

Principles

This policy outlines the approach to the teaching and learning of English at Hardwick Primary School. It should be used by all those who contribute to the development of the pupils' language and literacy in school.

We believe that children learn best when they take an active part in their own learning, when they are aware of the reasons for what they are learning and when they are supported in their learning. When young children begin school they will already have learned a great deal about speaking, listening, reading and writing. By using a developmental approach to language we use the children's previous experiences and their proven capacity to learn in order to devise an English curriculum that meets their needs, extends their learning and enables all pupils to achieve their potential. English is taught in the context of a broad, balanced curriculum and is guided by the statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum and the National Curriculum.

All teaching is informed by the general principle that learning should enrich the lives of all learners.

Overall aims for the teaching and learning of English

- To develop pupils' abilities to communicate effectively and confidently in a range of formats including oral and written standard English.
- To develop pupils' capacities to listen with understanding.
- To enable pupils to be enthusiastic, responsive, knowledgeable and critical readers.
- To encompass all aspects of the statutory requirements for communication, language and literacy in the Early Years Foundation Stage and English at Key Stage 1 and 2.
- To provide opportunities for pupils to use ICT to facilitate and extend their learning in speaking, listening, reading and writing.
- To enable pupils to use and apply their competence in one mode of language to extend and develop their competence in one or all other modes.

A summary of the key points contained in this policy

This policy contains the agreed aims for the teaching of the speaking, listening, reading and writing curriculum at Hardwick Primary School. It outlines the sequence of development in each area of English and makes some suggestions about the classroom organization, resources and activities that will encourage learning. It contains sections on the school library, work with the under-fives, bilingual learners, children who experience difficulties, equal opportunities, assessment and record keeping and parental involvement. Lists of resources for language and literacy and examples of good practice are attached to the policy.

Speaking and listening

Aims

All children should

- feel confident and valued when they express themselves through the spoken word
- respect and value all languages
- learn through discussion with others
- listen to, evaluate and respect the opinions of others
- become competent listeners and speakers.

The development of speaking and listening

Speaking and listening are important for learning and as a means of communication. All children start school with considerable oral ability but may still lack experience at using language in certain ways. Teachers will build on what children can already do but will extend the children's competence as oral language users by developing their abilities in the following areas:

- taking account of the needs of listeners. Assessing the listener's understanding and knowledge; needing to be more explicit in certain situations and with certain audiences
- talking in front of large audiences
- turn taking in large groups
- answering the teacher's questions which may be phrased in school language
- participating purposefully, using reasoning and discussion techniques, in collaborative classroom tasks
- using different styles and forms of language appropriate to particular situations such as telling jokes, participating in a debate or giving reasons and step-by-step explanations
- organizing what is said
- acquiring and using a more extensive vocabulary.

Organization for speaking and listening

The effectiveness of teachers, and other adults in school, in extending the oral development of young children is related to

- their own understanding of the value of talk
- their attitude to talk
- planning for talk
- organisation for talk
- the choice of classroom activities
- their own use of language

Talk has equal status with other aspects of the English curriculum and speaking and listening activities should be considered and included when planning schemes of work. Group work is an effective way of encouraging children to listen and to use language for different purposes. The teacher will also need to support children's talk through sensitive and well-timed dialogue and questions. Planning for talk in a range of formal and less formal situations will encourage children to use different dialect forms, including standard English, in appropriate contexts.

Resources for speaking and listening

These include listening areas, story sessions, whole-class discussion times, collaborative group-work across the curriculum, role-play, games, computer work, the use of story props and reading activities.

Reading

Aims

All children should

- understand the purposes for reading and learning to read
- develop confidence in their ability to read and to see themselves as readers regardless of attainment
- become voluntary users of books for pleasure, interest, information and the extension of experience
- be able to read fluently and competently from a range of material
- draw upon a variety of reading strategies in order to make sense of print
- become critical and discerning readers who are able to evaluate the written word.

The development of reading

During their early years at school children are expected to develop from dependence to independence as readers. Independent readers are those who combine fluency and accuracy and who make sense of what they read. Children's development as readers will be supported by hearing and sharing books with adults and other children, having time to browse in the book corner, talking about books and practising reading. Learning to write will support learning to read, giving children further experiences with and insights into print. As they engage in all these experiences children should be encouraged to apply a wide range of strategies to their reading and to read a range of book and non-book texts.

