

English Policy

Aims and objectives

'A high-quality education in English will teach pupils to speak and write fluently so that they can communicate their ideas and emotions to others and through their reading and listening, others can communicate with them.' National Curriculum 2013

At Alwyn we believe the English curriculum develops children's ability to communicate effectively- to listen, speak, read and write for a wide range of purposes, including the communication of their ideas, opinions and feelings.

Children are enabled to express themselves creatively and imaginatively as they become enthusiastic and critical readers of stories, poetry and drama, as well as of non-fiction and media texts.

Children gain an understanding of how language works by looking at its patterns and structures. Children use their knowledge, skills and understanding in speaking and writing across a range of different situations.

Alwyn Infant School works to ensure that all children develop the ability to communicate effectively and that any barriers to learning are swiftly identified and steps taken to remove them. The skills will be taught and practised in many areas across the curriculum, and not just in 'English' lessons.

Our objectives are:

- to enable children to speak clearly and audibly in a range of circumstances (eg. paired talk, group discussions, sharing presentations, role play and debates); they should be able to clearly explain their ideas and take account of other people's perspective
- to show children how to adapt their speech to a wide range of circumstances and become effective communicators, both verbal and non-verbal, through a variety of drama activities
- to encourage children to listen with concentration, in order to identify the main points, and be able to question and respond appropriately
- to help children become confident, independent readers and develop their understanding of meaning conveyed at word, sentence and whole text level
- to develop the habit and enjoyment of reading widely and often for pleasure and information
- to engender in children a love of literature and an appreciation of our literary heritage
- to write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting their language and style depending on context, purpose and audience
- to develop skills in planning, drafting, evaluating and editing their writing
- to acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language
- to enable and encourage pupils to apply their literacy skills across the whole curriculum.

Teaching and learning

We use a variety of teaching and learning approaches in our English lessons. Our main aim is to develop children's knowledge, skills, and understanding in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Our timetable ensures that pupils have a daily lesson which focuses specifically on the development of English skills and provides numerous opportunities to practise and improve on their learning. Whilst there is a high proportion of whole-class and group teaching, independent and paired activities allows an opportunity to talk and collaborate, and so embed and enhance pupils' learning. They have the opportunity to experience a wide range of texts, and to support their work with a variety of resources, such as word banks, phonic resources, dictionaries, thesauruses and multi media resources. Children use ICT where it enhances their learning. Wherever possible, we encourage children to use and apply their learning in all areas of the

curriculum, and will often find opportunities to teach and reinforce English skills in other subject areas.

In all classes, children have a wide range of abilities, and we seek to provide suitable learning opportunities for all children by matching the challenge of the task to the ability of the child. We achieve this through a range of strategies such as differentiated work, targeted group activities, individualised learning objectives and targets. We use teaching assistants to support some children, and to enable work to be matched to the needs of individuals.

English curriculum planning

English is a core subject in the National Curriculum. We use the guidance from the National government publications (Literacy Strategy, Revised Primary Framework for literacy, National Curriculum) as well as the interests of the children as the basis for implementing the statutory requirements.

The planning is structured to form a long term plan with an appropriate balance of fiction and non-fiction work units that are broken down in to short term weekly plans. Weekly planning covers skills required in the form of 'I can' statements. We plan activities that build on the children's prior learning. While we give children of all abilities the opportunity to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding, we also ensure progression, so that there is an increasing challenge for the children as they move up through the school.

Speaking and Listening

Children's ability to speak and to listen is fundamental to their language development, effective learning in school and is crucial to their social development. It is embedded into all areas of the curriculum as we teach children to communicate their ideas and opinions in a confident and clear manner as well as listening to and respecting others in a wide range of contexts. Role play and drama activities are also used to develop skills. In addition, the children have the opportunity to participate in regular sharing presentations that are planned at home and often include multimedia or visual aids. These help to develop presentation skills but also how to be a good audience and listener as there is an opportunity to respond and ask questions.

