Saint Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy

English Policy

Next Review Date: September 2028

Mission, Vision and Catholic Ethos

At Saint Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy, English is at the heart of learning and is fundamental to pupils' academic, personal and spiritual development.

Rooted in our Catholic mission, we believe that language enables children to understand God's world, form meaningful relationships and participate fully in society. Through reading, writing, speaking and listening, pupils develop confidence, knowledge, wisdom and moral purpose, enabling them to become compassionate, active citizens who live out Gospel values in their daily lives.

Our English curriculum reflects the Trust vision of developing confident, successful learners who aspire to excellence. We believe that every child is entitled to a rich and ambitious English curriculum that inspires curiosity, broadens horizons and provides the skills required for future success. High expectations are held for all pupils regardless of starting points or barriers to learning.

Curriculum planning ensures clear progression from the Early Years Foundation Stage through to Year 6. Knowledge, vocabulary and skills are deliberately sequenced to enable pupils to revisit, strengthen and extend learning over time so that they know more, remember more and can do more.

Curriculum Intent

At Saint Mary's, our English curriculum has been redesigned around the principles outlined within the Stronger Foundations guidance and the DfE Writing Framework.
We aim to develop pupils who are enthusiastic readers, purposeful writers and confident communicators. Through carefully planned learning experiences, pupils acquire the knowledge, vocabulary and literacy skills required to access the wider curriculum and succeed in later life.

The curriculum prioritises strong foundations in language development, speaking and listening, reading fluency, vocabulary acquisition and sentence construction. These foundations are built systematically before increasing levels of complexity are introduced. Knowledge is carefully sequenced so that pupils can connect new learning to existing understanding and apply skills with increasing independence.

High-quality literature sits at the heart of curriculum design. Carefully selected texts provide meaningful contexts for reading, discussion and writing whilst exposing pupils to a broad range of cultures, experiences, authors and perspectives. Through these texts, pupils develop both literary knowledge and an understanding of the wider world.

Our curriculum ensures pupils develop:

- A love of reading and literature.
- Fluency and confidence in reading.
- A rich and ambitious vocabulary.
- Strong foundations in grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- The ability to write effectively for a range of audiences and purposes.
- Confidence in speaking and listening across a variety of contexts.
- Independence, resilience and creativity as learners.

Curriculum Implementation

English is taught through a carefully structured and progressive curriculum that places reading at the centre of learning. High-quality texts act as the stimulus for discussion, vocabulary exploration, reading comprehension and writing outcomes. Learning is carefully sequenced to support progression and long-term retention.

Teachers use agreed progression documents which identify the essential knowledge, vocabulary, grammar and composition skills pupils must acquire within each phase of learning. New knowledge is explicitly taught, modelled and rehearsed before pupils apply learning independently. Opportunities for retrieval practice are embedded within lessons to strengthen memory and support sustained understanding.

Across the curriculum, pupils are provided with opportunities to read, discuss, write and present their ideas. English is recognised both as a subject discipline and as a vehicle through which learning is accessed in all curriculum areas.

Reading

Reading is the driving force behind the curriculum and is regarded as a fundamental life skill. We aim to nurture confident, fluent and enthusiastic readers who read widely for both pleasure and information. Reading lessons develop fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, inference and critical thinking through carefully structured teaching and discussion.

Pupils encounter a diverse range of texts including contemporary fiction, classic literature, poetry, religious texts and high-quality non-fiction. Class texts have been selected to broaden cultural capital, introduce ambitious vocabulary and expose pupils to increasingly sophisticated language and themes.

Reading lessons develop pupils' ability to retrieve information, make deductions, infer meaning, evaluate authorial intent and respond critically to texts. These comprehension skills are taught progressively from EYFS to Year 6 and underpin success across the curriculum. Teachers explicitly model reading fluency, prosody and comprehension strategies. Discussion is a central component of reading lessons, enabling pupils to explain ideas, justify interpretations and engage critically with texts. Reading for pleasure is promoted through class novels, library provision, author studies, book recommendations and regular opportunities for independent reading.

Early Reading and Phonics

The teaching of early reading is systematic, rigorous and responsive to children's needs. Pearson Phonics Bug is used as the school's systematic synthetic phonics programme and provides a clear progression from early phonological awareness to fluent decoding.

Daily phonics lessons ensure children develop secure knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondences, blending, segmenting and decoding strategies. Books are carefully matched to pupils' phonics knowledge to support confidence and success. Assessment is used to identify pupils requiring additional support and intervention.

We are committed to ensuring that every child becomes a confident reader. Early identification, targeted intervention and high-quality teaching enable pupils to secure essential reading foundations as quickly as possible.

Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary is recognised as a key driver of educational achievement and social mobility. Developing pupils' language knowledge is therefore a central priority across the curriculum. Ambitious vocabulary is explicitly planned, taught and revisited within English lessons and across the wider curriculum.

Teachers teach vocabulary through discussion, reading, direct instruction and repeated opportunities for application. Pupils are encouraged to explore word meanings, morphology, etymology and connections between words. Both academic vocabulary and subject-specific vocabulary are systematically developed to support comprehension and communication.

Vocabulary learning is cumulative. Through retrieval activities, purposeful discussion and meaningful application, pupils develop increasingly rich language that supports reading, writing and oral communication.

