

English Policy



Our Curriculum at Finchale

At Finchale Primary School we are proud of our curriculum and the range of experiences we provide for our children. Our curriculum is accessible to all children, irrespective of their ethnic background, gender, disability, religious or linguistic background. We strive to meet the needs of those pupils with additional needs, including special educational needs, those with disabilities, those who are more able, those with gifts or talents and the children who are learning English as an additional language. We provide a rich and challenging curriculum which aims to stretch our children. Staff monitor our children to ensure that they are supported in their learning, whatever their ability.

Statement of Intent for English

At Finchale Primary School, we are committed to providing a high quality English education which excites and engages all pupils. Our English curriculum is designed to develop children's love of reading, writing and discussion and prepare our learners for life as successful, valuable and socially responsible citizens. We inspire an appreciation of our rich and varied literary heritage and a habit of reading widely and often. We nurture a culture where children take pride in their writing, can write clearly, imaginatively and accurately and adapt their language and style for a range of contexts. We inspire children to be confident in the art of speaking and listening and to use discussion to communicate and further their learning in all areas of the curriculum. This is supported by different activities including our 'Reading for Celebration Day', Author Visits, Reading Rooms and English events with other local schools. We endeavour to develop an enthusiastic, creative and resilient attitude towards English that will stay with our pupils throughout their lives.

This Policy was agreed in

2023 and will be reviewed in Autumn 2026.

Chair of Governors:

Date:

Head Teacher:

Date:

The Importance of English

The National Curriculum (DfE, 2014) clearly states that teaching the English language is an essential, if not the most essential role of primary school education. We know that we have a duty to ensure that English teaching is a priority and we recognise that this is necessarily cross-curricular and a constant throughout school life and beyond. It is part of the 'essential knowledge' (p6 National Curriculum) that is needed in society:

'Teachers should develop pupils' spoken language, reading, writing and vocabulary as integral aspects of the teaching of every subject. English is both a subject in its own right and the medium for teaching; for pupils, understanding the language provides access to the whole curriculum. Fluency in the English language is an essential foundation for success in all subjects.' (P10 National Curriculum)

Aims

At Finchale, our core curriculum covers those elements set out in the EYFS statutory framework, as well as the programmes of study for both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 within the National Curriculum for England. In addition, our teaching goes beyond this to include a range of areas and activities which we believe equip our pupils not only with the skills and knowledge but also the confidence and resilience to be happy, productive members of our society today.

To ensure a smooth transition between what children learn in the Early Years and Key Stage 1, we have carefully structured our planning to ensure there are strong and purposeful links between what children learn and experience in Reception and what they go on to learn and experience in Year 1. This helps to build confidence, maximizes opportunities for learning and demonstrates how our staff have a good understanding of how children progress and develop within each subject.

Our starting point for teaching English at Finchale is within the EYFS. Here, the key components come within the specific area, Literacy and the prime areas: Communication and Language Development, Physical Development and Expressive arts and design. Within this, pupils:

EYFS Literacy

ELG Comprehension:

- ★ Demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary.
- ★ Anticipate (where appropriate) key events in stories.
- ★ Use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems and during role play.

ELG Word reading:

- ★ Say a sound for each letter in the alphabet and at least 10 digraphs.
- ★ Read words consistent with their phonic knowledge by sound-blending.
- ★ Read aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge, including some common exception words.

ELG Writing:

- ★ Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.
- ★ Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters.
- ★ Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

EYFS Communication and language development

ELG Listening, attention and understanding:

- ★ Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions when being read to and during whole class discussions and small group interactions
- ★ Make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify their understanding
- ★ Hold conversation when engaged in back-and-forth exchanges with their teacher and peers

ELG Speaking:

- ★ Participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussions, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary.
- ★ Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate
- ★ Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher.

EYFS Physical development (this links to the mechanics of writing/pencil control)

ELG Fine motor skills –

- ★ Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases

EYFS Expressive arts and design (this links to re-telling and adapting familiar stories – talk for writing)

ELG Being imaginative

- ★ Invent, adapt and recount narratives and stories with peers and their teacher.

