ST. GERARD'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

English Policy 2025 - 2027

"With Christ at our side and St Gerard as our guide, we live, love, learn and pray together."

Literacy Tree
Flagship School
2025-2026

I CAN DO all things THROUGH CHRIST Who gives me Strength
Philippians 4:13

School Mission Statement

Our Mission at St Gerard's is to provide a loving, caring atmosphere enabling each individual to develop intellectually, socially and spiritually. As a Catholic school, the foundation of all we do is based upon Christ and His Gospel values of Love, Peace and Justice. We will strive to ensure that the members of our community are happy and fulfilled in their lives at school.

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In this policy the Governors and teachers set out their intentions about English. We set out our rationale for, and approach to English in the school.

Intent

At St. Gerard's Catholic Primary school, we believe that all children can learn to read, regardless of their background, needs or abilities and are determined to make this happen.

We aim to create a community of avid readers who read fluently and widely and are able to express preferences and opinions about the texts that they read. We intend to develop a culture by which our pupils read for pleasure, having had access to a wide range of text types, genres and authors in order for them to make informed opinions about their favourites.

We want our children to write with confidence and accuracy for a variety of purposes and audiences whilst developing their own imagination and creativity.

We want our children to be able to write with grammatical accuracy and be able to apply spelling patterns correctly. We aim to expose our children to a wide range of vocabulary so that they are able to decipher new words and then use them when speaking, both informally and formally. By equipping our pupils with these skills, we aim to empower them to become confident and highly literate members of society who can read, write and communicate effectively, and can grow and flourish as individuals in our ever-changing world.

Aims and Objectives

At St Gerard's, we promote high standards of language and literacy by equipping pupils with a strong command of the spoken and written word, and to develop their love of literature through widespread reading for enjoyment.

Our general aims for English are to ensure that all pupils:

- Read easily, fluently and with good understanding.
- Develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information. We want children to express a love of reading.
- Acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language.
- Appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage.
- Write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting their language and style in and for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences.
- Use discussion in order to learn; they should be able to elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas.
- Are competent in the arts of speaking and listening, making formal presentations, demonstrating to others and participating in debate.

We believe the exposure to children's literature within the primary school setting is vital as a rich context for learning; not only within English as a subject but to support building a reading culture throughout the school.

We use high quality books that offer opportunities for empathy and can aid philosophical enquiry, where children see their cultures, families and relationships reflected. This is used as a means of developing the spoken language requirements through debate, drama and discussion using the issues raised through, and within, the text.

Implementation

Books are such powerful and wonderful tools which harness so many opportunities. Not only do they offer a wealth of information, experience and knowledge, they also provide opportunities to develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually. High quality texts can improve comprehension, vocabulary, spelling, speaking, listening, and writing. They offer so many benefits, and it is because of these benefits that St Gerard's Catholic Primary School have adopted a completely book-based approach to the teaching of English and have placed it at the very heart of our curriculum.

The pupils at St. Gerard's are taught English through the Literary Curriculum. The Literary Curriculum, designed by the Literacy Tree, is a book-based approach to the teaching of Primary English that places children's literature at the core. Whilst the scheme is there to guide teachers, staff adapt lessons tailored to the needs of our children.

The Literary Curriculum immerses children in a literary world through the planning sequences (for writing) and the literary leaves (for reading) therefore creating strong levels of engagement to provide meaningful and authentic contexts for primary English. Children become critical readers and acquire an authorial style as they encounter a wide-range of authors and a variety of fiction, non-fiction and poetry. Throughout their time at St

Gerard's, pupils will explore over 200 literary texts and experience at least 175 unique significant authors.

To ensure this curriculum is embedded throughout the school, English is taught daily as well as a whole class reading lesson, both with a different focus text.

We follow a spiral approach to learning which allows pupils to learn and revisit the different strands of the National Curriculum several times throughout each year. This spiral approach to learning provides complete coverage of all National Curriculum expectations for writing composition, reading comprehension, grammar, punctuation and vocabulary, as well as coverage of spelling and phonics – all in context.

Pupils have access to a diverse range of books both in their classroom reading areas and in the school library which they can read in school and at home. Reading areas in classrooms promote high quality texts that often link to the wider curriculum being studied. Our library monitors also run lunch-time clubs throughout the week where they deliver reading out loud sessions so pupils can sit, listen and be engrossed in new stories. The monitors also accommodate pupils who just wish to sit in a quiet area and read to themselves, as well as run sessions to help pupils improve specific reading skills. The staff are encouraged to share their love of reading with the children and are expected to model good reading and thinking aloud skills.