Organization for reading

Opportunities for reading are provided during individual, group, paired, shared, class and silent-reading sessions in each class both within and outside the literacy hour. The daily organization of activities should take account of the need to provide opportunities for pupils to have sustained periods of reading every day. The children will also gain practice in reading during shared writing sessions, and during activities arising from curriculum areas other than English which require children to read instructions and explanations. Story-reading and story-telling sessions occur each day and provide a valuable opportunity to introduce children to the power and use of books. Listening to audio tapes and reading the books which accompany these give children positive experiences with texts.

Resources for reading

A well-chosen range of good-quality picture books, poetry, song books, traditional tales, stories, novels, reference books, non-fiction, big books and books made by children and adults in school is available in

classrooms and the library. Books are available in English, other languages and dual-language versions. Each class has a collection of core books which are used in conjunction with enlarged texts, audio tapes and group-reading sessions. These have been selected to cover the likely reading level of each class and are used to provide a framework for reading.

Audio tapes, story props and computer programs should be used to foster the development of reading. Books and other resources are regularly updated and added to. It is an important professional responsibility for all teachers to familiarize themselves and keep up to date with books and other resources that are available for children.

The school library

The school has a well stocked reference library containing a large number of information books. It also houses books written by children, additional sets of core books, group readers, audio tapes, story props, language games and pictures. Library resources can be used by the children and they should be introduced to the library system and organization. Resources may also be borrowed for class use by the teacher. Teachers should plan to help pupils learn how to use the library and to give children access to the library resources.

Writing

Aims

All children should be able to

- use the knowledge and understanding of writing that they bring to school
- develop a positive attitude towards writing
- understand the reasons for writing and for learning to write
- understand that writing conveys meaning
- write for a variety of audiences and in a variety of styles
- become competent and fluent writers.

The development of writing

When children start school they are given opportunities to demonstrate what they know about writing. Teachers work with what the children are able to do. The children are asked to read back what they have written and are given correct models of writing which are compared with their own versions. As the children's writing becomes more readable the teacher may begin to focus on one or two aspects of transcription, for example word spaces or the correct spelling of one or two words. As children grow in competence they are expected to write more and to write and redraft their work, paying greater attention to organization, use of language, purpose and audience. Transcription is never emphasized at the expense of discussing the choice of words, detail, organization and structure of what has been written. As a general aim children are expected to progress in writing in accordance with the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum level descriptions for writing. It is unwise to attach levels exactly to particular ages of children, but most 7-year-olds are expected to produce writing that shows achievement at level 2 or above.

Organizing for writing

When only one or two groups are engaged in writing at one time, it is easier for the teacher to give support for each child's writing needs. Occasionally there may be times when all the class is writing at the same time, for example during a special book-making project. For some writing activities children

may be organized in collaborative mixed-ability groups and pairs. Shared writing with the whole class or with groups of pupils is a useful way of demonstrating all the processes that are used when writing. It can be used to introduce young children to the conventions of print, and older children to ways of planning, drafting, and redrafting. The organization for writing should always complement the nature of the task.

Writing for different purposes and different audiences

Writing at school should always have a purpose that is made clear to the children in terms of learning intentions and/or expected outcomes, with clearly stated success criteria. Writing activities should cover the range of uses for writing that exist, including personal, factual, expressive and imaginative. Children should be encouraged to make notes when carrying out practical tasks and to produce labels and captions for the classroom. Wherever possible children's writing should have an audience that goes beyond the teacher, such as older and younger children, children in the class, family members and audiences outside the school.

Resources for writing

Writing should be portrayed as a purposeful, everyday activity. In the classroom children should experience a print-rich environment with displays of lists, greeting cards, notes, letters, name labels, self-made books, registers and notices. In order to participate fully in a range of writing activities and become successful and competent writers children will require a range of writing implements including crayons, chalks and pastels. Word-processing facilities should also be available for pupils to use. Pupils should learn that different implements are more suitable for particular sorts of writing, for example thick felt pens for writing notices, writing pens for final drafts and pencils for first drafts. Children should be provided with notebooks, class-made books, card, different sorts of paper and first-draft books for writing. These resources should be available in the writing corner, the home corner and alongside interactive displays. As children become more proficient at writing they should be provided with dictionaries and thesauruses and shown how to use them. Final copies of writing should be placed in the finished work tray for discussion with the teacher, before being displayed or stored in the children's writing folders. Erasers should not be used when children are writing.

Transcription

Aims

All children should be able to

- be independent and confident users of written language
- communicate the meaning of what is written efficiently
- draw from a range of strategies when spelling
- develop dictionary and reference skills.

