



# Primary Literacy Policy

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Aquinas Church of England Education Trust





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# Primary Literacy

## Overview

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## Statement of Intent

Literacy and communication are key life skills. The English curriculum teaches and develops pupils' ability to listen, speak, read, and write for a wide range of purposes. The literacy skills taught formally within English are integral to all subjects and underpin the whole curriculum. Pupils learn to apply their literacy skills across the whole curriculum. Language is central to pupils' sense of identity, belonging and growth. Through literacy acquisition pupils have a language to learn and communicate, to think, explore and organise. Helping pupils to express themselves clearly orally and in writing enhances and enriches teaching and learning in all subjects. This linguistic competence enables pupils to communicate effectively at home, school, in the wider world and leads to improved life opportunities.

Communication is central to pupils' intellectual, emotional, and social development. They learn to examine their own and others' experiences, feelings, and ideas, giving this order and meaning. This policy sets out the principles and expectations for literacy, communication, and the English curriculum across the Trust for all ages and abilities.

### 1. Legal framework

**[UPDATED]** This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2013) 'English programmes of study: key stages 1 and 2'
- DfE (2021) 'Statutory framework for the early year's foundation stage'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following academy policies:

- Curriculum
- Equality



## 2. Roles and responsibilities

### Trust Board and Education Team

The Trust Board works through the Education Team and Education Scrutiny Committee to provide a direction and make sure the policy is implemented effectively in all academies. Where schools have an executive head, they will hold the overall responsibility and accountability for the quality of provision.

### Senior Leaders

The headteacher/head of school is accountable for the performance and training of staff, the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils. The leadership team provides appropriate support, training and resources for teams and individuals in line with their portfolio of responsibility. They make sure classroom practitioners, pupils and parents understand the expectations for good teaching and learning. They oversee processes for reporting to parents and to the Trust Board. The leadership team will establish a programme of quality assurance including: reviews of planning; visits to lessons; scrutiny of written work; analysis of data; pupil progress meetings; discussions with pupils and feedback from parents.

### Literacy Subject Leaders

Literacy subject leaders will work together through the network to implement strategies, organise training and share resources. They collaborate with leaders in other academies to develop good practice, including moderation and assessment standards. They are responsible for the development of subject knowledge for those they lead. They will make sure policy is being followed and are accountable for the quality of planning in their own academies. They monitor and evaluate consistent delivery of the policy at team level, and provide appropriate support to team members through training and coaching.

### Middle Leaders

All middle leaders are accountable for the quality of the learning environment, the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils in their area of responsibility. They are expected to undertake regular quality assurance and monitoring activities and take effective action where improvements are needed. When evaluating pupils' progress in literacy via work scrutiny the focus is to ensure work shows development of literacy skills by each pupil over a period. They check the regularity and quality of assessment information and challenge teachers when pupils do not make enough progress.

### Teachers

Teachers contribute to planning, using the agreed plans to structure and sequence the teaching programme. They must continue to develop their subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. They provide a well organised and stimulating environment which has a direct impact on the quality of teaching and learning. They set high expectations for attitudes to work and behaviour for learning. They are responsible for the accurate



assessment of pupils they teach so all pupils make good or better progress. All staff have a responsibility to reflect on their own practice in the teaching, marking and assessment of literacy within their own subject.

### **3. Principles**

Literacy has been identified as a key skill that is integral to raising achievement across the curriculum as well as to equipping young people for the workplace. Literacy supports learning in several ways, providing pupils with the vocabulary and the organisational control that is needed to progress across all subjects. Literacy provides pupils with the tools they need to communicate effectively through speaking and listening, reading, and writing. Pupils are enabled to express themselves creatively and imaginatively as they become enthusiastic and critical readers of stories, poetry, and drama, as well as of non-fiction and media texts.

The ability to respond to literature on a personal and aesthetic level enriches our pupils' lives. Pupils gain an understanding of how language works by looking at its patterns, structures, and origins. Pupils use their knowledge, skills and understanding in speaking and writing across a range of different situations. These skills are embedded across the curriculum to ensure every pupil achieves their potential and the highest standard of English possible. Literacy underpins pupils' progression across all subjects. Consequently, all teachers are teachers of literacy and, as such, they seek to embed literacy skills within their pedagogical practice and classroom environment.

Success criteria for literacy within written and discussion-based pieces of work are shared and discussed. Every opportunity is taken to ensure that subject specific technical terms are used correctly and spelt accurately. Subject specific vocabulary is communicated and used effectively within lessons and consolidated using display.

Teaching in all academies is designed to develop pupils' ability to communicate freely, effectively, and imaginatively. Teachers set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils. They promote good progress and outcomes through detailed planning and well-structured lessons. Teachers use good subject and curriculum knowledge, alongside accurate and productive use of assessment, to adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils. Teaching recognises and values the language skills that pupils have already acquired, including the foreign language skills of those pupils with EAL (English as an Additional Language). Teaching in all subjects reinforces literacy skills allowing pupils to use and apply their learning in all areas of the curriculum. Where this is possible, academies will develop a 'common language' to promote literacy by developing an awareness of the diverse ways that literacy is being developed across the curriculum and in different environments.