Writing

Our book-based planning sequences are detailed lesson plans that last between ten and twenty sessions. They have been written using a wide range of literature that will engage children to be critical readers whilst becoming confident and informed writers. All National Curriculum requirements are embedded, making the grammar purposeful and there are

always a mixture of shorter, longer and extended writing outcomes where the audience and purpose is clear and exciting for children.

Pupils receive lessons based on developing their writing skills four days a week with work recorded in their English books (this includes all elements of spelling, punctuation and grammar). Four lessons per week will have a writing based focus. Pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 will also receive one discrete spelling, punctuation and grammar lesson per week.

Throughout each planning sequence, pupils will be taught the necessary skills to use in their writing and will be given plenty of opportunities to complete pieces of writing at varying length.

A range of themes and genres will be covered by each year group throughout the year. Children will be taught to write through a range of methods; guided, modelled, shared and peer review. Writing should not just take place in the English lesson, it should be across the broad curriculum, and therefore there should be an opportunity for a child to write every day.

Teachers ensure that children have the opportunity to go back and revisit their work to edit and improve. From Year 2 onwards, this is done by using purple pens.

Reading

The Literary Leaves are a suite of book-based comprehension resources for Y2-Y6 designed to support teachers with the teaching of reading, using whole books, rather than extracts. They are created for use in a whole-class reading session or a guided reading session when the skills of reading comprehension are being taught. In the Autumn term Year 2 continue to receive individual guided reading, with a phonics based book, to embed those skills. Each Literary Leaf has 10-20 session notes, with each session focussing on a particular skill to allow the children to secure their knowledge of each particular skill. In many cases the same question stem is used several times to ensure the teacher can model how to answer this type of question, before the children have the opportunity to apply it themselves. Teachers are expected to expose children to different types of questions including those they encounter in a test.

The leaves are not meant to replace the teacher's own planning but should support the teacher with planning questions and activities that will allow children to become critical readers.

All pupils receive one reading lesson each day with work being recorded in their reading book.

We work quickly and efficiently to identify the readers who need the most support and regularly review who our lowest 20% readers are and what support is in place for them. These children receive 1:1 interventions three times a week with their own phonics phase text. Other children who also require interventions may have interventions in another form, such as a group guided reading session.

Spelling

From Year 2 to Year 6, we use 'The Vocabulary Ninja Whole School Spelling System' which provides the resources to effectively teach, learn, practise and test a given spelling rule, directly linked to the National Curriculum.

Each week children are given a list of 5-10 words to learn at home and have the choice to use any supporting resource sheets. These spelling lists are bespoke to each class and cover relevant spelling rules and year group spelling words.

Teachers should also consider if children need different spellings to support areas such as SEND and IEP targets.

Spellings sessions introduce children to the spellings and patterns. Spellings are also sent home for pupils to practise throughout the week. Pupils are assessed on their spellings once each week. If needed, children are identified as needing additional support, they will receive support in an intervention group. EYFS and Year 1 have words that link directly to their phonics learning from that week.

Handwriting

All classes from Reception to Year 6 use the Nelson scheme to develop a consistent and fluent handwriting style.

A 'Pen Licence' may be earned by children (most likely in Key Stage 2) whose handwriting is joined and legible, and where the child's general standards of the presentation of their work is good.

All children work towards the use of joined handwriting in their everyday writing tasks. Where progress on this appears to be slow, additional tailored handwriting support may be organised and delivered.

Handwriting practise takes place at the start of every English lesson and is recorded in English books.

Teaching styles

To enable access to the whole curriculum for every pupil, we cater for the variety of learning styles within each class, and to ensure progression and reinforcement of skills and concepts throughout the year groups, we employ a variety of teaching styles.

Literacy is a basic skill and is key to creativity, imagination and critical thinking. We want our pupils to find learning exciting, compelling and intrinsically worthwhile. Therefore, we use a variety of interactive teaching and learning techniques so that pupils can respond successfully to their learning.

We plan activities where pupils:

- Integrate prior and new knowledge

- Acquire and use a range of learning skills

- Solve problems individually and in groups

- Think carefully about their successes and failures

- Evaluate conflicting evidence and think critically

- Accept that learning involves uncertainty and difficulty

We use questions as a tool for learning. Effective questioning models are how learning evolves. Appropriately designed questions leads pupils from unsorted knowledge to understanding, teaching pupils how to use them for effective learning. Effective questioning will be employed by teachers when planning and shared with children to promote higher order thinking skills and give a shared vocabulary.