Our pupils then move on to develop their Literacy skills, knowledge and understanding as they study the attainment targets and programmes of study for English as set out in the National Curriculum. This aims to ensure that all pupils leave our school with the ability to:

- ★ read easily, fluently and with good understanding
- ★ develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information
- ★ acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language
- ★ appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage
- ★ write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting their language and style in and for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences
- ★ use discussion in order to learn; they should be able to elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas
- ★ are competent in the arts of speaking and listening, making formal presentations, demonstrating to others and participating in debate

What This Means at Finchale Primary

Early Years

We believe that the Early Years Foundation Stage is crucial in securing solid foundations that children are going to continue to build upon. We believe that all children deserve to be valued as individuals and we are passionate in encouraging all children to achieve their full, unique potential. With this in mind, we begin each year by looking at the individual needs and interests of our

children, taking into account their different starting points. We then work together to develop and carry out our flexible EYFS Curriculum, taking account of the Prime and Specific Areas of Learning. This enables children to follow their learning journey from a point that is suitable to their unique needs and stage of development, supporting them to develop into independent learners with a thirst for knowledge and a desire to learn.

Throughout all of these areas of learning are the Characteristics of Effective Learning. We strive to develop these key characteristics of “Playing and Learning”, “Active Learning” and “Thinking Critically” in order to give the children the skills that they will continue to draw upon throughout their development. The curriculum within our Reception class is shaped by the interests of the children and is very current. Therefore, content will vary from year to year. However, the skills, attitudes and learning opportunities will remain constant as we aim to ensure every child leaving Reception is ready and confident to move onto Year 1.

Reading and Phonics

The main intention in Early Years is to foster a love of books, reading and stories at an early age which will stay with the child throughout their life. Children are taught to blend known sounds together to read words, along with a recognition of high frequency words. Children are exposed to a wide range of reading materials from fiction books, magazines, poems and non-fiction materials such as recipes, lists, information books etc. We use stories, poems and a range of other texts in our teaching to develop the children’s interest and pleasure in reading and a great deal of time is spent exploring the content of a text, looking at the story structure and learning about the characters. Every child will receive a sound book at the beginning of the year which will be assessed weekly and any new sounds will be added accordingly. This is then followed by a blending book as the year continues. Children take home one Monster phonics reading book (and this is later extended to two) a week and parents are encouraged to read as often as possible with their child at home. Children access reading continuously in Reception class through whole class, group, shared, individual and guided reading sessions. Most children are expected to learn some basic words and phonics sounds before taking reading books home. When children experience difficulties learning a small number of words, non-word books may be sent home along with phonics packs to share with families. Children receive daily phonics sessions in Reception following the ‘Monster Phonics’ programme. This enables children to be able to decode efficiently.

Writing

In the Foundation Stage, children are encouraged to make marks independently across areas of the indoor and outdoor curriculum. Children are praised for their efforts and forms of writing are celebrated such as labels, lists, captions, stories, invitations and instructions. In addition to this, children access more formal writing tasks based around class topics or stories which are modelled, differentiated and supported according to ability.

As children develop their ability to recognise the sounds and names of letters, they are encouraged to put these sounds together and to make up words, then captions and moving on to sentences. Children in Reception are introduced to basic skills and as the year progresses children begin to apply these to the writing.

Key Stage 1 & 2

Reading and Phonics

In Key Stages 1 and 2 children follow our Reading for Comprehension approach to ensure a secure understanding and application of comprehension skills is developed. In years 1 – 5 all children spend the Autumn term using a variety of high quality texts to investigate and look in-depth at each comprehension skill using VIPERS: Vocabulary, Inference, Prediction, Explanation, Retrieval and Sequence/Summarise. This is implemented in a weekly comprehension whole class and group/whole class Reading for Comprehension sessions in years 2-6. After this, each class

continues to enjoy a range of texts applying these VIPERS skills to analyse and understand the texts. This approach of applying all reading skills is started at the beginning of the year in Year 6. In KS1 skills developed in the Foundation stage are also built upon too. Children are encouraged to acquire a love of books and to develop a respect for them and we aim to use books to stimulate each child's imagination. Children are further encouraged to read confidently and independently and phonics continues to be taught using the Monster Phonics programme. Children are encouraged to read simple texts independently and talk about the text, the characters and giving explanations about what they have read.

