English Policy

School Aims

We want to create a school where:

• we include everyone and strive for continued progress and learning for all children, no matter their starting points;
• we show courage, determination, respect and kindness in all that we do;
• children and staff are all safe, happy, healthy and contributing positively;
• leaders at all levels are inspirational practitioners, able and enthusiastic to learn from and develop others;
• we inspire success and build a strong foundation for future learning.

Our aim is *Inspiring Success* for every pupil. This underpins the design, sequencing and implementation of our English curriculum across the Early Years and Key Stage 1. Our values of Courage, Determination, Respect and Kindness directly shape pupils' attitudes to learning, interactions with each other and the culture of the school. These values are embedded through explicit teaching, daily routines, staff modelling and the behaviours we consistently expect and reinforce.

Aims of English Policy and Practice

We aim to provide a rich, challenging and structured language environment to enable children to become:

• confident, independent and reflective speakers, listeners, readers and writers;
• enthusiastic and creative in using language to develop ideas and thinking;
• effective and skilled in communicating to others in writing and speech for a variety of purposes.

Across Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, we prioritise:

• secure foundations in language and communication;
• early reading, including systematic synthetic phonics;
• early writing, including transcriptional fluency;
• equitable access for all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, quieter learners or those with SEND.

We focus on a small number of high-value components that must become automatic. This ensures pupils keep up with learning and do not rely on later intervention.

Approach

The English policy at The Orchard has been written in the context of the National Curriculum for English (2014) and the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum. These documents guide our planning and teaching alongside our school schemes of work.

The policy is reviewed and adapted regularly through staff meetings. We review and evaluate standards of work in English through termly monitoring including moderation, work scrutiny, classroom observation, learning walks, drop-in visits and planning scrutiny.

Across Early Years and Key Stage 1, teaching follows a clear, carefully sequenced progression. Staff explicitly teach and rehearse key knowledge and vocabulary, revisit prior learning and use structured recall to secure long-term retention. Learning intentions are clear and manageable so that all pupils can succeed.

Organisation of the English Curriculum

English is central to teaching across the curriculum and is key to children's success in their learning. English is taught through daily lessons and applied across other subjects.

Speaking and Listening

Speaking and listening are prioritised across the school. Staff model ambitious vocabulary and full sentence responses. Strategies include:

- talk partners;
- oral rehearsal prior to writing;
- sentence starters for pupils requiring support;
- structured questioning, including "no hands" questioning where appropriate;
- extended wait time to support quieter pupils.

In Reception, staff use ShREC strategies to enhance vocabulary acquisition and sentence structure. Adults join children in shared attention, respond to and extend utterances, model ambitious language and reinforce back-and-forth conversation. This ensures children develop the communication skills necessary for reading comprehension and early writing.

Reading

Group Reading

Children take part in adult-led group reading sessions at least three times per week. Reading sessions follow a structured sequence focusing on:

• decoding;
• prosody (fluency and expression);
• comprehension.

Reading books are carefully selected to match children's secure phonic knowledge. Children take home the book read in school to practise reading fluently and with expression. Written comments are made in each child's Home-School reading record book by staff and parents.

Individual Reading

Teachers or Teaching & Learning Assistants hear children read individually, providing encouragement, questioning and targeted support. Books are closely matched to secure phonic knowledge to ensure high levels of accuracy and confidence. Children are assessed regularly to ensure they are reading with at least 95% accuracy.

In Year Two, children assessed as secure in their phonic knowledge move on to appropriately levelled texts.

Daily Reading for Pleasure

Children have daily quiet reading time and access to carefully selected book corner texts. These books are chosen to promote enjoyment, broaden vocabulary and develop knowledge of a range of genres and authors. Children select a book weekly to share at home for pleasure.

Parents are valuable partners in teaching children to read. Daily home reading is an important part of homework, supported by regular communication in the reading record book.

Phonics and Spelling

Phonics is taught daily using the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds programme with fidelity. Teaching includes:

• systematic progression of GPCs;
• daily revisiting and rehearsal;
• matched decodable reading books;
• regular assessment to quickly identify and address gaps.