Writing

Writing develops from high-quality reading, rich experiences and authentic purposes. Through explicit teaching and carefully sequenced learning, pupils acquire the knowledge and skills required to write effectively and independently.

The writing curriculum is informed by the principles set out within the DfE Writing Framework and Stronger Foundations guidance. Teachers prioritise secure foundations in sentence construction, transcription, spelling and grammar before increasing expectations related to composition and authorial choice.

Pupils are taught through modelling, shared writing, guided practice and independent application. Opportunities for planning, drafting, editing and improving enable pupils to understand writing as

a process. Children write for a range of audiences and purposes and learn how writers make deliberate choices regarding vocabulary, structure and organisation.

Writing opportunities are planned across the wider curriculum to ensure pupils apply their literacy skills in meaningful contexts. Extended writing is regularly completed within Religious Education, History, Geography, Science and other foundation subjects, enabling children to transfer and deepen their learning whilst developing subject-specific vocabulary and disciplinary understanding. Pupils are taught that writing is a process. They are given regular opportunities to review, edit, redraft and improve their work so that they develop increasing independence as reflective and effective writers.

By the end of Year 6, pupils are expected to write fluently, accurately and effectively across a broad range of genres and contexts.

Oracy

Oracy underpins all aspects of learning and is regarded as both a curriculum discipline and a teaching tool. Pupils are explicitly taught how to communicate effectively, listen actively and contribute meaningfully to discussion.

Structured opportunities for classroom talk support pupils in developing reasoning, vocabulary and confidence. Children learn to build upon the contributions of others, justify opinions using evidence and adapt language to different audiences and purposes.

Strong speaking and listening skills support pupils' success as readers, writers and learners across the curriculum. Targeted intervention programmes, including speech and language support where required, are used to address barriers to communication and ensure that pupils develop the language skills necessary for success across the curriculum.

Oracy expectations are therefore embedded within classroom practice from EYFS to Year 6.

Spelling and Handwriting

The Emile Spelling Scheme provides a consistent and progressive approach to spelling across the school. Pupils investigate spelling patterns, morphological structures and etymological origins whilst applying learning within purposeful writing.

Handwriting is taught through the Martin Harvey Handwriting Scheme. Pupils develop accurate letter formation, fluent joins and an increasingly automatic handwriting style that supports composition and presentation. High expectations for presentation apply across all curriculum areas.

Early Years Foundation Stage

Communication and language underpin all learning within the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children are immersed in stories, songs, rhymes, role-play and meaningful conversations that promote vocabulary development and communication skills.

Early reading and writing emerge through systematic phonics teaching, high-quality interactions and carefully planned opportunities for mark making, motor development, storytelling and composition. The foundations established within EYFS enable children to become successful readers and writers as they progress through school.

Inclusion and Adaptive Teaching

At Saint Mary's, every child is entitled to access an ambitious and engaging English curriculum. High expectations are maintained for all pupils regardless of need, background or starting point.

Teachers use adaptive teaching approaches, scaffolding, modelling and targeted interventions to ensure all pupils can experience success. Support may include vocabulary pre-teaching, visual supports, structured discussion, targeted reading interventions and personalised learning strategies.

Particular attention is given to supporting pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils and those requiring additional language support whilst maintaining ambitious curriculum expectations.

Assessment

Assessment is integral to effective teaching and learning. Teachers use formative assessment continuously to identify misconceptions, evaluate understanding and inform future teaching.

Assessment information is gathered through questioning, retrieval activities, phonics assessments, reading assessments, independent writing outcomes, spelling assessments and pupil discussion. This enables teachers to monitor progress and provide timely support where required.

Leaders triangulate evidence through lesson observations, work scrutiny, pupil voice and assessment information to evaluate curriculum implementation and impact. Findings inform professional development and future school improvement priorities.

Leadership, Monitoring and Professional Development

The English Subject Leader is responsible for monitoring curriculum implementation, supporting staff development and evaluating the impact of English across the school. Monitoring activities include lesson visits, learning walks, pupil voice activities, work scrutiny, gap analysis, pupil progress meetings and assessment analysis.

Professional development is aligned to school priorities and supports staff in delivering a high-quality English curriculum. Monitoring findings are used to celebrate strengths and identify opportunities for further improvement.

Partnership with Parents and Carers

We recognise that strong partnerships between home and school are essential in developing successful readers and writers. Families are encouraged to share books, listen to children read daily and support learning through discussion and celebration of reading. Parents are provided with information and guidance to enable them to support literacy development beyond the classroom.

Impact and End Points

The impact of the English curriculum is evident through pupils who demonstrate increasing fluency, confidence and independence as readers, writers and communicators. Pupils develop secure knowledge and skills which enable them to access increasingly complex texts, communicate effectively and express themselves with confidence.

By the time pupils leave Saint Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy they are:

- Confident, fluent readers who enjoy reading and can think critically about texts.
- Purposeful writers who can write accurately and effectively for a range of audiences and purposes.
- Articulate communicators who can discuss, justify and explain their ideas with confidence.
- Learners with a rich vocabulary and strong literacy knowledge.
- Well prepared for the next stage of their education and future life opportunities.

As a result of the carefully planned and sequenced curriculum, pupils know more, remember more and can do more. They leave Saint Mary's equipped with the literacy knowledge, skills and confidence required to flourish in secondary education and beyond.