



English at Dennington Primary

The teaching of English is fundamental to everything we do at Dennington Primary School.

English lessons typically take place daily in every class in the school and opportunities are frequently provided for children to develop their oracy, reading and writing across the scope of the curriculum. Our goal is for children to develop into confident speakers, thoughtful and reflective listeners, enthusiastic readers and engaging writers.

Children need to be able to read and write in order to communicate and access information and ideas. It could be argued that first they learn to read and write and then they read and write to learn!

Writing is also an art form. As the essential skills are being mastered they can be applied to create interesting, engaging and powerful texts that communicate information, ideas, imagery and emotions to the reader. The teaching of literacy therefore, extends beyond the teaching of reading and writing skills into the creative application of these skills in writing for a range of purposes and audiences. In reading, it is about engaging and immersing the reader in a wide range of high quality texts to be informed, entertained, make sense of themselves and the world around them and appreciate the writer's craft.

When teaching English at Dennington, we aim to combine the teaching of reading and writing skills within a context that is meaningful, purposeful and creative. The primary curriculum is packed with content that provides the context for a multitude of writing outcomes so we often capitalise on links with other subjects.

Reading

Our approach to teaching reading at Dennington is based on developing the full range of skills involved in this complex process. Children are encouraged to develop a love of books and are given many opportunities to listen to stories, to share books with each other and to choose fiction and non-fiction. Creating a positive reading culture is potentially one of the most powerful ways of improving academic standards in school. We believe that reading should be a joy not a chore.

Reading involves two main elements – word recognition and language comprehension. Children have to be taught how to decode, retrieve information and ideas and make inferences from clues in the text. They need to be taught how to identify and comment upon the ways in which authors organise their writing and the language that they use.



Decoding and Early Reading

On starting school, they are encouraged to take books home to read and talk about with their parents and a dialogue is started between school and home in the form of their reading record. This includes both scheme texts and books chosen for shared enjoyment. We use a teaching approach based on systematic synthetic phonics as set out in the Letters and Sounds phonics scheme.

Phonics is the term used to describe the letters of the alphabet and the sounds each letter, and combinations of letters make. Children are taught to:

- blend these sounds together to say and read words
- segment the sounds to spell words for writing

Recent research has shown that a structured and systematic phonics programme is the most effective way to teach young children to decode. At Dennington we follow the National Strategy's Letters and Sounds which is a well-organised and effective programme and freely available to all schools. It is organised into six phases, each building upon the previous phase by introducing new sounds and alternative spellings of sounds until Phase 6, where knowledge is consolidated and children start to learn independent spelling strategies. It is structured and tailored to the needs of each individual right up until the end of Key Stage 1.

Phonics sessions are structured to build on previous learning and introduce new phonics skills and subject knowledge. Sessions often follow the model of revisit/review, teach, practise and apply.

In June of each year all children in Year 1 undertake a National Phonics Screening Check. This check consists of 40 words (20 real words and pseudo words) which children will be asked to read. The focus of this check is to see if pupils can decode a range of words which they have not seen before. We use engaging multimedia and interactive resources to enhance our teaching in this area. More detailed information on the teaching of early reading is presented as part of our induction process for new parents and is available on request.



Reading Aloud

It is our view that reading aloud to children is one of the most powerful and pleasurable ways to develop a love of reading. It enriches their language, develops their comprehension and provides a model for their own writing. To this end all teachers regularly read aloud from high quality texts to the class or to groups. This also gives children further exposure to literature that extends children's understanding and cultural capital, beyond the scope that they might experience in their independent reading. We believe that through this we will:

- create enthusiastic readers;
- increase children's vocabulary;
- enhance and accelerate language development and comprehension;
- give the children virtual experiences of situations and events that they have not experienced for themselves;
- introduce them to many different characters and settings;
- familiarise them with the flow, rhythm and patterns of the English language;
- develop their sense of the world and their place within it;
- offer an opportunity to share texts with children that they would not normally access or be able to interpret on their own.
- help them to populate and structure their own narratives.