Additional practice is delivered 1:1 or in small groups where needed.

In Year 2, children move onto the Little Wandle Year 2 Spelling programme and later the Spelling Shed scheme, following assessment.

Tricky words and common exception words are explicitly taught, displayed in classrooms and assessed regularly. Dictation is used to assess application of spelling and transcription skills.

Writing

Children write every day. English lessons incorporate a range of genres including letters, stories, lists, instructions, non-chronological reports and poetry.

Across Reception and Key Stage 1, we prioritise transcriptional fluency to avoid cognitive overload during composition. Writing is carefully sequenced so that children secure strong sentence construction and accurate transcription before moving to longer pieces. Writing is modelled, orally rehearsed, scaffolded and gradually released to independence.

Early Writing in Reception

In Reception, children receive explicit instruction in:

- letter formation using programme-specific mnemonics;
- correct pencil grip through the Nip-Flip-Grip approach;
- transcriptional accuracy through twice-weekly dictation sessions;
- daily handwriting practice.

Reception also have discrete handwriting and discrete dictation lessons in addition to continuous provision opportunities. Fine motor strengthening activities are prioritised, particularly in the first half term, to support grip, control and stamina.

Provision combines direct teaching with purposeful opportunities for rehearsal and application within structured continuous provision.

Writing in Key Stage 1

In Year 1 and Year 2, provision includes:

- daily handwriting;
- explicit teaching of letter families;
- continued focus on posture and pencil grip;
- four dictation sessions per week in Year 1 and two longer dictations per week in Year 2;
- structured modelling and guided practice before independent writing.

Although children are exposed to a range of text types, the focus remains on securing accurate transcription, sentence fluency and grammatical accuracy before extending writing length.

Handwriting

Children develop a legible style of handwriting through explicit teaching of correct posture, pencil grip, letter formation and spacing.

Reception children print letters using the Little Wandle formation phrases. In Year 1, children continue printing before being introduced to lead-in and lead-out strokes. In Year 2, children begin to use diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters.

Handwriting is practised daily and taught discretely several times each week in Year 1 and Year 2, and now discretely in Reception. Displays demonstrating correct letter formation are consistent across year groups.

Grammar

Grammar is taught explicitly in Years 1 and 2 and reinforced daily through speaking, listening, reading and writing activities. Children are taught using a 'revisit, teach and apply' approach to secure understanding and application.

English Across the Curriculum

English skills are applied across the curriculum. Children read, write and discuss ideas in other subjects, reinforcing vocabulary, comprehension and composition skills.

Homework

In Reception and Year 1, homework consists of practising phonemes and tricky words in line with Little Wandle. Children take home carefully matched decodable books.

In Year 2, children read books matched to their assessed level and complete weekly comprehension homework in the summer term.

Assessment

Formative Assessment

Teachers and Learning Support Assistants observe and assess children during reading, writing and carpet sessions. Information gathered is used:

a) to provide immediate verbal feedback;
b) to provide next steps;
c) to inform future planning.

Spelling and transcription are assessed daily within lessons and through dictation. Tricky words and common exception words are assessed regularly and shared with parents.

Summative Assessment

Each half term teachers assess children's:

- independent writing;
- spelling;
- phonics;
- reading of high frequency words;
- overall reading skills.

Moderation takes place within year groups and across the whole school each term. External moderation with other schools ensures rigour and accuracy.

Progress is analysed termly and additional interventions are planned where needed.

The Subject Leader for English analyses progress across the school, including the progress of disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND, children with EAL and other identified groups.

SEND

Children who make slow or no observable progress may require individually planned programmes. Teachers work with the SENCO to identify appropriate support.

Support may include:

- precision teaching;
- targeted vocabulary work;
- structured scaffolds and chunked instructions;
- visual supports;
- additional phonics or reading practice;
- structured interventions.

If progress remains limited, outside agencies may be involved with parental consent. Individual Support Plans are reviewed at least termly.

Support is designed to help pupils keep up with their peers wherever possible.

Latest review: February 2026