Each child takes home two reading books every week. One is a Monster Phonics reading book matched to the individual child's needs and which is to be read by the pupil to an adult. The second is a comprehension reading book which is to be shared with an adult. A reading record and a Reading VIPERS bookmark appropriate for each year group are also sent home too. The children share their books with an appropriate adult in school at least two times a week. The adult will ask questions relevant to the interest of the child and using our year group appropriate Reading Vipers bookmarks with relevant questions for each reading skill. The children are encouraged to decode unknown words using appropriate strategies. Reading for Comprehension group sessions take place daily. Children are grouped according to ability; each group has at least two guided sessions per week with either the teacher and/or additionally with the learning support assistant. By Year 2 each session looks at a different reading VIPERS skill before progressing onto a range within one session. A 'Class Novel' is also used to encourage children's enjoyment of literature. This is read regularly. All children have access to the library.

The Monster Phonics programme is introduced in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and into Key Stage 2 as necessary. It focuses on phoneme/ grapheme recognition and the strategies of blending to read and segmenting to spell. Monster Phonics uses colour to consistently code for key graphemes in English. Colour shows children how to pronounce the most difficult aspects of reading. It is unique in that it uses character (monster) phoneme cues and colour coding to represent the long vowel sounds, silent letters and tricky letters. Children in KS1 receive daily sessions of focussed teaching, learning and assessment. Regular school assessment ensures children who are not working at an appropriate level access intervention groups for regular pre and post teaching of the required phase.

In Key Stage 2, we continue to encourage the children to read enthusiastically a range of materials and use their developed VIPERS skills to understand and respond to meaning. The Reading for Comprehension group session is continued in Year 3 with this then moving onto Whole Class Reading for Comprehension sessions in Years 4, 5, and 6 with a full range of reading genre offered. Using whole texts, we increase the children's abilities to read more challenging and lengthy texts independently, whilst allowing the children to reflect on the meanings of texts, analysing and discussing them within a range of contexts. Reading comprehension continues to be taught with whole class Reading for Comprehension sessions three times a week and two 30-minute Reading Plus sessions a week. These cover a wide range of activities including whole class and group discussions and answering questions related to the text, picture, and comprehensions and rewriting the text from a different viewpoint. We use Reading Plus as a weekly homework task and children in Y3/4 take a reading book home weekly. Some targeted children in Y5/6 also receive this.

All children have access to Reading areas within the classroom, to recommended reads changed termly, our yearly Celebration of Reading, our school library and our outdoor Reading Rooms at break and lunch times. This enables our pupils to develop a love and passion for reading and have the opportunities to share novels and read for pleasure.

Writing

In Key Stage 1, children build on their writing experiences. They are encouraged to write independently and recognise the purpose of writing to communicate meaning. They continue to

be taught phonics patterns building upon their work from the Foundation Stage and a strong focus upon spelling, grammar and punctuation is further supported with our margin marking approach being implemented as a tool for self-assessment.

Children in Key Stage 2 are encouraged to understand that writing is essential to thinking and learning as well as being enjoyable in its own right. Children are taught the main rules and conventions of written English and explore writing in different styles and for different purposes. Children are given lots of opportunities to learn the process of planning, drafting and editing to improve their work. Children from years 1 -6 all participate in an Extended Writing task every other week, which incorporates the spelling, grammar and punctuation skills taught. All children in Reception and KS1 are taught spelling in line with the Monster Phonics programme. Children in KS2 are then taught spelling through the Superhero Spelling programme using the National Curriculum for their relevant year group. Children are encouraged to use an investigative approach to spelling looking and seeking patterns in words and word families and the use of dictionaries and thesauruses is taught and encouraged regularly. The children learn to self-correct when re-reading and re-drafting their writing through our school approach of Margin Marking. Any missing or misused punctuation, grammar and spelling (relevant to the appropriate year group) is identified in the margin during or after an extended writing session and children identify and self-correct. The children are given spellings and a spelling rule or pattern to learn and investigate almost weekly for homework. The children then explore and generate words from the rule or pattern set and these words are then shared back in the classroom and are assessed through regular spelling dictations and half termly assessments.