Reading/Phonics

Reading is a multi-strategy approach to understanding the written word. It is not simply the decoding of marks on the page but involves the ability to read with understanding a wide range of different texts, including fiction, non-fiction, real world texts such as labels, captions, lists and environmental print. Competence in reading is the key to independent learning and therefore the teaching of reading is given a high priority by all staff. Success in reading has a direct effect on progress in all areas of the curriculum and is crucial in developing children's self-esteem, confidence and motivation.

Reading is taught throughout the whole school as part of the English lesson and as an integral part of the school day. It may be taught as a whole class during a shared reading session or in smaller groups or during individual reading times.

Reading in the foundation stage starts with picture books and then progresses to phonetically decodable books and includes the keywords taught in class. Guided group reading begins in year 1 to focus on particular reading skill development. During guided reading sessions, the adult can read texts at an appropriate level, explicitly teaching and modelling next step reading skills, including higher level skills such as using inference and deduction to understand meaning. Guided reading sessions are teachers' key opportunity to assess children's reading and to plan which skills they need to develop next so assessment records are kept. We also ensure children have the opportunity to read aloud, individually to an adult, at least once a week to an adult.

The school environment is rich with appropriate text: labels, captions, simple instructions, names, alphabet prompts and children's own mark-making and writing. Adults continuously model

reading in the learning environment, embedding in children's understanding the idea that print conveys meaning and is invaluable to us in our lives. Children are taught from the youngest age to value and care for books, to understand their structure, to handle them appropriately and to enjoy sharing them with each other.

There is a systematic approach to the teaching of phonics using the Letters and Sounds scheme. Children's ability to phonetically 'decode' letters and words into oral sounds is continuously assessed throughout the EYFS and Key Stage 1, in order that the next steps in children's knowledge of phonics can be effectively planned and taught. All children have a daily phonic session to support their development of both reading and writing skills. Children are also encouraged to use a variety of strategies when tackling unknown words including reading on, phonic, contextual and graphic cues.

We do not use one single structured 'reading scheme' in our school, but believe in guiding and supporting children to read a variety of books with text of an appropriate level of difficulty. For this reason our reading books are colour-coded to indicate their level of difficulty. A range of books are available at each reading band including non-fiction, reading schemes and story books as well as poetry to ensure all interests are covered. We also value and promote computer-based reading resources, games and the internet to support children's reading.

Parents are seen as essential partners in the development of their child's progress in reading. Books are sent home for the child to read to the parent or for the parent to read to the child. There is a reading record book for parents to comment in and record home reading.

Writing

Writing is essential to thinking and learning. Children use writing as a means of developing, organising and communicating ideas. Through a cross curricular approach, children should encounter a rich and stimulating environment that will enable them to develop their writing for a wide variety of purposes and audiences, building on previous experiences and enjoyment.

In EYFS, children's writing development is encouraged through independent mark making in a variety of media from paint and crayons to shaving foam and "gloop". A variety of writing frames and support materials are available to facilitate writing for a number of purposes. Role play areas encourage children to take on the role of writer. Where ever possible children are given real opportunities to write and materials for books, cards, posters, lists, letters etc are always available. Teachers draw children's attention to punctuation and grammar in big books or on IWBs and children, who are able, are supported to use capital letters and full stops.

Pupils in KeyStage 1 should be able to demonstrate the key skills as outlined in the New National English Framework. Throughout their time at Alwyn, children will be given opportunities to see themselves as writers from the earliest stages and to build upon previous experiences. This will include the checking of spellings and meanings of words, developing an understanding of grammar/punctuation, writing in a range of styles and for a variety of purposes and actively participate in writing tasks by making valued contributions and sharing ideas. As well, as the physical process of forming letters and writing with a fluent, legible handwriting style.

