



Outcomes  
First Group

# English Curriculum Policy

Mountfield Heath School

# Mountfield Heath School - English Curriculum Policy

*This Policy has been produced after extensive research and draws 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.*

## Document History

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1.0	Version 1	Sam Dugan	September 2021
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2.0	Version 2 – amended to reflect MHS 2022 Curriculum and introduction of SOLAR and Twinkl Phonics.	Sam Dugan	October 2022
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3.1	Removal of myON. Changes for clarity.	Sam Dugan	March 2025
4.0	Version 4 – Full rewrite with alignment to Capabilities Curriculum.	Sam Dugan	June 2026

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## **SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION AND CURRICULUM INTENT**

This policy sets out Mountfield Heath School's (MHS) approach to the teaching and learning of English. It should be read alongside the Curriculum Policy (February 2026), the Assessment, Feedback and Evidence of Learning Policy (January 2026), and the Language and Communication Deep Dive. These documents carry the full detail of the Capabilities Approach, the school's assessment model, and the therapeutic rationale for communication provision; this policy does not replicate that content, but is shaped by it throughout.

This policy has also been developed with reference to the OFG Best Practice Series for English, comprising the guides on the Science of Reading, Writing, Handwriting, Phonics Adaptation and Manipulatives, and Cross-Curricular Literacy, which have been considered alongside MHS's own curriculum framework, pupil profile, and pedagogical approach.

English at Mountfield Heath School is understood as the curriculum expression of a fundamental human capability: the capacity to communicate, make meaning, and participate in a world built on language. As the Curriculum Experiences Collection states, communication is the means by which pupils share who they are, build relationships, make choices, and navigate the world. Our curriculum does not treat English as a set of literacy skills to be sequenced, delivered, and assessed against normative benchmarks. Instead, we understand communication — in all its forms — as something that every pupil at MHS is already doing, and our role as educators is to recognise, develop, and extend that capacity in ways that are meaningful to each individual and oriented toward a life well lived.

This understanding is grounded in the school's Integrated Therapeutic Curriculum, organised around the ten human capabilities drawn from the work of philosopher Martha Nussbaum. English sits most directly within the capability of Senses, Imagination and Thought — the capacity to use the senses, to imagine, to think, and to reason — but it also develops and expresses the capabilities of Emotions, Affiliation, Control, Practical Reason, and Bodily Integrity. The English Curriculum Wheel sets out how these capability domains are expressed across the subject. Communication is not confined to English lessons; it is present in every curriculum area and every moment of school life.

All pupils at MHS have an Education, Health and Care Plan and a diagnosis of autism and/or complex Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs. Many present with Speech, Language and Communication Needs, specific learning differences including dyslexia, and interrupted or adverse educational histories that have left them with significant anxiety around literacy. Our English curriculum is designed with these realities at the centre — not as a set of adaptations to a mainstream model, but as a genuinely different philosophical and pedagogical position.

That position has four foundations. First, communication is understood as multimodal: spoken language, sign, symbol, AAC, mark-making, drawing, gesture, and digital expression are all recognised as valid and valued forms of communication. Second, provision is organised by stage of development rather than chronological age, through the school's three curriculum pathways — Curiosity, Discover, and Explore — which reflect each pupil's communication profile, developmental stage, and individual need as identified through their EHCP and IEP. Third, the purpose of English is understood in relation to each pupil's likely adult life: as the Curriculum Experiences Collection makes explicit, each pathway has a distinct adulthood orientation, from laying the sensory and relational foundations of participation, through building functional independence, to developing the self-determination needed to navigate adult life with agency.

Fourth, progress is understood as ipsative — measured against each pupil's own starting point, not against the attainment of others or age-related expectations.

The English curriculum supports pupils' engagement with fundamental British values through text selection, discussion, and creative work that develops pupils' capacity to understand, express, and assert their own values and perspectives. This is addressed in fuller detail in the school's SMSC Policy.

