGOLs – What A Good One Looks Like) so that they can identify the features of effective writing and understand the expectations for each text type.

Teachers may also use "slow writing" techniques to support pupils in focusing on specific writing skills, such as sentence structure, vocabulary choice, punctuation and cohesion. These structured prompts help pupils build confidence and accuracy when composing their own writing.

Grammar, punctuation and spelling (SPaG) are taught both explicitly and within the context of writing, ensuring that pupils understand how these elements contribute to clarity and meaning.

The children are given frequent opportunities in school to write in different contexts using quality texts as a model and for a variety of purposes and audiences. The text types are outlined in our whole-school long-term plans to ensure that there is a breadth of coverage.

Writing opportunities are also embedded across the wider curriculum, enabling pupils to apply their literacy skills in subjects such as history, geography, RE and science. This helps pupils understand the purpose of writing and strengthens their ability to communicate knowledge and ideas clearly.

Handwriting

We teach handwriting as a key component of writing fluency. Clear, legible handwriting supports composition by allowing pupils to focus on communicating their ideas rather than the mechanics of writing.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children develop the physical foundations for writing through activities that strengthen gross and fine motor control, including mark making, drawing, pattern making and large-scale movement. Children are encouraged to hold writing tools comfortably and effectively, while recognising that grip develops naturally as muscles strengthen. Staff model and encourage an efficient pencil grip but do not force a particular grip prematurely, recognising that children develop at different rates.

Research suggests that practising letter formation stroke by stroke helps children recognise the distinctive features of each letter, supporting both handwriting and early reading development.

From Reception onwards, children are taught a cursive handwriting style, beginning with correct letter formation and gradually developing into fluent, joined handwriting as they progress through the school. Across the school we aim for handwriting that is:

- correctly formed
- consistent in size and orientation
- neatly presented and legible
- increasingly fluent and joined

Teachers model handwriting regularly and ensure that high expectations for presentation are maintained across all curriculum areas.

Our Hernhill Handwriting Guidance provides more detail.

Approaches to grammar and spelling

From Year 2 upwards, children have access to Spelling Shed, a whole-school spelling curriculum giving full coverage of the spelling objectives outlined in the English National Curriculum.

Children are encouraged to learn short lists of spellings each week, often developing clues or mnemonics to support retention. The words are linked to the National Curriculum statutory word lists.

These words are assessed in a variety of ways at the discretion of the teacher. This may include:

- dictation
- interactive “Hive” games using Spelling Shed
- weekly spelling tests

The Super Spellers home-spelling programme provides a list of words for each term. A random selection of up to 20 of these “Super Spellings” are tested in Week 6 of each term.

In the infant classes, if children can read the random 20 words as well as spell them, they are recognised as “Super Readers.”

These achievements are celebrated in the final Celebration Worship of each term with prizes awarded.

Children who demonstrate strong effort or significant progress are also recognised.

IMPACT

Hernhill Church of England Primary School has universal ambitions for every child, whatever their background or circumstances. Teachers incorporate the Mainstream Core Standards to ensure all children learn and thrive.

We pride ourselves on our inclusive nature. Our curriculum includes diverse texts and resources that represent a wide range of cultures, experiences and perspectives.

To summarise the impact of English at Hernhill C of E Primary School:

- Children will enjoy writing across a range of genres
- Children of all abilities will succeed in English lessons through tailored SEND provision
- Children will develop a wide, expressive vocabulary
- Children will adapt writing effectively based on context and audience
- Children will confidently apply spelling rules and patterns
- Parents will understand how to support spelling, grammar, and composition at home
- Presentation and handwriting will become increasingly fluent, legible and consistent
- No significant progress gaps will exist between different groups of pupils.

Impact is monitored through lesson observations, book looks, pupil voice, moderation and statutory assessment outcomes.

Our goal is to create an inclusive, supportive learning environment where every child can flourish.