Academies provide suitable learning opportunities for all pupils regardless of ability by matching the challenge of the task to the ability of the pupil. Academies use a range of strategies which may include setting by ability, differentiated group work, peer talk, or



opportunity to work from the same starting point before moving on to develop individual ideas. Teaching assistants work in partnership with teachers to make sure teaching is matched to the needs of individuals. Pupils can experience a wide range of texts, and to support their work with a variety of resources, such as word banks, phonic resources, ICT (Information Communication Technology), multimedia resources, dictionaries, and thesauruses.

#### **4. Speaking and listening**

Pupils are encouraged to develop effective communication skills in readiness for later life. Opportunities to develop these skills include: assemblies; talk partners; debate; discussion; public speaking; philosophy for pupils; questioning and drama. In formal and informal situations, we create and facilitate purposeful opportunities for conversation, discussion and talk around learning. Questioning forms the basis of our teaching and we strongly encourage pupils to be inquisitive and to share their thoughts confidently in a supportive environment, but also to ask their own questions. When planning for talk we consider pace and timing so that purposeful talk is maintained.

A focus on speaking and listening:

- Enables pupils to speak clearly and audibly, to communicate effectively through speech and to take account of the perspective of those to whom they are speaking;
- Teaches pupils how to adapt their speech to a wide range of circumstances and demands;
- Provides pupils with a wide-ranging vocabulary to articulate effectively;
- Provides opportunities to develop speaking skills;
- Encourages pupils to listen with concentration, to identify the main points, and sometimes the detail, of what they have heard.

We recognise the need for all pupils to speak, read and write Standard English fluently and accurately, while acknowledging that a pupil's own dialect, or other language is of prime importance. We model our own language to pupils which encourages Standard English both in speaking and writing.

Examples of practice used to develop speaking and listening include:

- Questioning and taking risks with language;
- Presenting in-front of an audience;
- Reciting and reading aloud;
- Re-telling, role-play, and drama productions;
- Listening to and participating in stories, poems, rhymes, and songs;
- Using drama activities to enliven and enrich pupils' understanding of character;
- Talking the text with opportunities for pupils to talk about and discuss their reading and writing;
- Debating;



- Engaging in collaborative work and reporting back following group work;
- Giving presentations.

As pupils develop speaking and listening skills, these are extended to all aspects of the school curriculum. Pupils are taught how to participate in groups and in the whole class, including: using talk to develop and clarify ideas; using active listening skills to identify the main points which arise from discussion; listening for a specific purpose; discussion to promote debate and the evaluation of ideas. Pupils should be able to use language precisely and coherently to respond to and build on their ideas constructively.

Pupils may speak and listen:

- In pairs with a working partner;
- In small groups with opportunities to take on the roles of chair or scribe;
- With the teacher or another adult;
- In whole class discussions;
- Or, by making presentations to a wider audience.

In these contexts, some of the following activities take place:

- Exploring and describing events, activities, and problems, exploring, and developing ideas with others;
- Reporting back to a wider audience to consolidate ideas and understanding;
- Asking questions as well as answering them;
- Speculating, hypothesising, and imagining;
- Planning, organising, and reviewing activities;
- Investigating and solving problems collaboratively;
- Evaluating experiences and reflecting on learning;
- Talking at length and adopting the 'expert' role.

## 5. Reading

We see ourselves as a community of readers in which all adults share their current reading. The teaching of reading and pupils' acquisition of reading skills is the bedrock of our primary English curriculum. As pupils get older, they learn to read for understanding, the acquisition of knowledge and analysis. Becoming an effective and proficient reader is the gateway to learning for our pupils. Teachers in all areas of the curriculum model to pupils how to read like a subject specialist. Success in most other subjects of the curriculum is dependent upon learning to read well.

A focus on reading will:

- Engender a love of literature and an appreciation of our literary heritage;
- Help pupils become confident, independent readers;
- Enable pupils to develop as enthusiastic and reflective readers, through contact with a wide range of distinct types of material.



Children begin to develop pre-reading skills involving, for example, the ability to visually focus, to concentrate for increasingly sustained periods, to distinguish between visual shapes and to notice similarities, and to begin to understand that pictures, symbols, and print can convey meaning, from the very youngest age.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), we aim to give children continuous experience of the medium of print and text through all their learning experiences and in all the Areas of Learning in the EYFS curriculum. The environment is rich with appropriate text: labels, captions, simple instructions, names, alphabet prompts and children's own mark-making. Adults continuously model reading in the learning environment, embedding in children's understanding the idea that print conveys meaning and is invaluable to us in our lives. Children are taught from the youngest age to value and care for books, to understand their structure, to handle them appropriately and to enjoy sharing them with each other.

Pupils become avid readers through developing a love of books and through reading being made fun by teachers and other adults, providing excitement, and inspiring the imagination. Parents and carers have a key role to play in helping to promote a love of books and reading at home, and we regard sharing books and support for reading to be one of the most important aspects of 'help with homework' which parents can provide. As pupils gain confidence in reading, wider reading is essential to developing an awareness of how tone, style, conventions, audience, and structure can be used to communicate meaning within different texts.