## **SECTION 2: AIMS**

The aims of the English curriculum at MHS reflect the school's commitment to developing communication as a human capability — one that enables every pupil to express who they are, connect with others, make choices, and participate in the world.

We aim for every pupil, regardless of pathway placement or communication profile, to:

- experience themselves as a communicator — as someone who has something to say and a recognised means of saying it, in whatever mode is most accessible and meaningful to them.
- develop their capacity to engage with language — through listening, attending, responding, speaking, reading, and writing — in ways that are developmentally appropriate, purposefully taught, and genuinely valued.
- encounter reading and literature as sources of pleasure, meaning, and identity — developing a relationship with texts and stories that extends beyond school and enriches their experience of the world.
- develop writing and expression as tools for self-determination — from early mark-making through to functional and purposeful writing that serves real audiences and real purposes in adult life.
- build the communication skills needed for safety, autonomy, and participation — including the capacity to express needs, assert boundaries, seek help, and navigate the communicative demands of daily and community life.
- develop vocabulary and language understanding across the curriculum — through purposeful, contextualised encounter with language embedded in meaningful activity.
- experience an English curriculum that affirms their identity and reflects the diversity of human experience — through text selection, discussion, and creative work that is genuinely inclusive.
- receive the specialist support they need to develop as communicators and literacy learners — through integrated Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy input, assistive technology, and adaptive teaching.

These aims apply across all three pathways. What changes is the nature of the encounter and the form of the outcome — not the ambition.

## SECTION 3: CURRICULUM APPROACH

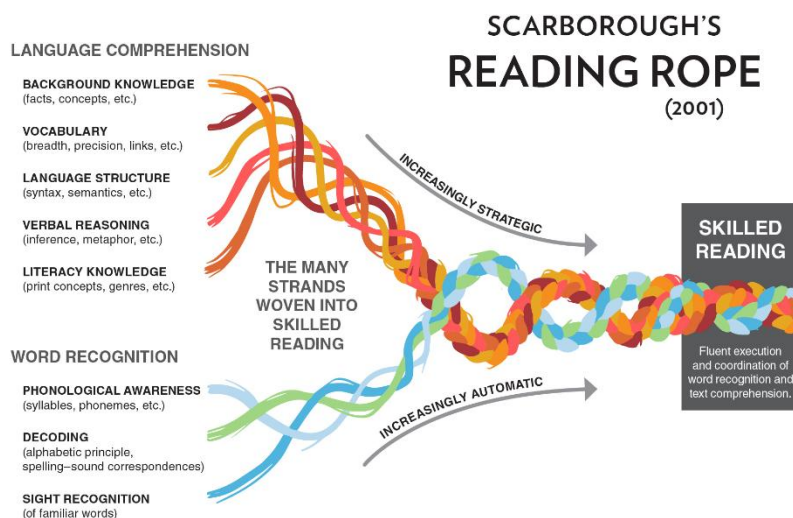
English at Mountfield Heath School is not a single curriculum experienced in the same way by all pupils. Pupils are placed on one of three curriculum pathways — Curiosity, Discover, or Explore — according to their stage of development, communication profile, and individual need. The Curriculum Policy sets out the full framework of the Capabilities Approach and the rationale for pathway-based provision; this section describes what that framework means for English specifically.

The curriculum is backwards-chained from adulthood. The Curriculum Experiences Collection makes the adulthood orientation of each pathway explicit: Curiosity lays the sensory, relational, and experiential foundations for lifelong participation; Discover builds the functional communication and early literacy needed for supported independence; Explore develops the agency, self-knowledge, and literacy needed to navigate adult life as independently and meaningfully as possible. These orientations shape every planning and provision decision in English.

What follows describes the approach to reading, writing, and communication across the pathways as an integrated whole. Detailed curriculum and therapeutic rationale for communication and language development is held in the Language and Communication Deep Dive, which should be read alongside this policy.