Guided Reading

- This usually takes the form of an adult reading a text with a group of about six children, who are ideally reading at about the same level. The teacher selects a book or text that the children are able to read without too much difficulty (95% accuracy). However, it is worth noting that some children are able to comprehend at a level well beyond their decoding ability and so will benefit from guided groups where most of the text is read to them.
- There is a balance of adult and child talk – with the teacher taking over as necessary to maintain the flow of the narrative.
- Reading activities during the guided session often include:
 - ❖ reading for enjoyment;
 - ❖ understanding the text;
 - ❖ use and apply phonics;
 - ❖ retrieval of facts and ideas;
 - ❖ empathising with characters and determining their motives;
 - ❖ interpreting what the author is communicating;
 - ❖ identifying the author's style;
 - ❖ commenting on the author's use of language;
 - ❖ reflecting on the narrative view point;
 - ❖ analysing the structure and organisation of the text;
 - ❖ building cultural capital through exploring different times and places;
 - ❖ considering how the author's techniques can inform the children's writing.



- ❖ responding – personal responses, art, drama, journal work; writing in role.
- The teacher’s role in the immersion stage is to elicit response, extend the children’s responses and encourage critique. Comprehension is then developed through focused talk and the exchange of ideas.
- It is sometimes helpful when teaching reading comprehension to refer to mnemonic devices. Two commonly used examples include DIAL and VIPERS (see below).

Deductive Inferential Authorial Literacy	Vocabulary Infer Predict Explain Retrieve Summarise
---	--

Personal, Independent Reading

At Dennington we aim to develop independent readers, who read for information and pleasure. To this end we provide regular opportunities for independent quiet reading, with age and ability appropriate fiction and non-fiction texts. The children choose these books, with support and guidance from teachers and are able to take them home to read, as well as having opportunity in the week to read independently.

When children are still learning to de-code, these books should be phonically decodable, so that children can practise their blending by reading aloud to parents and then be encouraged to read the book by themselves. Children are also encouraged to “read” the pictures in high quality picture books and information books, which enhances their comprehension skills, inspires a love of narrative and increases their knowledge and understanding of the world. Parents are encouraged to write in their child’s Reading Journal to promote home-school collaboration in developing reading.

When children are able to read fluently they are given support to choose books they will enjoy and be extended through reading them. They are encouraged to read aloud at home still, to develop fluency, confidence and oracy skills. There are special days and occasions where children’s and adults’ personal choices in reading are celebrated, such as World Book Day and Shared Reading Days.



Creating A Positive Reading Culture

At Dennington we endeavour to create a positive reading culture in all of our classrooms. In a 'Reading Classroom' we would hope to find the following:

- reading for pleasure is the main driving force;
- there is a rich reading environment- teachers promote reading through incentives, displays/book boards, visitors, events and competitions.
- the teachers are committed to extending their knowledge of children's books
- the teachers are excited about books, authors and reading;
- the children are involved in a range of reading activities;
- the children are involved in decision making about the selection of books;
- the library and information gathering skills are included as planned learning activities;
- the classroom book collection contains a wide range of genres and formats which are updated as often as possible;
- the children feel good about themselves as readers;

