



## English Policy Bennerley Fields School

### Rationale

At Bennerley Fields School, we believe that the acquisition and use of language, and communication skills, underpin every subject of the National Curriculum and is present in all activities and schemes of work undertaken by our pupils as part of our curriculum drivers (Communicate Aspire Nurture). In return, other subjects offer opportunities and purpose for the reinforcement of these skills. The development of social and life skills presents the necessary practical contexts for the use of language in all its forms.

English consists of all aspects of communication, phonics, reading and writing. Some of our pupils enter school with delayed language skills, with some being pre-verbal communicators. The acquisition of receptive and expressive language and/or of the ability to use and understand signing is, therefore, fundamentally important for some pupils; the use of Makaton signs and symbols are used where necessary and appropriate to support pupils' learning.

We believe that early literacy provision should provide pupils with the underpinning knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes required for them to successfully progress to access phonic teaching and learning. Pupils working at this level benefit from a literacy rich environment which offers opportunities for expressive and receptive communication, building attention and engagement through developmentally appropriate learning which is purposeful and meaningful.

#### Curriculum Drivers

**Communication-** Pupils learn to communicate in their preferred method and build on their communication skills to help prepare them for life after Bennerley.

**Aspire-** Staff set aspirational targets and through assessment and feedback pupils are able to see their aspirations become their achievements.

**Nurture-** Pupils are supported and encouraged through a pupil centred curriculum.

### Intent

At Bennerley Fields we value communication, reading and writing as key life skills, and we are committed to our pupils becoming lifelong communicators, readers and writers who are able to read for pleasure and apply their skills functionally in a variety of contexts.

*'Nothing is more important in education than ensuring that every child can read well. Pupils who can read are overwhelmingly more likely to succeed at school.'* DfE 2015

We want pupils to develop a love of English and be able to understand more about the world in which they live, through the knowledge they gain from texts. Reading will also allow them to access the world they live in meaningfully; they can also learn skills such as empathy, curiosity and imagination.

We aim to develop pupils' communication skills in the following ways:

- Use Makaton signs and symbols as a means of pre-verbal communication.
- Engage and listen to others, take turns, and be part of a group.
- Want to communicate with others and to enjoy being with other people.
- Communicate orally and use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), clearly and appropriately, to a variety of audiences and in a range of situations.
- Have the ability to use oral language and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), in stressful situations, in order to avoid physical confrontation.
- Acquire the skills necessary for life during transition from and after school.
- Be aware and have experience of the use of Standard English.
- Develop awareness of using vocabulary for different reasons and in imaginative ways.

We aim to develop pupils' reading skills in the following ways:

- Understand that photos and pictures carry meaning.
- Read and comprehend Makaton symbols and respond to them.
- Read and comprehend the written word, in book form or on the screen, and act upon it in a range of situations.
- Have access to a range of high quality texts.
- Read accurately, fluently and with expression.
- Be aware of and read print in the wider environment in order to promote life skills and to keep safe.
- Reading is an enjoyable activity; both reading to themselves and being read to.

Writing is defined as the communication of ideas and information in written form. Handwriting and spelling are component skills in writing but do not together constitute the ability to write. We aim to develop pupils' writing skills in the following ways:

- Communicate meaning through the use of Makaton symbols.
- Use alternative means of mark making and writing if fine motor skills are very delayed.
- Develop motor skills and mark making skills needed for handwriting.
- Write legibly for a variety of audiences and purposes.
- Acquire those writing skills necessary for life during transition from and after school.
- Use a range of word processing packages.

## **Implementation**

All classes are audited by our Speech and Language Therapist to ensure they are communication friendly and enhance the early literacy and literacy development of all pupils. In our class environments and routines, pupils are exposed to print in meaningful ways including: labelling in the classroom, coat pegs, register, snack time and daily timetables. Each classroom has a reading area which encourages engagement with stories and books from the earliest stage.

Neaum (2017) outlines the knowledge and skills required to create a framework for the essential learning that comes before phonics which includes:

- Spoken language: the basis of becoming literate
- Physical activity that supports sensory awareness and integration
- Meta-linguistic awareness

- An understanding of the functions and forms of print
- The ability to symbolise
- Phonological awareness

Phonological awareness paves the way into formal phonics teaching and learning. Phonemic awareness relates only to sounds and is a precursor to phonics. Phonological awareness follows a sequential development pattern outlined by Smith (2017).

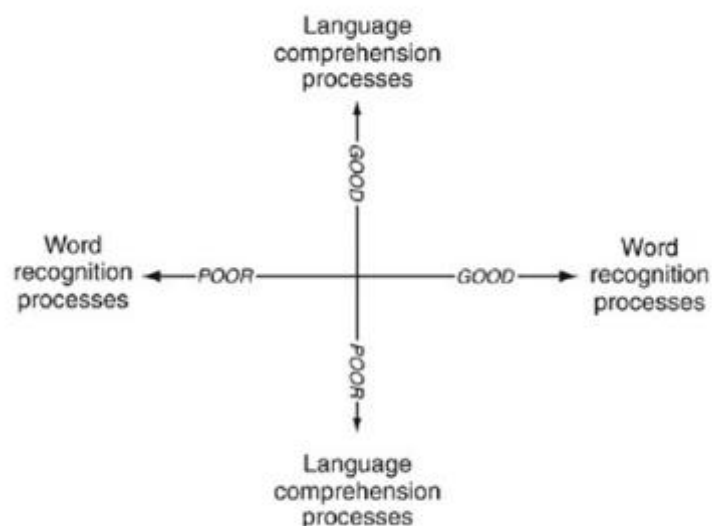


Smith (2017)