### Reading

All pupils encounter reading at MHS. What changes across pathways is the nature of the encounter and the relationship between a pupil and a text. Our approach draws on the evidence that skilled reading depends on two mutually reinforcing dimensions — word recognition and language comprehension — and that both require careful, sustained, and balanced attention for our pupils (Scarborough, 2001).



Mountfield Heath School has adopted Twinkl Phonics as its named Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP) programme. Twinkl Phonics is a DfE-validated programme and provides the structured, cumulative, and progressive framework through which pupils at MHS are taught phonics. To

accompany the programme, pupils access Rhino Readers decodable books, which are directly mapped to the sounds taught at each stage, enabling pupils to apply and consolidate their phonics knowledge through reading practice. Phonics teaching is adapted to individual pace and profile and is never delivered at the expense of comprehension or reading enjoyment.

For pupils on the Curiosity pathway, structured phonics is introduced only where it is developmentally appropriate; for many, the priority is immersive, sensory, and co-regulated language experience that lays the phonological and relational foundations for later literacy. For pupils on the Discover and Explore pathways, phonics teaching is more structured where relevant to the individual's decoding stage, and is always delivered in a context that preserves the pupil's sense of themselves as a capable communicator and meaning-maker.

For pupils whose decoding is developing and who benefit from age-appropriate decodable texts with controlled vocabulary, MHS uses the Phonics Books series. These texts — including the Moon Dogs, Totem, and Rescue ranges — are designed for readers who may be working at an earlier decoding stage but whose interests and life experience extend well beyond the content of early-stage reading books. The series supports pupils to experience success and independence as readers without being constrained to texts that feel juvenile or reductive.

A central vehicle for reading and writing development at MHS is the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) Power of Reading programme. Power of Reading schemes of work are built around high-quality texts — primarily picture books and accessible non-fiction, extended where appropriate to include poetry and chapter fiction — and provide structured opportunities for talk, drama, creative response, and writing. The school holds an active CLPE membership and subscription and subscribes to the CLPE Reading for Pleasure: What We Know Works (2018) framework. The Power of Reading approach is particularly well-suited to our pupils because it places reading enjoyment, meaning-making, and comprehension at the centre of the literacy curriculum from the outset — not as rewards for mastering decoding, but as the conditions in which reading development occurs.

On the Curiosity pathway, high-quality texts are used as objects of shared attention and sensory experience, read aloud in co-regulated contexts, with adult attunement and response rather than taught comprehension tasks. On the Discover and Explore pathways, Power of Reading schemes of work provide the primary structure for English planning, adapted to individual needs and pathway placement.

All pupils are encouraged to read for enjoyment and to see themselves as readers with preferences, tastes, and opinions. The school maintains a dedicated library stocked with a range of fiction and non-fiction texts, selected to reflect the diversity of experience and identity of our pupils and the wider world. All children have daily opportunities to practise reading skills across the curriculum and to read for enjoyment, through individual, paired, shared, and guided reading as appropriate to the pupil and context. Reading records support communication between class teams about pupils' reading experiences and progress.

## **Writing**

Writing is understood as one mode of communication among many — valued, purposefully taught, and developed progressively, but never positioned as the only or primary measure of a pupil's capacity to express themselves.

On the Curiosity pathway, early mark-making is the beginning of writing. Pupils are offered opportunities to make marks in a range of media through creative and multi-sensory approaches. Pre-writing skills are developed through the P-level and Level 1 activities of the OFG Universal Handwriting Programme, embedded in sensory and physical activity throughout the school day. The emphasis is on the experience of making a mark and having it mean something, not on the formation of recognisable letters.