Handwriting

At Finchale, Teachers have high expectations in the presentation of work in all areas of the Curriculum. From EYFS to Year 6 we follow the Letter Join Handwriting programme.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are encouraged to use a writing tool in their dominant hand developing an appropriate grip. Activities are planned to encourage children to develop the ability to make controlled straight and curved lines and to learn printed letters. How we write the different graphemes is taught formally alongside the sounds as they are introduced in phonics sessions. These are reinforced regularly throughout our daily teaching.

More formal handwriting sessions are introduced in Key Stage 1 where children are encouraged to think about the size of their writing and to create 'zooms' at the start of their letters. Regular practise of cursive handwriting begins in Year 2 and continues throughout Key Stage 2. This varies from whole class sessions to targeted group and one to one boosters in each year group.

Making Learning Memorable

At Finchale, we aim to make learning memorable through the careful planning and delivery of enriching activities. We have a Celebration of Reading day, Monster Phonics day, Poetry day, the opportunity for author visits, drama production visits/workshops and we also partake in World Book day. We use Monster Phonics, Superhero Spelling and Reading Plus Certificates as well as Star Awards and Head Teacher Awards to celebrate the pupil's achievements.

Organisation

Our English Curriculum is drawn from a range of resources which include but are not restricted to: Monster Phonics, Superhero Spelling, Literacy Shed, Reading Plus, Fiction Express, Letter Join and Grammarsaurus. Long term plans, Medium term plans and the Progression of Skills, detail the units taught and the sequence of learning through school. Teachers identify their content from these with a clear focus on knowledge and skill development as well as placing importance and priority on developing a child's vocabulary understanding and use.

The content for each year group, along with long-term plans and medium-term plans, content can be found on our school website: www.finchale.durham.sch.uk .

Assessment

Throughout the year, teachers assess children's learning in various ways; through the marking of books, observations, questioning and discussions. This all helps to ensure that the teachers are planning appropriately to meet the needs of all our pupils. We assess progress regularly by talking to pupils to ensure they are learning more and that they are remembering more. Formal assessments take place three times a year for English and Maths whilst other subjects are normally assessed more informally in the ways described above. In all cases, appropriate feedback is given to pupils, verbal and/or written to ensure they can make improvements to their work and move their learning on.

Monitoring

We monitor in a variety of ways, including work scrutiny, work moderation, learning walks, observations and through our Coaching scheme.

Parental Involvement

We encourage parents to be involved by:

- Having a 'Meet the Teacher' event during the first week of the academic year. During this, the class teacher shares the curriculum plan (as well as other important messages) for the year.
- Communicating with parents during our Parents' Evenings in the Autumn and Spring Terms to share progress and achievements in English.
- Producing an end of year report which details achievements and targets in English. Those pupils who have attended intervention sessions across the year also receive an additional report.
- Providing children and parents with reading records, reading bookmarks, phonics and grapheme charts, spelling word mats etc to support learning.
- Holding workshops for parents in school on: how we teach Phonics, Early Reading and Preparation for the Phonics Screening.
- Sending homework activities to be completed by or with their child.

Resources

We use a range of resources to support our teaching within English which include the following:

- Phonics - <https://monsterphonics.com/>
- Handwriting - <https://www.letterjoin.co.uk/>
- Spelling - <https://superherospelling.com/>
- Reading - <https://www.readingplus.com/>
- Reading - <https://en.fictionexpress.com/>
- Reading for Comprehension - <https://www.literacyshedplus.com/en-gb/>
- <https://grammarsaurus.co.uk>
- <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/primary>

We are continually adapting and amending our resources to meet the needs of our children.

'Reading is like breathing in. Writing is like breathing out.'

Pam Allyn

Updated: November 2023

Due for review: November 2025