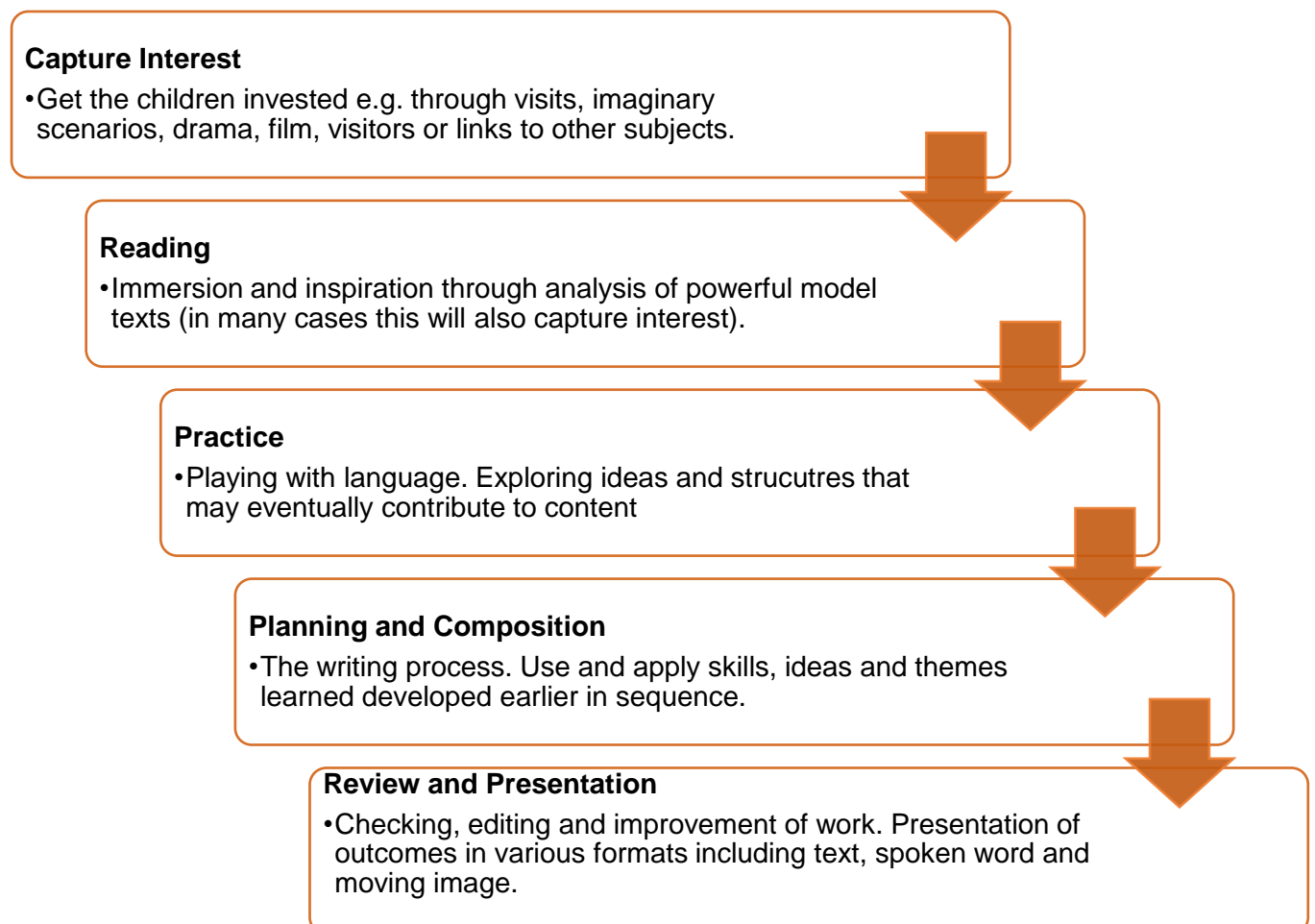


Writing

Dennington pupils are actively encouraged to develop as confident, engaging and creative writers. We believe it is important that children see their work as having purpose and that they regard themselves as authors. Opportunities are provided for pupils to develop the skills required for writing for a wide range of different purposes and audiences such as for example using both modern technologies and social media as well as tried and test traditional approaches such as crafting their own books.

In writing, children are taught how to select words and apply grammar, punctuation and spelling skills in ways which are interesting and to create different effects for the different purposes and audiences. Whilst spelling, punctuation and grammar skills are taught discretely in all classes, the end purpose of these lessons is always for clarity and refinement in writing. These skills may be embedded through starting the day with "4-A-Day" sentence practise and through dictation work to embed recent learning.

The journey to a written outcome often includes a lot of work on reading and grammar in addition to composition. The sequence typically follows the pattern below.