Examples of strategies used to promote and develop reading include:

- Shared reading sessions which allow teachers to model reading strategies;
- Guided reading which gives pupils opportunities to develop reading strategies and to discuss texts in detail;
- Buddied reading sessions within or across key stages;
- Independent reading time which facilitates 1-1 teaching and assessment;
- Discrete phonics lessons with systematics teaching of phonics;
- Use of reading schemes and ability banded books;
- Guidance for parents on reading and phonics;
- Competitions throughout the year to encourage the love of reading;
- Book fairs;
- Well-stocked libraries with opportunities for class visits, independent reading, quiet time, and library lessons.

As pupils get older, they develop their skills in reading and learning from text. Pupils use their reading skills to help them to learn as they develop increasing confidence and competence in reading distinct types of texts. They learn to interpret the meaning behind these texts and the diverse ways in which this can be communicated through language. Pupils are taught strategies which enable them to: read with greater understanding; locate and use information; follow a process or argument; summarise; synthesise and adapt what





they learn from their reading. We use available data on pupils' reading ability to make informed choices about appropriate texts and to plan appropriate support for pupils in order that they may successfully access texts.

As pupils develop their reading skills and read across a wide range of subjects, teaching includes planned opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to:

- Read and follow written instructions;
- Read and engage with narratives of events or activities;
- Follow up their interests and read texts of varying lengths;
- Question and challenge printed information and views;
- Read with understanding descriptions of processes, structures, and mechanisms;
- Read and explore ideas and theories;
- Learn how to sift and select, and take notes from text and read to locate and relocate information;
- Learn how to scan for overall meaning and scan for key points, words, and phrases;
- Use reading to research and investigate from printed words and moving images.

## 6. Writing

Pupils are taught to produce well-structured and detailed writing in which the meaning is made clear and which engages the interest of the reader. Attention is paid to the formal structures of English, grammatical detail, punctuation, and spelling. An understanding of how to use grammar correctly, use relevant meta language, identify word classes, and sentence types is taught both in the context of a piece of writing and explicitly in whole class work. Grammar is taught and planned to fit in with relevant genres of writing as well as stand-alone lessons to support class teaching.

A focus on writing will:

- Teach pupils to write clearly in a variety of styles and forms, appropriate to the situation;
- Develop confidence, fluency and understanding;
- Foster the enjoyment of writing for a wide range of purposes, and a recognition of its value;
- Develop skills in planning, drafting, evaluating, and editing;
- Encourage accurate and meaningful writing, be it narrative or non-fiction;
- Teach pupils a range of independent strategies to self-monitor and correct;
- Develop and utilise imagination, inventiveness, and critical awareness.

Pupils learn to spell, recognise spelling rules, use phonic sounds, and recognise key words. They have wordlists and key subject specific vocabulary which supports their writing. They are expected to write clearly and neatly. Teachers of all subjects, model good handwriting when writing on the board or in pupils' books. Teachers model writing strategies, the use of



phonics and spelling strategies in shared writing sessions. Guided writing sessions are used to target specific needs of both groups and individuals. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to write in different contexts using quality texts as a model and for a variety of purposes and audiences. There are many opportunities for pupils to improve their writing inspired by drama techniques and film clips.

Examples of writing strategies include:

- Defining a purpose and audience for each piece of writing from the outset;
- Displaying examples of skilful writing including explanation of the key features which make them good;
- Providing stimulating first-hand experiences e.g., trips;
- Teaching writing as a sequenced activity;
- Using regular prescriptive feedback through marking;
- Planning for progression in complexity of tasks and reading material year on year;
- Developing stamina by providing opportunities to write for extended periods;
- Teaching drafting and redrafting before being satisfied with a publication standard;
- Using clear criteria to support peer marking as a response to writing;
- Teaching students how to plan organise and record;
- Providing opportunities for collaborative writing and reflection with other students.

The development of high-quality writing continues throughout formal education. Learning through writing enables pupils to use writing to express their ideas and thoughts. This in turn requires an understanding of how to organise their writing so that they can write in a widening variety of forms for different purposes e.g., to interpret, evaluate, explain, analyse, and explore. Subjects that require pupils to complete extended writing tasks should provide them with a structure which will enable them to better organise their writing. Academies will agree the most effective way to organise extended pieces of writing and use this as a cross-curricular tool.

Mnemonics are also useful when used consistently between subjects, providing pupils with a way of remembering how to develop their points fully. Pupils should also be clear about the tone, style, conventions, audience, and purpose which underpin their work. Pupils should also be taught how to write with brevity and succinctly where appropriate.

## 7. Monitoring and review

**[UPDATED]** This policy is reviewed on a **bi-annual** basis by the **Education Scrutiny Committee** and **Chief Executive**. Monitoring is conducted through the Trust's programme of quality assurance and that undertaken by the individual Academy. Changes to this policy are communicated to relevant stakeholders.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is **January 2025**.