

## **English at St. Michael's**

At St Michael's, reading is central to our curriculum; we aim for our children to be avid readers and creative writers.

To do this, we provide children with multiple opportunities for reading, for a range of purposes, every day. We ensure that our children access rich, quality books and increasingly read for pleasure and with confidence. Texts are carefully selected to engage and ignite children's love of reading; expose them to a range of genres and purposes beyond their usual preference; widen their vocabulary; enhance further curriculum links and stimulate their own creative ideas.

We actively teach reading and reading skills through structured programmes and lessons. In addition, we dedicate time to reading for pleasure independently and as a whole class.

Reading is at the forefront of our writing process which it is developed consistently across the school. Children are given a range of opportunities to read and write for a purpose in a range of genres, each unit stems from a core, quality text. Our English teaching follows a clear structure of Reading Phase, Capturing Ideas then Writing Phase, which ensures that there is enough time to acquire the knowledge, content and skills that will add to the quality of the writing.

We know that the promotion of a language-rich curriculum provides essential learning that our children need for their future success. Vocabulary development is a vital part of the writing process and is taught both explicitly and incidentally across English and wider areas of our curriculum.

We also place huge value on providing our children with Speaking and Listening opportunities which are carefully planned across the English curriculum. We aim for children to become confident and competent speakers and offer children the opportunity to participate, speak and perform for a variety of purposes and audiences. We aim to equip children with these vital communication skills which will be valuable for their future life.

# Intent

## Academic

We aim for every child in our care to achieve their academic potential and we also acknowledge that our children have different starting points and different factors in their lives which may enhance or inhibit them in reaching this.

At St Michael's, we aim to promote a culture of reading for pleasure as we know that this intrinsic motivation to read has a huge impact on academic success in both reading and writing and across other curriculum areas. **To do this, we ensure that we have book corners in each classroom, a bright and attractive Library and displays which encourage children to read widely. Children are involved in the selection of books and texts and recommend favourite books to others. Book fairs take place regularly so that children can select and buy books for home. Authors in school motivate children to read books they might not be familiar with. We also have a daily reading sessions, where we have class sets of engaging fiction stories for children to enjoy together. These are selected to give children the opportunity to listen to, and read along with, quality texts, challenging them beyond their independent reading level.**

In addition to this, we teach reading skills through clear, structured programmes at an appropriate level. **For example, through the RWInc Programme, we provide rigorous and systematic phonics teaching for those at that level, to ensure that our children can make rapid progress in their reading fluency. In addition, to explicitly teach key comprehension skills, we adopt the Reading Masters programme. Reading masters takes a 'mastery approach' to reading and building comprehension strategies. Four 30 minutes sessions take place each week and focus on a particular reading skill, guaranteeing that each of the sessions has a clear learning intention. The focuses are fluency and vocabulary, retrieval, inference and explanations in context. Each session will include the teacher modelling comprehension strategies and children practising these strategies through answering written questions. Each year group follows the same plan which consequently ensures that a consistent approach takes place across the school. The texts increase in difficulty in terms of language, grammar and structure throughout the school.**

Our curriculum is designed to balance text type and genres across the year and then revisit them through the school at a deeper level. **For example, with non-fiction writing, the text types that we cover each year are: instruction, explanation, discussion, persuasion, non-chronological report and recount. Children will explore at least 4 of these in English time and the additional text types in their wider curricular writing. They are rotated with the aim for even coverage. The features and expectations of the text type within English will increase in challenge each year.**

Within fiction writing, each unit will have a key area to focus upon to ensure that we are explicitly teaching key skills to promote progress in writing. At St Michael's these will fit within the broad categories of structure, characterisation and setting. **For example, structure will increase in complexity as Year 3 learn a simple linear plot line, Year 4 analyse a range of ways to open a story, Year 5 include flashbacks, Year 6 write dual narratives and cliff hanger endings.**

We will cover a range of free verse, narrative, structured, visual and performance poetry balanced within year groups and increasing in difficulty across the school. **For example, free verse poetry will progress with the complexity of the vocabulary use and discussion of poetic devices. Year 3 identify simple poetic devices, Year 4 focus on one more challenging device (personification), whilst Year 5 will analyse all devices and use these within their own poetry writing and Year 6 will also consider authorial intent and the impact on the reader.**

The skills and expectations for each piece of writing are clear to the children as they co-create a boxed success criteria for each unit.