We use a wide variety of materials to enable every pupil access the planned teaching and learning objectives.

We give pupils the opportunity to work in a variety of ways – whole class, groups (of different sizes and composition) as pairs and individuals, according to their needs, the nature of the activity and the learning objectives.

We build pupils' confidence and self-esteem, and enable them to become effective language users by:

- Sharing teaching and learning objectives and clarify expected outcomes in a language that pupils can understand.

- Teaching children to self-monitor.

- Effective use of the plenary enabling children to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and process orally as well by in writing.

- Encouraging children to learn from and support one another, and to realise that they do not all have to be at the same level or arrive at the same point at the same time.

- Positive and constructive oral and/or written feedback.

- We enable pupils to develop written and spoken Standard English through the model we set as teachers, and through sharing and providing good quality reading and writing materials and texts.

Key experiences

We aim to provide the pupils of our school with the following key experiences:

- Access to a wide range of fiction and non-fiction and multi-media based material;
- Opportunity to browse and select from a range of books within the classroom;
- Opportunities to experience a wide range of reading, writing, speaking and listening activities;
- Opportunities to be involved in a range of cross curricular activities to develop all aspects of English;
- Opportunities to share books with other children;
- Visits to the school library to listen to stories, choose books and develop library skills;
- Opportunities to experience live performances;
- Opportunities to take part in regular masses, prayer and liturgy and school/key stage performances;
- Participation in book related activities such as dressing up as a book character, quizzes, surveys, sharing opinions;
- The opportunity to present writing in a variety of short, long and extended formats each year, e.g. plays, posters, information leaflets, menus, comic strips etc;
- The opportunity to engage in whole class, guided, paired and individual reading and writing activities;
- The opportunity to engage in various drama and role play as a tool for learning;
- Opportunities to take part in performances for parents and the wider community;
- Opportunities to develop children's skills as critical writers as modelled by their teachers;
- Share pupil book reviews with parents through newsletters.

Resources

The Literary Curriculum (developed by the Literacy Tree) is an approach that staff follow and adapt to suit the needs of their learners. It is a complete book-based approach used to cover all objectives of the English curriculum. All resources required to teach English effectively are stored in classrooms, on Google Drive and in other designated areas around

the school. Although all staff follow this approach, staff may supplement it with other published material to facilitate the teaching of English.

Inclusion

All children at St Gerard's are entitled to, and will access, the same English curriculum. The following are done to ensure that this happens:

- Challenge or scaffolding will be provided to pupils based on level of ability.
- Teaching assistants are used to support individuals or groups of children. This includes additional support outside of the daily English lesson.
- Parents will be kept informed and encouraged to assist in helping their children.

Assessment

Assessment provides information about what a pupil knows, understands, is able to do and where they go next. It is part of the teaching and learning process, and as such is a part of everyday classroom practice. The majority of assessments are part of a continuous process rather than a separate activity requiring the use of extra tasks and tests.

On-going assessment is used to inform medium and short term plans and thus highlight pupils' strengths and areas for development. Children are encouraged to think critically and assess their own work through the use of effective success criteria.

Writing assessments are moderated internally and externally with other schools and within the Sursum Corda group of schools. Pupils also complete standardised assessments at the end of each term to monitor progress in reading. During Y6, children will participate in statutory assessment of English and in Y1 (and Y2 if required) children will take the phonic screening check.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Improvement

Short term/weekly planning is reviewed by the class teacher at the end of each week.

Unit plans are reviewed by the class teacher, the English subject leader, and head teacher.

Writing assessments are moderated internally and externally with other schools and within the Sursum Corda group of schools.

Lesson observations, book trawls, pupil voice, staff questionnaires etc will take place as part of whole school monitoring and evaluation timetable.

Impact

Our children will grow into competent, fluent readers who can recommend books and authors to their peers, have a thirst for reading a range of genres including poetry, and participate in discussions about books, including evaluating an author's use of language and the impact this can have on the reader. They will also read books to enhance their knowledge and understanding of all subjects in the curriculum. By the end of their time at St Gerard's, children will be able to write clearly and accurately and adapt their language and style in and for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences. Our pupils will acquire a wide vocabulary and have a strong command of the written word. Most importantly, they will develop a love of writing and be well equipped for the rest of their education.

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