



English Curriculum Statement



“When I read great literature, great drama, speeches, or sermons, I feel that the human mind has not achieved anything greater than the ability to share feelings and thoughts through language.” James Earl Jones

At Vallis First School, we aim to deliver an inspiring and engaging English curriculum that provides exciting and purposeful opportunities for speaking, reading, comprehension and writing.

Intent

Reading

Reading is placed at the heart of, and permeates through, the full curriculum offer. All texts are deliberately chosen to promote British values and the diversity of modern Britain. Children are exposed to rich and varied texts written by a range of authors from diverse backgrounds in order to build pupil’s cultural capital and widen their world view. In developing the skill of reading, children gain access to and develop a life-long love of reading. Non-fiction is a fundamental aspect of our reading curriculum, allowing pupils to interpret, synthesise and acquire knowledge as part of, and beyond the wider curriculum. The ability to read and interpret the written language is a fundamental skill. Reading impacts on a wide range of issues, including attainment, mental health, economic wellbeing and relationships. When teaching reading and associated reading skills, we aim to raise and sustain pupils’ levels of attainment and achievement in reading throughout the school by developing a number of attitudes and skills.

Writing

At Vallis, our aim is to foster competent, confident writers. The curriculum is designed to spark curiosity and excitement, starting each unit with an engaging hook, such as the discovery of a crashed spaceship in the playground, the clue to begin a treasure hunt taking us out of school along the river, or the delivery of a mysterious letter. We give the children a taste of all the possibilities imaginable through drama, discussion, poetry, performance and exposure to authors and illustrators.

We recognise that writing is an area that should not be confined to literacy lessons alone, so opportunities are planned for children to write across the curriculum. Children write in the style of a whole range of genres and teachers plan opportunities for children to be able to vary the purpose, audience and form of their writing based on core termly texts. We cater for a range of learning styles through a multitude of resources used to inspire our children’s creative minds: video clips, auditory recordings, trips, visitors, images, drama, talk for writing and high quality texts are some examples of these. Meaningful, real-life purposes for writing are encouraged wherever possible. Children are taught to discuss, plan, draft and edit their writing through teacher modelling and peer support.

Implementation

Children experience a broad and balanced diet of genres; there is a clear progression of reading and writing skills through each year and across each year group. Each English unit is led by a model text and enhanced by a variety of multimedia. Shared writing supports children's understanding of the necessary transcriptional and compositional skills, such as the relevant punctuation, handwriting and grammatical rules for the text type. In order to give a purpose and an audience for writing, children are given time to discuss, plan, write, edit and redraft their work into published pieces that are celebrated.

Reading

For reading, KS1 receive daily phonic sessions following 'ULS' and 1 Guided Reading session a week. This scheme teaches children sounds progressively, building as they move through KS1. The children are grouped by ability and regularly screened to check their understanding and ensure the right groups are learning the right sounds. KS1 children also receive a guided reading session once a week, on top of their phonics teaching. This focuses on both decoding and comprehension and is run in small groups through a key text. The texts contain known sounds for the children in the group and are a chance to practice what they have been learning. These core skills are then built upon in our topic lessons too.

Reading is taught daily in KS2. Additional vocabulary instruction is given alongside fluency and prosody reading lessons. These use extracts from high quality texts, often non-fiction and linked to our learning in the foundation subjects, to broaden subject knowledge. Additional time is spent on teaching key comprehension skills from our curriculum (retrieval, inference, word meaning, comparing, summarising, predicting, word choice and meaning as a whole) from the key texts or a text that has sparked interest. We teach the skills, model the skills, guide the skill and then allow the children to independently apply the skills.

Writing

As a school, we have invested in a wide range of high-quality texts that reflect different cultures, contain inspiring language, exciting illustrations and that engage the children's imaginations. Each term, our topics centre around one key text for all children to access and enjoy. Writing and reading comprehension skills are taught using the key text each half term.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children engage in dedicated English sessions that introduce basic literacy skills in a fun and interactive manner. A weekly Drawing Club session promotes creativity and story comprehension through sharing stories, drawing and talking. Phonemic awareness and decoding skills are systematically developed through daily phonics lessons. Additionally, each child participates in a one-on-one reading session weekly to enhance their reading skills and foster a love for books.

In KS1 and 2, each half-termly topic starts with a hook in which we use story-telling and drama to engage the children's creativity, and introduce key vocabulary for the topic. Following on from this, Vallis use The Power of Reading approach to writing, introducing children to a range of text types and new challenging vocabulary. Our writing is purposeful and shared with a real audience in the school and wider community, and work is published in imaginative and creative ways, such as in the window of the local bookshop! We follow our skills lists in order to ensure progressive, focused teaching that moves children's learning forward towards appropriate expectations. We teach key skills through modelling, guiding and supporting, building up towards a final write to assess the children's learning. We provide clear models of writing for the children to explore and focused success criteria to direct them towards the required skills.

- Teachers have high expectations of the presentation of written work and children are taught to proof read, edit and publish work to a high standard and for a real audience.
- Handwriting is taught across the school using the Nelson scheme. In the last term of Year 2 children are taught to join using the Nelson approach.
- Spelling lessons follow the ULS scheme in KS1 and move to follow the Spelling Shed guidance in KS2. Termly spelling words are also frequently revisited in morning settling activities and with mini quizzes.

Impact

- Children have a love of both reading and writing and talk enthusiastically about their learning with confidence and pride.
 - Children are competent communicators and have a vast knowledge of vocabulary.
 - All children make at least good or accelerated progress in their literacy development.
 - Children have an awareness of a variety of authors and genres and are able to voice their love of reading.
 - Our children are enthusiastic writers and produce quality extended writing. (Children's writing is shared with a real audience giving work purpose. Writing may be shared in assemblies, or with parents/carers in open classroom events. At times, their work may also be seen in the wider community, such as a local care home, window displays at the bookshop or in the town library.)
 - Children's literacy skills support them to access the wider curriculum and the next stage of their education.

Curriculum Lead: Tracey Messenger

Subject Lead: Zoey Powrie