We ensure that children will gain the appropriate knowledge to become competent and effective writers as set out in the National Curriculum. **For example, our long-term grammar plans ensure that children learn the new concepts for their year group and revise all previously taught concepts too. SPAG is taught every day as starter activities in English (15 minutes extra in upper school) - this is to reflect our children's need to be constantly revisiting the key terminology. In addition to this, we teach grammar for purpose within a writing sequence. We have a focused grammar objective for each unit of writing where there will also be specific lessons taught and short burst opportunities to embed these skills.**

The writing process at St Michael's is designed to provide academic challenge to our pupils. **For example, teachers model writing which provides scaffolding that stretches children to their potential level.** In addition, we aim to ensure that all children are able to feel successful in a lesson and are supported appropriately to do this. **For example, we provide additional support to our SEN children including adapted activities, sentence starters, word banks and some have access to Clicker. This means that they are also able to develop their independence and gain autonomy in their learning.**

Children are able to reflect on their own academic progress and take responsibility for their own learning. **Teacher's monitor children's progress in writing carefully using writing assessment sheets to tick achieved objectives and create targets to focus on. These assessment sheets are stuck into the front of children's Presentation books alongside their current targets.**

### **Character**

At St Michael's we cultivate and encourage a range of moral, spiritual, intellectual, civic and performance virtues. We recognise the interdependence of children's character and academic success and therefore encourage children to go 'above and beyond' with their efforts on their own personal journey of progress and success.

At St. Michael's, we recognise that service to school and the wider community is important to our pupils' future successes. We provide children with speaking and listening opportunities with meaningful purposes and audiences to work towards this. **An example of this is in Year 6 where children design an environmental campaign and perform a persuasive speech to their peers. Children, teachers and eco-council members will become the audience and one of the children's campaigns will be launched in our school.**

Teachers strive to develop children's ability to form independent opinions, articulate, justify and evaluate these, and respectfully challenge others' opinions. **Our wide range of reading opportunities promotes 'book talk' both formally at the beginning of each new writing sequence and informally when reading for pleasure. Children are welcome to share their opinions and teachers model and scaffold talking points allowing them to become increasingly analytical and critical.**

Text are selected to promote discussion and develop moral character virtues, particularly within class reading for pleasure time. **For example, Year 6 read the book *Wonder* which explores bullying, friendships and identity. In addition, they read the book *Trash* which is set in the dumpsites of Behala – this can provoke great discussion about child workers, poverty, fairness and equality. Children are welcomed to form and share their own viewpoints of these complex themes.** Further to this, we ensure that children are exposed to characters of different backgrounds, lifestyles and circumstances through the books that we select. **For example, in Year 4 children read *Azzi In Between* which is about refugees. Broadening their experiences and knowledge of these different aspects of life – that may not be similar to their own – is vital for their character building and acceptance of the wider community.**

### **Behaviour**

We understand that mental wellbeing underpins many behavioural choices. Therefore at St Michael's, we aim to develop children's emotional literacy and emotional intelligence in order to encourage them to foster the positive traits within our curriculum intentions. We believe that engaging with picture books in class groups provides children with a safe, non-threatening opportunity to learn, reflect, discuss and navigate through some challenging concepts. **We have carefully researched quality reading materials to provide these opportunities to our children. For example, we have books that promote a growth mindset and perseverance, which help children to identify positive behaviours and habits for successful and fulfilling learning. We read books that explore character emotions, from worries to grief to anger, which help children to promote self-awareness and work towards more self-regulation. In addition, we have selected materials to promote empathy and diversity in a wide range of contexts, this promotes co-operation, tolerance and consideration of others' feelings and views.**