Modelling

This is arguably the most powerful and influential aspect of the teaching of writing. This tends to be whole class activity in which the teacher adopts the role of the writer, thinking aloud and making decisions as to what to write and how to write it. The teacher is saying, '*Watch me, then you have a go*'. There are three levels of modelling writing and the teacher will choose which is most appropriate:

1. Teacher demonstration – the teacher demonstrates a skill without input from the children:
2. Teacher scribing – the teacher involves the children in word choices and composition:
3. Scaffolder composition – the children 'have a go' at composing their own sentences, often on white boards, applying the skills demonstrated by the teacher.

Guided Writing

This involves explicit teaching of the skills needed to move the children on or address their specific problems. This use occurs when the teacher is working with a group or individual. The Guided Writing focus can be on any stage of the writing process and can be used for:

- teaching children how to plan and draft;
- teaching children how to improve structure and style;
- teaching children to make their writing appropriate to purpose and audience;
- varying sentence types;
- improving punctuation;
- making effective vocabulary choices;
- introducing more sophisticated grammatical structures
- editing and improving.

Independent Writing

This is an opportunity for the teacher to observe the child as a writer and enables them to use and apply their knowledge and skills. The key features are as follows:

- children are aware of the learning intentions and agreed success criteria or 'writing points';
- there is a supportive environment in which children are confident and willing to take risks;
- quiet, dedicated time and space for writing;



- children check if their writing sounds right and makes sense, perhaps reading aloud part of their work to themselves or others;
- appropriate resources and materials are made available e.g. spelling words (walls/mats / dictionaries), recording buttons, clicker 6, word banks (e.g. adjectives, conjunctions), writing frameworks or templates, story plan or genre specific structure, 1:1 support;
- teachers may stop periodically and carry out mini-plenaries which could involve sharing writing from children's work, addressing misconceptions and improving or editing a sentences.

Free Writing

At Dennington we believe there needs to be opportunities for children to just write for the enjoyment, creativity or catharsis of putting thoughts onto paper. To this end the children are. From time to time, given, or make, books where they can write freely. Sometimes the theme of this writing is dictated by the teacher, where we want children to engage through writing with something they may not have thought of for themselves, and sometimes it is chosen by the child. This has been developed through the "Writing Teachers" network, part of All Saints Trust, where teachers are supported in becoming writers themselves, inspiring the children they teach.

Writer's Toolkit

This represents a workshop approach to writing – where the 'tools of the trade' are accessible, and added to, as the process develops.

Aspects of the writing process include:

- the key features of the text type – language and structure;
- gathering content – information, notes, ideas about the subject of the writing;
- examples of skills practice in the context of the unit – great sentences, punctuation reminders, paragraph prompts;
- vocabulary – descriptive, figurative and technical;
- connectives – text-type appropriate;
- planning – different techniques – story-maps, bullet points, mind-maps, story mountain, non-fiction skeletons;
- drafting – step by step, following the teacher's model;
- editing and revising – proofreading symbols, examples of edited writing



Spelling

A good spelling programme gradually builds pupils' spelling vocabulary by introducing patterns or conventions and continually practising those already introduced. The best spelling sessions are investigative. If children have explored the etymology and morphology of words, they are far more likely to make informed decisions about how to spell a word. Children are taught the rules and conventions of the spelling system and also spelling strategies to support independent writing. Spelling strategies need to be taught explicitly and applied to high frequency words, cross-curricular words and individual pupil's words. Proofreading should be taught during shared and guided writing session and links should be made to the teaching of handwriting.

At Dennington we use the Purple Mash Spelling programme, which leads through the National Curriculum expectations for spelling in each year group. This is an online learning platform that means that children have opportunity to practise online at home as well as on paper.