A variety of teaching styles will be used in KeyStage 1 and all writing is connected to a topic/book so a clear purpose for writing is established. Talk for Writing will be regularly used to improve structure, increase the range of vocabulary used and support the understanding of grammar as children have opportunities to 'play with words'. Talk partners will reinforce this approach on a daily basis. Children will be taught to use dictionaries, thesaurus and word banks to improve their vocabulary choices.

Shared writing will teach children how to generate imaginative and informative ideas through discussion and questioning and collaborative working. The teacher has the opportunity to model particular skills and address misconceptions and editing skills.

Guided writing sessions are used flexibly to provide a bridge between shared and independent work. During these sessions the teacher or TA may scribe for specific children or support children writing independently or in pairs with a particular learning objective.

Independent Writing opportunities allow children to write independently so that the skills demonstrated during shared writing and supported during guided writing will be transferred into their own writing.

Since accurate, fluent and independent writing is dependent on a secure grasp of phonics, a high priority is placed throughout EYFS and KS1 on daily systematic phonics teaching (based on the 'Letters and Sounds' programme). This gives children the strong and essential foundation upon which all their future development as writers will be built.

Contribution of English to teaching in other curriculum areas

The literacy skills that children develop are linked to, and applied in, every area of our curriculum. The children's skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening enable them to communicate and express themselves in all areas of their work at school.

English and inclusion

All children, whatever their ability and individual needs, have a basic entitlement to be taught essential English skills, and to have the opportunity to develop those skills to the best of their ability. We provide learning opportunities that enable all pupils to make good progress. We strive hard to meet the needs of those pupils with special educational needs, those with disabilities, those with special gifts and talents, and those learning English as an additional language, and we take all reasonable steps to achieve this.

When progress falls significantly outside the expected range, the pupil may have special educational needs. Our assessment process looks at a range of factors – classroom organisation, teaching materials, teaching style, differentiation – so that we can take some additional or different action to enable the child to learn more effectively. Assessment against the National Curriculum and the schools 'I can' grids allows us to consider each child's attainment and progress against expected levels. This ensures that our teaching is matched to the child's needs.

Assessment

Teachers assess children's work in English in three phases. The short-term assessments that teachers make as part of every lesson help them to adjust their daily plans. They match these short-term assessments closely to the learning objectives. Written or verbal feedback is given to help guide children's progress. When appropriate, children are encouraged to review their work based on feedback and make simple self-assessments about how they can improve.

Teachers use medium-term assessments to measure progress against the curriculum key objectives, and to help them plan future. They use 'I can' grids to record the attainment and progress for each pupil.

Teachers make long-term assessments towards the end of the school year, and they use these to assess progress against school and national targets. With the help of these long-term assessments, they are able to set targets for the next school year, and to summarise the progress of each child before discussing it with the child's parents or carers. The next teacher then uses these long-term assessments as the planning basis for the new school year.

These long-term assessments are based on teacher assessments, supported by national assessment guidelines, and may be informed by the use of standardised tests. Pupils participate in the national tasks and tests at the end of Year 2.

Teachers meet regularly to moderate assessments across a range of writing and other activities to ensure that our teacher assessments are accurate and in line with national standards.

Staff are continuously developing their English subject knowledge and the subject leader takes an active role in disseminating best practice and making recommendations for staff training.

Resources

We have a very wide range of resources to support the teaching of English across the school. All classrooms have dictionaries and a variety of age-appropriate learning materials and have a selection of fiction and non-fiction texts. Children have access to computers in the classroom and a bank of laptops are available to support their learning.

Monitoring and review

The co-ordination of the English curriculum is the responsibility of the subject leader, who also:

- supports colleagues in their teaching, by keeping abreast of current developments in English and by providing a strategic lead and direction for this subject;
- gives the headteacher an annual summary report in which s/he evaluates the strengths and areas for development in English in the school, and indicates areas for further improvement;
- uses specially allocated regular management time to review evidence of the children's learning, and to observe and review literacy lessons across the school.

A named member of the school's governing body is briefed to oversee the teaching of English and meets with the subject leader to review progress.