We believe that all our pupils can become fluent readers and writers. This is why we teach phonics to pupils working at this level through 'Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised', which is a systematic and synthetic phonics programme, validated by the DfE. When we start teaching phonics we follow the 'Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised progression', which ensures pupils build on their growing knowledge of the alphabetic code, mastering phonics to read and spell as they move through school. Phonics is taught 5 times a week for up to 20 minutes a session. First pupils are taught to read and spell words using Phase 2 and 3 GPCs, and words with adjacent consonants (Phase 4) with fluency and accuracy. Next pupils review Phase 3 and 4 and are taught to read and spell words using Phase 5 GPCs with fluency and accuracy.

As a result, all our pupils have strategies to tackle any unfamiliar words they encounter. At Bennerley Fields we also model the application of the alphabetic code through phonics in shared reading and writing, both inside and outside of the phonics lesson and across the curriculum. We have a strong focus on language development for our pupils because we know that speaking and listening are crucial skills for reading and writing in all subjects.

The purpose of reading is for pupils to decode the phonic symbols and use sight reading to derive meaning. Therefore, based on current research of the teaching of reading, we use the simple view of reading to form the basis of the learning process. Initially the focus is on the decoding of individual words and their meaning. As reading develops then the pupils begin to focus on the comprehension of what has been read.



*'The Simple View of Reading highlights the need for a balanced approach to literacy teaching. Namely, both word reading and language comprehension need to be developed; however, the emphasis of teaching will shift as reading becomes more secure.'*

Our English curriculum at Primary and Key Stage 3 is taught through themed topics where reading and writing are linked to the topic with additional opportunities to apply skills functionally. As pupils progress to Key Stage 4 they build and develop their skills and use reading in a more functional way, working towards AQA Unit Awards for pupils working at Pre-Entry Level, and OCR Entry Level Certificate for pupils working at entry level.

Pupils experience reading, writing and high-quality texts in many ways:

- Rhyme, rhythm and poetry
- Symbols
- Role play
- Class texts
- Shared reading and writing activities
- Reading and writing through play-based activities
- Reading and writing across the curriculum
- Phonics
- Developing comprehension through a language-based approach
- Relevant newspaper articles
- Filling in forms
- Using reading texts as a basis for creating own examples of writing texts

A range of interesting and engaging books and magazines are available in each classroom. We strive for books to be appropriate for pupils' ability and age. Classrooms nurture positive attitudes to English through pupils experiencing a wide variety of texts and genres, demonstrated in curriculum overviews which outline high quality texts. Each classroom provides pupils with a welcoming and pleasant reading area to allow them to browse and explore stories and different texts for pleasure. We embrace World Book Day as an opportunity to celebrate a love of books and explore characters through drama, and exploratory activities. As meaningful reading and writing relies on language comprehension, reading is taught as part of a language rich environment and use of total communication strategies are embedded throughout Bennerley Fields. Pupils also have opportunities to access texts which are carefully selected to support pupils to develop their understanding of language and vocabulary. Pupils read individually with an adult on a weekly basis. Their reading books are chosen taking into account their phonic ability, high frequency words and

their level of comprehension. Reading books are sent home so that parents are involved in supporting the reading of pupils. Parents and pupils are also able to access 'Reading Eggs' and 'Bug Club' at home to enable consolidation of skills.

### Handwriting

The school does not use one single handwriting scheme as we believe that our pupils, who can find writing incredibly hard, need to be encouraged to want to write for a useful purpose and for enjoyment and to insist on a particular way of forming letters may de-motivate many of our children. Those children who do acquire the skills for writing are expected to write legibly and neatly but content and independence are considered more important than appearance. Pupils at the early stages of writing will be supported in their motor skills involved in handwriting and mark making before progressing to letter formation.

### **Impact**

English is planned and delivered to meet the needs, abilities and interests of students. Each pupil experiences a range of texts ensures progress in their reading, writing and communication skills. All pupils are assessed annually using the Blank models which informs the level of understanding of abstract language and verbal reasoning. When linked to reading this ensures that reading comprehension skills are being taught at the correct level to challenge and support the understanding of the text.

Writing is developed in a sequential and progressive way, using reading, phonics and communication as a basis for developing language and, therefore, writing skills.

Pupils develop skills for life through reading, completing pre entry, entry level qualifications in KS4 demonstrating their ability to read. Pupils also demonstrate their reading in the community and in all areas of the curriculum.

We are aspirational and aim for 90% of pupils to make at least expected progress in English using our school assessment system, SOLAR, for Engagement and Progression Steps.



## English Policy

Version	Reviewed in School	Approved by SLT	Ratified at LGB	Minute Number
1-Date Approved	2.11.2022	14.11.22 - SLT	NA	NA
Review Requirement:		3 Years		
Approval Level:		SLT		

Version	Reviewed in School	Approved by GB/SLT/HT/IG	Approved on GVO on
2	24.10.25	SLT	03.12.2025
Review Requirement:		3 Years	
Approval Level:		SLT	