



LOCATION: CURRICULUM HANDBOOK, DOCUMENT 6

English Policy

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Curriculum Intent for English at Abbey Court School

English at Abbey Court encompasses all aspects of Reading, Writing and Communication; verbal, non-verbal and written. Work undertaken in English promotes learning across the whole of the school curriculum and has an impact on pupils' achievements in all aspects of their lives. More specifically, English offers pupils the opportunity to develop the ability to respond, to listen and to understand. Reading is embedded throughout all learning at Abbey Court, with a strong focus on developing functional reading skills and an enjoyment of literature. Phonics is delivered to all pupils, where appropriate, with pre-reading and listening skills a strong focus for many. Understanding and use of spoken Language is fundamental to our interaction and response to other people and our environment. Communication and reading are supported by the use of Objects of Reference, photos, symbols and Makaton signs. A range of communication aids are used, appropriate to the individual needs of pupils. The curriculum is supported by visits to local libraries for special events, drama groups coming into school and participation in national events such as World Book Day. Abbey Court has libraries with resources that are accessible to all, including story sacks, sensory story boxes, reading scheme books, talking books and books of interest to all ages, cultures and abilities.

I. Introduction

English is a core National Curriculum subject and as such is part of every pupil's entitlement. It is the starting point and focus from which other subject developments are dependent. Every effort is used to offer access to a broad and balanced curriculum where English teaching is differentiated to the abilities and needs of each pupil. All pupils spend a minimum of five hours a week on the English curriculum. This is broken down into ability-based Communication and Literacy groups in Key Stages 3 - 4. In addition, there are short discrete communication sessions, and cross-curricular class group lessons. Each class has one discrete half hour lesson for drama each week.

- 1.1 At Abbey Court, Schemes of Work (covering Communication, S&L, Reading and Writing) are used to ensure the aims of The National Curriculum for English are met. To support language development, teachers work closely with our Speech and Language therapist to set targets for pupil progress. Key resources and strategies, such as 'Colourful Semantics', along with other adopted extension Language schemes are also seen as essential tools to develop language for our pupils.

2. SMSC

Abbey Court School makes effective provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) aspects of learning and thus promotes the development of the whole child. Abbey Court School values highly its work in personal, social, health, sex and relationship education and citizenship. We want pupils to become responsible adults and supportive citizens and seek to create an ethos and climate in the school which will help them to flourish as young people; therefore, we actively promote and evaluate pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The four SMSC aspects are connected, and the school's provision for one area will often make an impact on another, e.g. When pupils listen to music from different cultures, this may also make an impact on their spiritual development. Activities to promote moral development are also likely to have an impact on social development. The school provides opportunities to promote these aspects of pupils' development within the curriculum. Each subject policy, therefore, enables staff to be clear about what it means to promote development in these four areas, within each subject. This is further supported through the subject schemes of work and the SMSC Exemplar.

3. Rights Respecting School

Abbey Court School is a Rights Respecting School and puts the 54 articles of the UNICEF Children's Charter at the heart of all school policy. This policy reflects that we believe that, as a school we must do everything possible to ensure that, through their learning, our pupils grow as healthy as possible, learn at school, receive protection, have their views listened to, and be treated fairly.

4. Definition

- 4.1 English is the means of communicating and interacting with the world around us. Receptive and expressive understanding and use of language is necessary for communicating our needs, interpreting information and solving problems. Use of English is the essence of our everyday life and facilitates interaction with other people.
- 4.2 The English Curriculum will provide a variety of communication experiences. Communication can take many forms. The pupil may communicate through touch, facial and bodily expression, gesture, signing (Makaton), using symbols and through vocalising, speech, reading and writing.

- 4.3 Reading may be defined as the ability to interpret the written word for information and pleasure but at Abbey Court, the teaching of reading is individualised to access learning to all pupils through the use of Objects of Reference, signs, symbols, social sight methods, structured reading schemes, a wide range of story and non-fiction books, shared home reading scheme, drama, animated poems and action rhymes, visits to libraries, theatres and museums.
- 4.4 Drama is an art, a practical activity and an intellectual discipline. It involves the creation of imagined situations and characters, enacted in a designated space. Beginning with play and leading through all elements of theatre, drama can help pupils make sense of the world. Drama is an integral part of the Speaking and Listening component of English within the National Curriculum and is a powerful communicative tool. At Abbey Court, Drama is used to support learning in many areas of the curriculum, as well as being important in the English curriculum; therefore, a separate Drama policy has been developed. (Drama Policy as per the cycle of policy review.)
- 4.5 Writing is a means of expressing one's feelings, thoughts and knowledge in a form other than spoken words. At Abbey Court, access to writing, creative and formative is taught through group and individual programmes geared to each pupil's ability.

5. Aims and Objectives

5.1 Speaking and Listening.

- 5.1.1 To develop communication and language, receptive and expressive, as a priority for all pupils at Abbey Court, as the foundation to learning.
- 5.1.2 To regularly assess and evaluate each pupil's language ability, in conjunction with the Speech and Language Therapist, to formulate individual learning targets in Speaking and Listening. To ensure that every pupil has the most appropriate means of communication identified for them and is supported to develop this communication method to ensure each pupil meets their full potential.
- 5.1.3 To develop pupils' ability to use language in a continuous and progressive way.
- 5.1.4 To encourage appropriate forms of communication/speech with fluency, confidence and clarity, in a variety of groupings and contexts for a variety of audiences, for a range of purposes of increasing complexity and demand.
- 5.1.5 To encourage responsiveness to the presence of others and to establish reciprocal interaction patterns.
- 5.1.6 To promote consistent behaviours in relation to people and objects.