Throughout the writing process, we also equip children with positive behaviours and habits for successful learning. **In English, we emphasise the process of reflecting, evaluating and editing writing, which requires children to develop their perseverance and ambitions in learning. We allow children the time they need to write and edit, recognising that drafting and redrafting may be necessary. In addition, we encourage children to take great pride in their final piece of work, to value how much effort has been put in. As part of the writing process, children will write up the final, edited version of their work in their**

**neatest handwriting in our English Presentation Books. These books will be taken up throughout the school as a portfolio of their writing and become a real piece of pride for children to reflect on.**

In addition, we encourage the children to communicate in a positive manner, aiming to help form positive relationships within the class and build self-esteem and confidence within the children. **An example of how we do this is through providing regular opportunities for peer marking/assessment. We support the children with the language for this and role model how to give this feedback in a positive manner, for example to say *what has gone well* and then an *even better if*.**

## **Implementation**

In October 2019, English leaders met with English Advisor, Emma Adcock, to review the way that we plan and teach English. Staff feedback and experience in the Key Stage 2 writing moderation process prompted us to revisit our curriculum and teaching sequences to ensure that we provided children with enough opportunities to be independent and challenged with their writing.

Through consultation with Emma Adcock, we made the choice to move away from Pie Corbett's structured 'Talk for Writing' approach, towards a process of three phases: Reading, Capturing Ideas and Writing, which we felt was more suitable and tailored to the needs of our children. Emma Adcock delivered a training session to teachers to introduce this new process with many practical teaching examples to increase confidence in the planning and teaching of English. English leaders have made a support document named 'Planning English at St. Michael's' outlining this key process to provide a clear resource that teachers are able to refer back to.

In December 2019, English leaders led an internal writing moderation staff meeting to set clear expectations of children's independent writing and allow staff the opportunity to develop a consistent approach to this. This was designed to reinforce the new teaching process and focus on accurately assessing writing now that it is much more independent.

In Spring 2020, English leaders attended an English Subject Leader Network which focused on writing skills within fiction, non-fiction and poetry. After this, they conducted a review of our whole school English curriculum focusing on progression opportunities across the school. They ensured that each year group

features a balance of fiction, non-fiction and poetry; a range of engaging authors, genres and resources and focus skills and objectives that progress in difficulty.

English Leaders continue to read widely and engage with online forums and subject leader networks to remain up to date with the most contemporary quality resources. They regularly gain staff feedback on class reading books and aim to ensure that these resources are updated and refreshed appropriately.

Teachers have been using the Reading Masters approach to explicitly teach reading comprehension skills since Spring 2019 when we were given whole staff training. Since then, English leaders have continued to review this approach, fine tune it and tailor to our own school's needs. English leaders have created a support document named "Planning Reading Masters at St. Michael's" to ensure that this process is outlined clearly and is available for staff to refer back to.

## **Impact**

English leaders undertake half termly monitoring to ensure consistency in approaches of planning, teaching and assessment; to ensure appropriate challenge through the school and to assess the impact on children's learning and progress.

For writing, leaders look for evidence in children's books of independent writing that is consistently and accurately assessed using our writing assessment grids. They look at weekly planning resources to ensure that they are made in line with the medium-term plans that they have provided. They also conduct learning walks to observe lessons and have discussions with children: this is particularly useful when asking children to explain where they are in the sequence of learning. In addition, we organise termly writing moderation meetings within year groups or as a whole school to encourage peer feedback, consistent assessment and target setting together.

For reading, leaders look in children's books to see evidence of progression in challenge throughout the school in the texts selected and the questions asked. They conduct learning walks to ensure that the class reading timeslot is kept to – ensuring that our commitment to Reading for Pleasure is demonstrated

clearly. In addition, they discuss class reading materials with children and regularly reflect to ensure that these resources are updated with the most high-quality and engaging texts.

Leaders provide feedback from monitoring that identifies strengths and areas to continue to work on. Where identified, English leaders offer staff additional support and coaching opportunities to develop their subject knowledge and confidence with key areas of planning and assessing English.