On the Discover pathway, writing develops as a functional and expressive tool. Pupils are supported to communicate through whatever combination of modes best serves them — handwriting, keyboard input, symbols, AAC, dictation, adult scribing — with all modes treated as equally valid expressions of the pupil's voice. Letter formation is taught through the OFG Universal Handwriting Programme. Where pupils have fine motor or sensory needs that affect their engagement with handwriting tasks, this is addressed through the programme's OT-informed activities and, where needed, through direct Occupational Therapy input. Keyboard skills are developed alongside handwriting, using tools including Clicker and InPrint where appropriate. Spelling is developed in line with pupils' phonics progression as identified through Twinkl Phonics, adapted to individual pace and profile.

Grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary are developed in context — embedded in purposeful writing tasks and across the curriculum — rather than through decontextualised instruction. CLPE Power of Reading schemes of work provide a central vehicle for writing development, creating text-rooted writing opportunities grounded in shared reading and supported by talk and drama.

On the Explore pathway, writing develops as a tool for self-expression, reflection, and participation in adult life. Pupils write across a range of forms and purposes: personal narrative, functional writing, persuasive and expressive writing, and creative response. Form and audience shape every task. The communicative demands of adult life are rehearsed purposefully — writing emails, completing forms, following and producing instructions, engaging with the written conventions of community and civic life. Pupils are taught explicitly that writing is a way of being heard: of making an argument, expressing a position, and navigating a world that assumes literacy. CLPE Power of Reading schemes extend on the Explore pathway to include a wider range of text types, with writing tasks that respond to more complex and demanding texts.

Across all pathways, writing development is understood as comprising two distinct but interdependent strands: composition and transcription. Composition — the capacity to form and express ideas — and transcription — the physical and technical means of recording them — are given equal and explicit attention, recognising that for many pupils at MHS these strands may develop at different rates and through different means. A pupil may communicate sophisticated ideas through scribing, dictation, AAC, or symbol-based composition while their transcription skills are still developing; equally, a pupil may have functional handwriting and phonics knowledge while requiring significant support to compose for meaning and purpose. This decoupling of composition and transcription is central to MHS's approach: it preserves pupils' sense of themselves as meaning-makers and communicators at every stage, and it ensures that assessment of writing reflects capability across both strands rather than collapsing both into a single measure of output.

The development of handwriting across all pathways is guided by the OFG Universal Handwriting Programme, an Occupational Therapy-informed framework developed specifically for pupils with complex and neurodiverse learning profiles. The programme covers pre-writing skills through to speed, fluidity, and endurance across eight developmental levels from P-level mark-making to Level 7. Staff use the accompanying handwriting checklist to identify each pupil's current level. Where a pupil is not making expected progress within the programme, this triggers consultation with the Occupational Therapy team. The decision to move a pupil toward a cursive style is made only once foundational levels are secure and only where this is appropriate for the individual.

## **Communication and spoken language**

Communication is not a strand of the English curriculum at MHS — it is its foundation. This section should be read alongside the Language and Communication Deep Dive, which sets out the full curriculum and therapeutic rationale in detail.

Speech and Language Therapy is embedded within the school's Integrated Therapeutic Curriculum and is central to the English curriculum rather than an add-on to it. The SaLT team provides three levels of support: universal support, encompassing the communication strategies and approaches embedded in daily practice across all classrooms; enhanced support for identified pupils requiring targeted group or individual input; and specialist support for pupils with the most complex communication profiles, including Gestalt Language Processors and AAC users. All three levels are integrated with ITEP targets and EHCP outcomes.

Sign Supported English is embedded in daily practice across the whole school. All staff receive regular training and are expected to use signs consistently alongside spoken language throughout the school day. SSE is not delivered as a discrete lesson but as a pervasive feature of the communicative environment.