Spoken Language

Speaking and listening are essential life skills. At Dennington, these are explicitly taught and applied both socially and across the curriculum. We believe that giving children opportunities to talk and respond to each other is hugely important. These opportunities need to be planned and integrated into lessons so that they make a significant contribution to learning. The National Curriculum explicitly states that pupils should be taught to:

- listen and respond appropriately to adults and their peers
- ask relevant questions to extend their understanding and knowledge
- use relevant strategies to build their vocabulary
- articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions
- give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings
- maintain attention and participate actively in collaborative conversations, staying on topic and initiating and responding to comments
- use spoken language to develop understanding through speculating, hypothesising, imagining and exploring ideas
- speak audibly and fluently with an increasing command of Standard English
- participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role play/improvisations and debates
- gain, maintain and monitor the interest of the listener(s)
- consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others
- select and use appropriate registers for effective communication



At Dennington, we endeavour to provide children with opportunities to:

- Talk to others
- Talk with others
- Talk within role play and drama
- Talk about talk

Talk within English lessons is fundamental to:

- Book Talk - understanding and responding to what children read or have read to them;
- Eliciting and extending responses and encouraging critique;
- Vocabulary development – acquiring new words, ideas and knowledge of the world is directly linked to reading comprehension. (If you understand something that you hear you will also understand it when it is written down) **This is developed through all subjects – everything that is part of the school’s curriculum is used as an opportunity for increasing and enriching children’s vocabulary.**
- Storytelling – retelling well-known and familiar stories to assimilate the rhythms and patterns of story language;
- Story making - creating 'new' stories orally and/or as a preparation and rehearsal for writing;
- Rehearsing what is to be written – exploring ideas and gathering the content for writing - what to write about. Creating characters and settings, exploring characters’ feelings, sequencing and role-playing the order of events – knowing your story or organising information before writing it down; composing sentences orally and refining them until they are effective and reflect the purpose of the text.

Drama

Using drama in the classroom is one of the most effective ways of ensuring that learning is lively and interactive. Most drama activities take just a few minutes but can have a significant impact upon the children’s learning. Drama can be used to:

- explore characters and situations to develop interpretation, response and comprehension in reading;
- foster empathy
- role-play stories to develop sequencing and story language;
- engage children through teacher-in-role – teacher acting as a character or special visitor who can give the children information and answer their questions;
- explore issues and dilemmas from multiple perspectives
- role-play events and then write about the event in role;
- re-enact events in history;
- develop vocabulary.



In both key stages we plan, rehearse and perform a play to an audience; KS1 and EYFS through the Christmas nativity play and KS2 through the summer performance. Particularly in KS2 this will involve using a play script to learn lines and refine the delivery of those lines over an extended period to make the performance clear and entertaining. Because of the relatively small size of our school every pupil is given the opportunity to engage in the drama process and be an actor, increasing confidence and cultural experience.

Planning

We use the Reading and Writing Progression Maps (see appendix) to support our long term and medium term planning. These maps ensure that there is depth and progression in writing expectations and reading experience through the journey from EYFS to Year 6. The long term plan shows how writing and reading can link in with other subject areas and the coverage through the two year rolling plans for each key stage. The medium term planning ensures that there is breadth and coverage in each area, for example having writing to inform, writing to entertain and writing to persuade in each term.

Assessment

Formative assessment takes place on a daily basis with teachers making the opportunity to work with individual and small groups of children as they write and read. Teachers use green pen to show children in their writing when there is a mistake that needs correcting or an opportunity to improve writing, according to the stage an individual child is at in their learning. Teachers also use pink pen to highlight and praise parts of a child's writing that shows real effort and quality. For extended pieces of writing we use "Writing Points" which has criteria for success that the teacher and class have talked through together. Children are encouraged to read carefully and engage with any written feedback from teachers.

Summative assessment takes at the end of each term, although it is informed throughout the term by the teacher's knowledge of each child's progress. Reading is assessed through use of formal comprehension tests for each year group, from year 1 to year 6, which are administered according to the child's maturity level. In key stage 2 these are marked with the children and used as a guided reading opportunity to learn from. In writing children are assessed as being working towards the expected standard, working at the expected standard or exceeding the expected standard for their age group. The criteria for this is in line with the National Curriculum expectations. Parents are informed each term of the level and the progress of their child in English. The data from these assessments is used by the class teachers and the school leaders to identify and plan for any interventions, support or challenge needed for individual children.