

English Curriculum Policy

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Safeguarding**

Document History

Version	Comments/amendments	Name	Date
1.0	Version 1	Sam Dugan	September 2021
1.0	Version 1	Sam Dugan	November 2021
2.0	Version 2 – amended to reflect MHS 2022 Curriculum and introduction of SOLAR and Twinkl Phonics.	Sam Dugan	October 2022
3.0	Version 3 – removal of Accelerated Reader and Lexia. Introduction of IDL. Reference to Universal, Enhanced and Specialist SaLT support. Changes for clarity.	Sam Dugan	October 2023
3.1	Removal of myON. Changes for clarity.	Sam Dugan	March 2025

This Policy has been produced after extensive research and has been produced using input from a range of existing resources, including from the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education. The document is a working document and as a result will be revised, amended or updated as required.

Mountfield Heath School - English Curriculum Policy

Introduction

This policy reflects Mountfield Heath School's (MHS) values and philosophy in relation to teaching and learning English and should be read in conjunction with the school's curriculum policy. Everyone at MHS recognises the central importance of English: gaining and using skills in language not only affects a child's progress in school, but also has a profound influence upon the course of their whole life. Language and communication skills are essential for all our pupils and we recognise that the skills developed in English promote learning across the curriculum. We aim for our pupils to be able to express themselves creatively and imaginatively, and to communicate effectively both verbally and non-verbally with others in a range of social situations, appropriate to their levels and needs.

All children at MHS have an EHC plan, with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder and/or SEMH needs. Some children have other special needs in addition to autism, e.g. Dyslexia, Developmental Coordination Disorder, Speech and Language difficulties. Meeting the children's complex needs is the priority at MHS and our English Policy continuously develops, and is amended, according to the changing individual needs of our pupils.

We teach pupils the skills they need to communicate in ways relevant to their individual needs, developing their skills in communication, reading and writing. Cross-curricular themes have been developed to promote progress against our assessment framework, whilst meeting the individual learning styles of our pupils. Phonics also forms an important part of the literacy curriculum. We aim to develop pupils' abilities within an integrated programme of Spoken language (speaking & listening, vocabulary), Reading (word reading/decoding/comprehension) and Writing (spelling, handwriting, spelling, grammar and punctuation). Pupils will be given opportunities to develop their use, knowledge and understanding of spoken and written English within a broad and balanced curriculum, with opportunities to consolidate and reinforce taught literacy skills in all curriculum areas. All children have daily sessions to develop their English proficiency. Pupils work on specific, individual targets developed in line with individual learning needs identified in EHCPs and from teaching and learning assessments. Staff monitor the progress and amend the targets as required.

Consistency across the school in our approach to the teaching of reading and writing is key to supporting both progress in understanding and development, and the nurturing of confidence in our children. Many of the pupils referred to the school have complex literacy needs, including a high prevalence of dyslexia, that can affect their ability to access the broader curriculum, as well as very low levels of confidence, often as a result of perceived failure in previous educational settings. At Mountfield Heath School, we have carefully developed a multi-layered curriculum, which draws on the benefits of consistent phonics teaching for reading, and a rich, high quality text approach to developing and fostering a lasting love of reading and writing. These approaches are supplemented by the use of targeted interventions and 1:1 support, which further boost children's confidence. Regular assessment, both formal and informal, aids and informs planning and ensures that each pupil's study program is individualised and based on need. Staff are supported through regular training and INSET to ensure they are able to best meet the pupils' needs.

This policy is to be used as guidance for all teaching and support staff to ensure our pupils are receiving consistent direction from all who are involved with their learning. The stages indicated throughout the policy for each concept are the directed order of teaching and teachers are encouraged to teach at a level appropriate for each individual, focusing on stage not age. As with the offering across the full curriculum, learning is always highly adapted and directed to the needs of each individual pupil.