For pupils on the Curiosity pathway, the priority is establishing the foundational conditions in which communication becomes possible: joint attention, contingent response, and the reliable experience of being heard. All communication — vocalisation, gesture, eye contact, body movement, facial expression — is recognised, honoured, and responded to consistently. We recognise that pupils may acquire language through different routes, including Gestalt Language Processing; our approach is responsive to each pupil's acquisition route as assessed by the SaLT team. For pupils on the Discover pathway, communication develops as a functional and purposeful tool for participation in shared life, with all communication modes equally valued. For pupils on the Explore pathway, spoken language is developed as a tool for self-determination: pupils engage in purposeful discussion, negotiation, presentation, and conversation, and develop the metacognitive awareness to reflect on how they communicate and what effect their language has on others.

Vocabulary development at MHS is embedded in everyday curriculum experience rather than delivered as a discrete programme. Pupils encounter new language through shared texts, adult modelling, and purposeful activity across all curriculum areas; vocabulary is introduced in context, revisited deliberately, and used as a vehicle for building both comprehension and communication. The Language and Communication Deep Dive sets out in detail how vocabulary development is integrated with the SaLT team's universal and enhanced support, including the use of Blank levels of questioning, visual vocabulary supports, and contextualised repetition appropriate to each pupil's communication profile.

Class teachers are responsible for identifying the vocabulary central to each curriculum topic and ensuring it is taught, displayed, and reinforced across contexts — in English and across all other subject areas — recognising that the communicative demands of daily and adult life are built as much on language breadth as on technical literacy skills.

## **Dyslexia**

A significant number of pupils at MHS have been assessed as having a dyslexic learning profile. The school uses the British Dyslexia Association (2021) definition of dyslexia and understands dyslexia within a neurodiversity-affirming framework. We do not treat a dyslexic profile as a deficit to be remediated but as a different way of processing language that requires thoughtful, adapted teaching, consistent with the school's broader commitment to neurodiversity-affirming practice as set out in the Behaviour Policy.

In practical terms, teaching of reading and writing is adapted throughout to support pupils with dyslexic profiles: multi-sensory approaches to phonics and handwriting, the prioritisation of comprehension and meaning-making alongside decoding work, the use of assistive technology where appropriate, and the integration of Speech and Language Therapy input to address phonological and processing difficulties.

The Phonics Books series provides age-appropriate decodable texts that allow pupils with dyslexic profiles to experience success and independence as readers. Where a more detailed assessment of a pupil's dyslexic profile is indicated, this is arranged through the SENCo in consultation with appropriate external specialist assessment services.

## **Literacy intervention**

Literacy intervention at MHS is not a discrete programme delivered separately from the curriculum. It is a multidisciplinary, ITEP-driven response to each pupil's identified needs, embedded in the Integrated Therapeutic Curriculum and informed by ongoing assessment and professional dialogue between education and clinical colleagues. Where a pupil's literacy development is identified as an area of priority need, this is reflected in their ITEP targets, set collaboratively by the class teacher, SENCo, and clinical colleagues, and reviewed termly. Where progress is limited or stalled over time, this is identified through pupil progress meetings and prompts professional inquiry — review of targets, adaptation of provision, increased therapeutic input, or consultation with external agencies — rather than automatic escalation to a named programme.

In practice, intervention draws on Speech and Language Therapy at universal, enhanced, and specialist levels; the OFG Universal Handwriting Programme with direct OT support where indicated; the Phonics Books series as a structured, success-oriented reading resource; Twinkl Phonics adapted to individual pace and profile; and assistive technology including Clicker, InPrint, and AAC devices where access to written expression is significantly constrained.

## **Planning and sequencing**

English planning at MHS operates across three layers. The Curriculum Experiences Collection and the English Curriculum Wheel together provide the long-term planning framework: they set out the capability domains, adulthood orientations, and curriculum experiences that shape the school's English provision across all pathways. Medium-term planning is produced at pathway level, typically co-produced by class teachers working within a pathway team, using Power of Reading units as the primary planning scaffold adapted to pathway stage and individual profile.

Class-specific planning distils this into the week-by-week teaching decisions made by class teachers in response to their pupils' current needs, ITEP targets, and EfL evidence. This planning architecture means that provision is consistent in intent across the school while remaining genuinely responsive at the level of the individual pupil and class.