Spelling

Spelling is only one part of the writing process. It is not the most important part and should not be overemphasized. Children should be encouraged to consider the look of words and to have a go at spelling when they are writing. The teaching of spelling should arise from what children write and be linked to individual children's needs. Spelling is taught during shared writing sessions, through word games and by the 'look, copy, cover, write, check' method. Reception and year 1 children should have access to simple dictionaries and word banks, while year 2, 3 and 4 children should begin to use more sophisticated dictionaries and thesauruses.

Handwriting

Handwriting is only one aspect of writing. All children need to learn to write legibly, fluently and with reasonable speed. To this end children need to be shown correct pencil grip and letter formation. Help with handwriting should be given as children write. Not every piece of writing children produce needs to be perfect, but teachers should emphasize attention to good presentation when they are writing final drafts. All final drafts should be written with writing pens. When demonstrating writing to left-handers, teachers should use their left hand and be alert to the difficulties that left-handed children may have. If necessary special provision should be made for left-handed writers. Children in year 2 and year 3 who are forming their letters correctly should be introduced to a simple form of cursive script. The teacher's own writing should always provide a good model for the children.

Punctuation

The correct use of punctuation is an advanced transcription skill. Children should not be pressed into using punctuation before they understand what it is for. Discussions about punctuation should arise during shared reading and writing sessions. These will help children to recognize its function in writing. When children begin to incorporate punctuation into their own writing the teacher may wish to include this as a topic for discussion in writing conferences or with the class.

Other Issues

Language in the nursery

In the nursery opportunities for speaking, listening, reading and writing will be planned for children. Indoor and outdoor play, group work and collaborative activities as well as discussion times and adult involvement in activities will provide occasions for the development of speaking and listening. Story sessions using enlarged texts as well as other books should introduce children to the pleasure and purposes of reading and writing. The nursery has a well-resourced library area which is used by the children for browsing and borrowing. Story tapes and books should be available in the listening area. Imaginative play areas should contain appropriate literacy resources and adults should enter into children's play to provide models of how these resources are used. All children are expected to explore and enjoy reading and writing during their time in the nursery. Close liaison with carers will enable nursery staff to match language and literacy experiences to the children's needs and to extend the knowledge, skills and understanding children already have.

Writing and reading

Good readers are not automatically good writers. However, as children gain more experience of print through reading, it is likely that their writing will improve. As young children gain more experience of print and books they will learn about written language. Attending to the details of print in reading will help children with the transcription elements of writing, such as knowledge about letters, presentation and spelling. Reading will also provide children with ideas for their own compositions as well as awareness of the structure and organization of writing.

Bilingual learners and English

Wherever possible children's development as listeners, speakers, readers and writers in community languages should be supported. Where appropriate and when available, tapes and books in home languages should be available in every class. Initial and continuing meetings with parents should provide teachers with information about children's experiences in language and this should be used to

guide the teacher's provision for English. Children who are fluent or literate in a language other than English should not be discouraged from speaking, reading or writing in languages that are familiar to them. This will not prevent them from developing as competent users of English. Support teachers may be available to work with bilingual children. Monolingual pupils should be encouraged to value languages other than their own.

Children who experience difficulties with English

Children who are making less progress in speaking, listening, reading or writing than one might expect should be brought to the attention of the language subject leader, the headteacher and SENCO. Support staff may be allocated to work with these children. As far as possible the language and literacy curriculum should be the same for all children and careful attention to differentiation of outcome or presentation and to organization should make this possible.

Equal opportunities and English

Teachers should ensure that the language activities they present to children should be appropriate to the needs and interests of girls and boys. Particular attention should be paid to the needs of both sexes as speakers and listeners, to the resources that are used for reading and to one's expectations about the content and presentation of writing.

Assessment and record keeping

Most assessment takes place as the teacher works with and observes the children each day. More formal evidence of assessment forms part of the language and literacy record for each child; Foundation Profile for children in their reception year. Teachers should collect samples of children's reading and writing, and should keep records of observations, conferences and comments from parents and other teachers who work with the children. Wherever possible children should be involved in assessing their own development. Children's assessments should be included in their language record. Judgements about children's work may refer to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study, the needs of the child and suggestions for the child's future development. At the end of Key Stage 1 teachers should make a summary of children's progress in English which refers to the level descriptions in the National Curriculum for English (DfEE/QCA, 1999a). Year 2 pupils are assessed using the standard assessment tasks and tests and their results are added to their records.