Mountfield Heath School subscribes to the ***The CLPE Reading for Pleasure What We Know Works (2018)*** approach:

1. Developing an ethos and an environment that excites, enthuses, inspires and values
2. High quality texts with depth and interest in story, character, illustration, vocabulary, structure and subject matter
3. A read aloud programme
4. Teachers who are knowledgeable about children's literature
5. Creating a community of readers with opportunities to share responses and opinions
6. Planning for talking about books and stories, providing structures within which to do this
7. Understanding the importance of illustration in reading both in terms of creating a text and responding to a text
8. Using drama and role-play to help children to understand and access texts
9. Working with authors and author/illustrators to understand the process of creating books
10. Using literature beyond the literacy lesson – cross-curricular planning with quality literature as the starting point

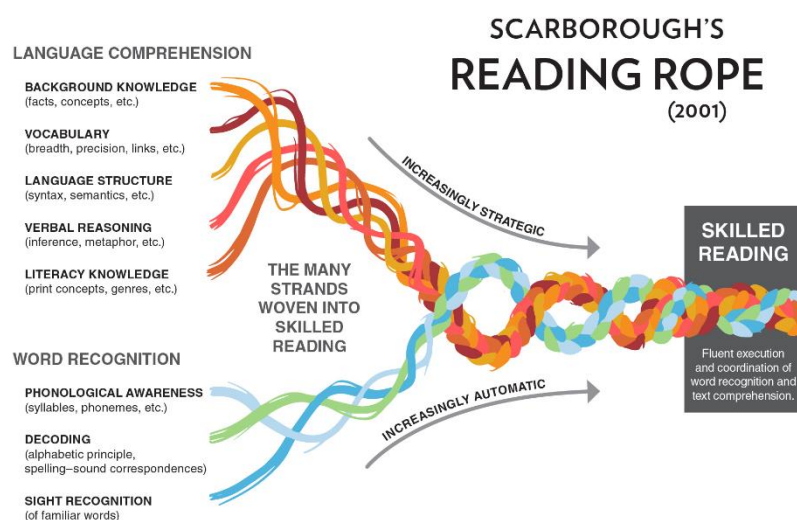
We prioritise reading for meaning to aid our pupils in making sense of the world around them. The UKLA (2010) states that, 'Children who become avid and accomplished readers focus on making sense from the start: they develop a habit of mind that expects the words they decode to make sense'.

Reading

All children are encouraged to practise their reading skills across their curriculum and to read for enjoyment. All children have a reading diary where details of books read are recorded on a regular basis. Staff assist through individual, paired, shared or guided reading when necessary. Pupils have the opportunity to visit local libraries. Books and reading records are not sent home, but staff communicate with staff to encourage reading at home.

Early reading and phonics (typically KS1)

Research into best practice for teaching early reading centres on the importance of the consistency of phonics teaching. Ofsted (2020) reports that, 'Where schools use a phonics programme that is not supported by resources, including books and sufficient guidance for staff, this often leads to greater inconsistency and a lack of rigour in the teaching of phonics' (p.15). Mountfield Heath School follows the DfE Validated Twinkl Phonics programme for the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics. To accompany the programme, pupils access Rhino Readers books which are directly



mapped to the sounds they learn in Twinkl Phonics. How this is delivered, is dependent on each class. We recognise that the majority of our pupils will not progress through the programme at the pace intended for their mainstream peers and that due to pupils' SEN, progression through the programme should be adapted on an individual basis. Phonics lessons may be whole class, group or individual, dependent on what is most effective for a given class. We acknowledge that learning to read is a multifaceted process. Scarborough (2001) likens the different processes involved in reading to the strands of a rope, with each contributing to the end result of being a skilled and proficient reader:

For the pupils at Mountfield Heath School, phonological awareness and decoding can be significant areas of difficulty and frustration. Previous schooling may have focussed heavily on these skills, leaving pupils experiencing failure and anxiety. Moreover, as all of our pupils likely face additional challenges regarding information processing, as well as often having specific learning needs such as dyslexia, a heavy focus on decoding can cause a 'bottle neck' in comprehension (Perfetti et al., 1996). The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (2021) states:

'We do not have finite capacity when undertaking the act of reading. Capacities of Emergent Readers will be greatly absorbed by the act of decoding, the ratio of which shifts over time with the competency that builds with experience and practice'.