## **SECTION 4: ASSESSMENT**

Assessment of English at MHS is developmental and ipsative, in line with the Assessment, Feedback and Evidence of Learning Policy, which should be read alongside this section. Progress in English is understood in relation to each pupil's own starting point, profile of need, and context of learning — not against age-related expectations, year-group descriptors, or normative literacy benchmarks.

Evidence of reading, writing, and communication development is captured through Evidence for Learning and may include observation notes, photographs, video, pupil voice, professional reflection, and examples of pupil work. EfL entries are tagged to ITEP targets and Capabilities achievement statements. Progress is recognised when pupils demonstrate capability in ways that are new, more independent, self-directed, or generalised across contexts.

Each pupil's English-related learning priorities are reflected in their ITEP, aligned to their EHCP outcomes. ITEP targets in the English domain are reviewed termly and progress is recorded using the ZEDSM framework — Zero, Emerging, Developing, Secure, Mastered. Movement between stages does not follow a fixed timeframe and reflects the complexity of each pupil's profile.

Where placing authorities request a broad indication of attainment — for example, as part of an annual review or phase transfer — teachers provide a best-fit professional judgement referenced to national year-group descriptors (for example, Working Towards Year 3 or Working At Year 1 for reading, writing, and mathematics). This is understood as a teacher's contextual judgement, not a formal standardised assessment, and reflects the reality that MHS does not follow the National Curriculum; standardised assessments are used only where they are in the individual pupil's best interests or specifically requested by a statutory authority.

The Capabilities achievement statements most directly relevant to English are Senses, Imagination and Thought; Emotions; Affiliation; Control; and Practical Reason, though English learning may also evidence progress across other capability domains.

Where a standardised assessment of reading is considered appropriate and in the pupil's interest — for example, a Diagnostic Reading Analysis to inform the annual review process — this is arranged on an individual basis, in consultation with the class teacher, SENCo, and clinical team. Such assessments are used to supplement rather than replace EfL evidence, ITEP review, and professional judgement. For some pupils, the format or demands of standardised assessment would not produce reliable or meaningful data, and the decision not to complete one is made on the same individual basis.

Assessment quality in English is maintained through EfL moderation, pupil progress meetings involving class teachers, senior leaders, and clinical colleagues, and leadership monitoring of assessment practice, in line with the school's wider QA framework.

Pupils' progress in English is communicated to parents and carers through termly ITEP reviews, annual EHCP review reports, and Evidence for Learning Journals. These mechanisms fulfil the school's obligation to share performance information with families in a format appropriate to the school's assessment model and pupil profile.

## SECTION 5: REFERENCES

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## SECTION 6: APPENDICES

### Phonics Books Scheme:

Series	Phonic focus	Letter/sound correspondences	Word structure	Phase in 'Letters and Sounds'
<b>Moon Dogs Sets 1 and 2</b>	Sounds of the alphabet and consonant digraphs	1 and 2 letter spellings	1 syllable words	Phase 2, 4
<b>Moon Dogs Vowel Spellings</b>	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
<b>Magic Belt/That Dog!</b>	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
<b>Totem/ Alba</b>	CVC through to alternative vowel spellings	2, 3 and 4 letter spellings	2 and 3 syllable words	Phases 2-5
<b>Rescue/ Talisman 1/ Island Adventure</b>	More alternative spellings for vowel sounds	2, 3 and 4 letter spellings	2 and 3 syllable words	Phase 5
<b>Titan's Gauntlets/ Talisman 2</b>	More alternative spellings for vowel and consonants sounds and common Latin suffixes	2, 3 and 4 letter spellings	Multi-syllabic	Phase 5, 6
<b>Amber Guardians</b>	Introduction of morphology: prefixes, suffixes, base/root words	2, 3 and 4 letter spellings	Multi-syllabic	Phase 6

### 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