Parents and language

We value the experiences of language in its written and oral modes that children bring with them from their homes and communities. Making links and sharing information between home and school has a beneficial effect on children's learning and to this end parents are encouraged to participate in the work of the school and in their children's language development through

- discussions with parents as part of the Foundation Profile
- parents' evenings and reports
- regular parent consultations and discussions
- informal discussions
- a home-school reading programme
- curriculum evenings
- invitations to parents to make contributions to the language curriculum in school.

Parents are provided with information about their child's language development during parent discussions and a written report which is sent home towards the end of the school year.

Support available to implement this policy

Further information and guidance about the teaching of English is available in the first instance from the English subject leader. Other people who may be able to provide support include the assessment subject leader, the special-needs co-ordinator, support teachers, Foundation co-ordinators and LEA advisers. A number of other professionals such as speech therapists may be called upon when appropriate. Please consult with the English subject leader if you feel you would like to discuss issues with outside agencies.

Monitoring and evaluating the policy

Each year the effectiveness of the provision for English throughout the school is reviewed. A short report written by the subject leader is discussed by the staff and suggestions for future action are agreed. These are used to inform the School Improvement Plan. Monitoring is undertaken with regard to the school's aims for each area of English. The yearly review will be attached to the reference copy of the policy document.

Areas for future development

This section could refer to areas of known weakness such as the need to build up stocks of information books for younger children or the need for staff-development sessions on organizing for speaking and listening. It should identify future developments and give an indication of when and how these will be addressed.

Examples of practice

Samples of records and reports, brief accounts of activities, successful schemes of work and ideas gathered from staff-development sessions and courses could be included in this section.

Resources and reading list

Lists of core books, dual-language books, big books, computer software as well as names and telephone numbers of contacts for book weeks or translations might be included in the resources section of the policy. The reading list could include books that were consulted when the policy was written, a list of books about English that are available in the staffroom and other books that teachers have found or might find useful for their teaching.

Examples of children's work

Samples of work illustrating aspects of the level descriptions in the National Curriculum for English, demonstrating appropriate teacher intervention or depicting progress over time might be usefully included in this section.

An English policy cannot contain all the knowledge, activities and strategies known and used by every teacher in the school. But it can give guidance to staff and insights for other interested parties into agreed ways of developing children's language and literacy.

The characteristics of an effective programme of work

In a well organized and productive learning environment children are meaningfully engaged in learning activities which they perceive as interesting and relevant. They move between a balance of challenging and more straightforward tasks about which they receive and give feedback. The format of the activities and careful thought about differentiation enables all pupils to succeed. In planning the tasks the teacher has taken account of the amount of teacher support that will be required and the availability of resources. She has made her expectations about the activities clear and has deployed other adults well.

Thoughtful planning and careful classroom management combined with an understanding of how young children learn are likely to lead to successful teaching and learning. You may be able to judge your own success at teaching English by seeing how closely or how often your planning and teaching meets the characteristics listed below:

- planning has clear and realistic short and long-term aims for pupil learning
- use is made of routine times such as registration to foster children's learning
- evaluation and assessment of teaching and learning are built into the programme through systematic and regular record keeping
- space inside and outside the classroom is used well
- the teacher is aware of the needs, interests, attitudes and experiences of the pupils
- planning is detailed and includes reference to how and when reading with children will occur each week, when reading conferences will take place and when and with whom specific work on spelling, such as look, copy, cover, write, check will take place
- the classroom atmosphere is calm, orderly and quiet
- all those who work with the class have been involved in the planning and are clear about the aims of the activities and the teacher's approach
- the teacher sees herself as the biggest resource in the classroom and organizes all the other factors which affect learning, such as equipment, people, the children and space, in order to realise her aims.

Conclusion

Planning is supported by the school and national guidelines about the curriculum and these can provide teachers with a useful framework. However, effective individual planning begins with reflecting on the expectations, aims and activities that are appropriate for 3 – 8 year-old pupils. It relies on the teacher's understanding of how children learn and what they need to learn. It is influenced by planning in other curriculum areas and by the cross-curricular links that the teacher makes. It depends on the teacher's knowledge of subjects, organization and management. Planning and implementing a programme of work successfully demands that teachers use the full range of their professional knowledge and skills in order to guide and extend all children's achievements.

This policy was adopted by governors June 2008

This policy is due for review in Summer 2011