

Northowram Primary School Approaches to Teaching and Learning: ENGLISH

A long-established 'Text-led' English curriculum is in place throughout school. Our literature spine ensures that children are developing reading and writing skills whilst studying the highest quality stories and poems. Progression in content, length and complexity of themes studied is achieved through careful planning from our experienced English leader. We ensure diversity in author, character and theme throughout the texts studied. Texts are carefully selected in each year group for their ambitious quality of tone, vocabulary and visuals. Authors studied include Poet Laureates past and present and Children's Laureates past and present. Authors studied include Carol Ann Duffy, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Philip Pullman and Michael Morpurgo. Themes are carefully selected to contribute to children's understanding of the world and include apartheid, bullying, slavery, conservation, migration and asylum, prejudice and war. Stories selected cover a wide range of genres including horror, adventure and comedy and are set in a range of places and times from Greek myths, tales from ancient Baghdad and medieval-set poetry to stories and poems set in the trenches of world war 1, South Africa during apartheid and modern-day realistic settings.

Phonics and early reading is prioritised in our curriculum from Nursery to KS1. Daily phonics lessons take place in all classes in Reception and year 1 and are continued throughout the first half term of year 2. Our teachers and teaching assistants receive high quality training on the use of our DfE approved phonics scheme (Read, Write, Inc) and phonics is well resourced. Children practice their phonics skills by reading phonetically regular texts (also including high frequency irregular words) which are closely matched to their stage of development. Fidelity to the teaching methods and progression of skills is achieved through strong leadership and quality assurance by our two phonics leaders.

When children's phonics knowledge is complete (usually at the end of year 1 or by Christmas in year 2), they progress onto an incremental, colour-banded reading scheme (Nelson PM). Whilst reading through this scheme, children's phonic knowledge becomes fast and automatic and is combined with developing techniques to tackle longer, multi-syllabic words and stamina to tackle longer sections of text.

When children's reading is assessed as being fluent and competent (usually at some point during year 3) and they are confident tackling short chapter books, children progress onto Accelerated reader. Their 'free reading' choices are targeted to well-matched books labelled to match their reading level. Children's understanding of the books they have read is assessed and checked through book quizzes following reading. Teachers keep a close track of children's reading comprehension and number and range of books read through an online monitoring system.

Throughout each stage of reading, teachers work with parents to ensure that reading skills are practiced at home. Reading records in all classes maintain communication between home and school and parents are invited to phonics workshops and welcome meetings which go through the reading expectations in each year group.

Spelling and handwriting are taught daily using consistent schemes to ensure progression. Weekly spellings are set to be practiced at home and results of weekly spelling tests are recorded. Children learn to form letters correctly using a clear, printed style in Reception and year 1 and are taught to use a fluent, joined style of handwriting by the end of year two/first term of year 3 which is then practised and refined through key stage 2. 'Penpals' (the only scheme approved by the National Handwriting Association) is used to structure handwriting lessons. 'Read, Write, Inc' spelling is used to structure content of our spelling curriculum in years 2-6 and provides seamless progression from our phonics scheme.

Writing is taught linked to our text-led curriculum and academic writing is taught and practised each half-term linked to learning in Geography, History and Science. Punctuation and Grammar are taught discreetly and practised in consistent weekly homework tasks in years 1-6. These skills are then applied in children's writing. Teachers model writing using visualisers and whiteboards thus demonstrating writerly techniques matched to the year group expectations and purpose of each writing task. Children's writing is robustly assessed twice per half term and feedback provided on successes and next steps. Assessment of writing is moderated within school, at cluster events and through local-authority annual moderation processes.

Parents are provided with termly progress reports on Reading attainment using standardised tests which provide information on where children are working against the year group standard. These also provide Reading ages and a breakdown of children's strengths and next steps based on their performance in termly tests.