Simply put, the more effort readers have to put into decoding, the less that is available to comprehend the text, resulting in a weakened 'rope' overall. Considering the specific needs of our pupils, Mountfield Heath School aims to achieved a balanced approach, that focuses on both decoding and comprehension. This is in line with research in this area: Henrietta Dombey (2006), Professor Emeritus of Literacy in Primary Education, University of Brighton, states that the 'Most successful schools and teachers focus both on phonics and the process of making sense of the text', supporting children 'in making personal sense of the texts they encounter and also show[ing] them how to lift words off the page'. By using the Power of Reading schemes of work, a significant focus is placed on reading enjoyment, meaning making, and comprehension.

Reluctant readers (typically KS2)

For older pupils and/or pupils who are particularly reluctant to engage with the core phonics programme, the school has access to sets of books designed by Phonics Books. These are decodable books that are presented in a way more appealing to more mature pupils, and contain texts which the pupils can read, using the phonics they have already been taught. The text is controlled to enable the reader to read independently at every stage. Pre-teaching of specific sounds and key words featured in the text takes place at the start of each book to build the child's confidence. This develops reliable and successful strategies for tackling new words as the pupil will experience

higher levels of success. Assessments are used to help guide teachers to books most appropriate for their pupils. The table below charts the progression of the texts:

Series	Phonic focus	Letter/sound correspondence	Word structure	Phase in 'Letters and Sounds'
Moon Dogs Sets 1 and 2	Sounds of the alphabet and consonant digraphs	1 and 2 letter spellings	1 syllable words	Phase 2, 4
Moon Dogs Vowel Spellings	Two alternative spellings for the sounds ae, ee, oa, ur, e, ow, oo, igh, bk, or, oi, ar, air, ear	1 -3 letter spellings	2 syllable words	Phases 3-5
Magic Belt/That Dog!	Starts at CVC/CVCC through to consonant digraphs: ch, sh, th, ck, ng, qu	1 and 2 letter spellings	2 syllable words	Phases 2, 4
Totem/ Alba	CVC through to alternative vowel spellings	2, 3 and 4 letter spellings	2 and 3 syllable words	Phases 2-5
Rescue/ Talisman 1/ Island Adventure	More alternative spellings for vowel sounds	2, 3 and 4 letter spellings	2 and 3 syllable words	Phase 5
Titan's Gauntlets/ Talisman 2	More alternative spellings for vowel and consonants sounds and common Latin suffixes	2, 3 and 4 letter spellings	Multi-syllabic	Phase 5, 6
Amber Guardians	Introduction of morphology: prefixes, suffixes, base/root words	2, 3 and 4 letter spellings	Multi-syllabic	Phase 6

To promote a deep love of reading, reader choice is essential. The school has invested in the creation of a dedicated library space with a range of amazing fiction and non-fiction books. Pupils are encouraged to browse and identify books they want to read for their own enjoyment, with staff modelling how to identify if a book is something that can be read independently or would benefit from being read alongside a more confident and experienced reader.

Dyslexia

A significant number of the pupils who attend Mountfield Heath School have been assessed as having a dyslexic learning profile. The school uses the British Dyslexia Association (2021) definition for dyslexia:

Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed. Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities. It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points. Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia.

A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds or has responded to well-founded intervention. In addition to these characteristics, the BDA acknowledges the visual and auditory processing difficulties that some individuals with dyslexia can experience, and points out that dyslexic readers can show a combination of abilities and difficulties that affect the learning process. Some also have strengths in other areas, such as design, problem solving, creative skills, interactive skills and oral skills.

MHS celebrates the positives to thinking differently. Pupils learn about and celebrate neurodiversity and specific learning differences through class work and whole school assemblies. Many dyslexic people show strengths in areas such as reasoning and in visual and creative fields. We support our dyslexic pupils with specialist support from Speech and Language Therapists, and adapt our teaching of reading and writing to be supportive of those requiring adaptations to aid processing and information storage/retrieval.

Literacy Intervention

At Mountfield Heath School, Speech & Language Therapy is used to support the following: the development of active listening skills; the development of vocabulary and concept knowledge – topic words, spatial and descriptive words through Lego Therapy, sequencing and joining words through narrative work, the ability to make inferences and deductions, understanding of figurative speech such as idiom, the ability to relate a narrative, to set the scene and describe the events in sequence, the development of grammar skills and creating more grammatically accurate sentences, phonological skills- developing an awareness of sounds in words, and the ability to manipulate sounds in words, identification of key information, leading to better expression of thoughts, which in turn supports better written outcomes and the comprehension of verbal information which supports the development of comprehension of text.

IDL

All pupils have access to an online platform, IDL. The IDL Literacy intervention is a speaking, computer-based multi-sensory system which supports learners with dyslexia and other learning difficulties to increase their reading and spelling ages. The programme was specifically designed for those with dyslexia and is used as an intervention but can also be used effectively as a school wide literacy solution. IDL is adaptive and targets the areas of spelling, comprehension, narrative, sentence structure, and is scaffolded by opportunities for verbal dictation and rehearsal. IDL can also be used as a dyslexia screening tool to identify which pupils may benefit from further detailed assessment.

Writing

Pupils are encouraged to express themselves in writing using a variety of styles according to purpose, audience and ability level. Pupils are encouraged to start writing with mark making using creative multi-sensory approaches. These are often informed by the school's Occupational Therapist. Letter formation is developed, with pupils encouraged to use a clear and consistent script for handwriting; word processing keyboard skills are developed alongside. Where children particularly struggle with writing, laptops may be used (using software such as Clicker 7 and InPrint3), but handwriting will still be developed as appropriate. Key skills sessions target writing for a range of real-life situations and enjoyment. Teachers plan to include specific focus on developing vocabulary use and understanding, using pre-teach vocabulary where applicable. Spelling strategies are taught in line with pupils' progression steps identified using the Twinkl Phonics programme.

Grammar is taught at an age-appropriate level to gain skills in understanding and use of language. Punctuation is also taught inline with the school's assessment framework. Writing is encouraged with practical real-life activities such as writing recipes for cooking or designing posters for school activities.

Speaking and Listening

Communication and interaction is central to our curriculum (see Deep Dive document). All children are given opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills across all learning experiences. We encourage all children to be respectful listeners and to express themselves confidently according to age and ability. All pupils access a weekly signing lesson to aid communication.

Assessment

Mountfield Heath School uses its own curriculum framework on SOLAR as an evidence tool for reading and writing. Teachers evidence pupils' progress against the framework throughout the year. Progress against reading (decoding and comprehension) and writing are measured on SOLAR as a baseline for measuring progress and as a tool for forward planning to develop English skills further. Specific assessment strands regarding communication and interaction are also assessed. Following INSET training, the introduction of Power of Reading schemes of work, and the implementation of its own curriculum, the school is adopting the CLPE Reading and Writing Scales (Appendices 1 and 2) to aid assessment and to identify clear next steps for pupils. The Scales provide a consistent vocabulary for staff to use when discussing the stage of pupils and allows for greater moderation and consistency between classes. The Scales have been incorporated into the school's SOLAR assessment framework as level descriptors.

We use a variety of tools to assess pupils' reading. Experience of supporting pupils with a range of SEN has demonstrated that the completion of standardised assessments is not always appropriate or in the child's best interest. Where appropriate, a standardised assessment e.g. Diagnostic Reading Analysis, is completed during a pupil's Phase Transfer year, providing standardised data on reading age, accuracy, speed, and comprehension. This information, alongside our own in-house assessment data, aids the Annual Review process. Twinkl Phonics assessments are completed throughout the year and linked to the decoding assessment strand of SOLAR; teachers have complete flexibility to move children through the scheme as they see fit.

References

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