- 5.1.7 To establish understanding and systematic use of communication behaviours.
- 5.1.8 To build a repertoire of signals related to needs, preferences, interests, ideas and feelings.
- 5.1.9 To enable pupils to exchange information with others and exert some degree of control over their surroundings and experiences.
- 5.1.10 To make use of technology when endeavouring to provide pupils with an appropriate communication system, whilst maintaining access to low-tech methods of communication to ensure constant access to a communication method.
- 5.1.11 To seek the assistance of the appropriate sensory service when working with pupils with sensory impairment, to plan an effective sensory communication programme to support the pupil's learning.
- 5.1.12 To work with parents and carers to support the development of communication at home, as well as at school.

5.2 Reading

- 5.2.1 To value reading within the broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated curriculum and in particular, its relationship to speaking and listening, writing, spelling and handwriting.
- 5.2.2 To provide every opportunity to encourage enjoyment of books and text, through story books, non-fiction books, rhymes, poetry, song and computing.
- 5.2.3 To regularly assess and evaluate each pupil's reading ability, in conjunction with the Reading and Phonics support assistants, to formulate individual learning targets in Reading.
- 5.2.4 To develop individual ability to read through structured teaching, reinforcement, evaluation and review.
- 5.2.5 To involve parents/carers in supporting and motivating their child's interest in reading through a shared reading programme.
- 5.2.6 To use alternative methods to support the teaching of reading, such as signing, symbols, pictures, information technology, tactile books and sensory resources.
- 5.2.7 To provide access to phonics teaching to ALL pupils at Abbey Court School from the development of early phonological awareness through to structured teaching of Synthetic phonics, depending on pupils' abilities. Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS) is used to support phonics teaching and learning.

5.2.8 To focus the systematic teaching of reading through the appropriate phonics reading scheme, Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS), whilst also offering opportunities to access a wider range of decodable reading material to enable access to age and interest-appropriate reading resources to support the development of phonics. This initially includes the ELS reading scheme books, but may also include other books and materials to meet individual pupil interests. Teaching will be enhanced by the use of additional schemes and a range of books, fiction, non-fiction and poetry.

5.3 Writing

5.3.1 To develop all aspects of writing, formal and creative, in a relevant and planned way for the abilities of each individual pupil.

5.3.2 To use supportive methods to ensure all pupils can access the writing curriculum

5.3.3 To demonstrate the use of the written word through group discussion/news activities.

5.3.4 To develop handwriting through the agreed school approach and as appropriate to each individual.

5.3.5 To encourage pupils to use language, sensory responses, Objects of Reference, drawings, pictures, symbols, technology and Makaton signs to construct their own writing.

5.3.6 To regularly assess and evaluate each pupil's writing ability, in conjunction with the English subject leader, to formulate relevant and purposeful targets in writing.

5.3.7 To use a cross-curricular approach to the development of hand/eye co-ordination, fine motor control and the teaching of handwriting. To use a variety of writing implements and ICT to ensure access for all pupils.

5.3.8 To use the ELS teaching resources to provide pneumonic diagrams to help teach the correct letter formation in a way that is memorable, where appropriate.

5.3.9 To ensure pupil progress is not delayed by the inability to follow the correct letter formation, maintaining focus on meaningful, functional and legible messages as key priorities for writing and text production.

5.3.10 To ensure text production is given equal focus, particularly for those where physical disability impacts the ability to produce legible handwriting.

6. Curriculum Planning.

- 6.1 At Abbey Court School, pupils are taught using a carefully planned curriculum with differentiated schemes of work to deliver relevant and personalised learning. These schemes incorporate relevant elements of the National Curriculum. Those who attend the Further Education Unit follow an individualised Further Education curriculum that offers an extension of their prior curriculum work in English. Their continued progress is accredited through ASDAN and AQA unit award schemes. Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage follow the Early Years curriculum, which is individualised to each child. They work towards the Early Learning Goals to develop a mode of communication and to prepare them for the National Curriculum.
- 6.2 Speech and language assessments are carried out by the Speech and Language Therapist. An individual language programme is drawn up and implemented by the class teacher. Speech and Language and Literacy groups are organised across departments so that pupils at the same or similar assessed level of Language and Literacy work together on the appropriate Language/ Literacy scheme. (See Appendix 1)
- 6.3 As part of their Individual Education Plan and Annual review targets, each pupil has an individual target in Communication and Reading. These are written by the Class Teacher and moderated by the senior team. The targets are worked on through the pupils' curriculum and also in discrete English lessons, as shown on the class timetable. All targets are evaluated regularly.
- 6.4 Many elements of the English Curriculum will form parts of cross-curricular topics, which will be reflected in class planning.
- 6.5 The programmes of study as laid out in the National Curriculum (2014), and other adopted curricula, will inform the coverage plans and schemes of work, where developmentally appropriate. Literacy is taught as part of a topic-based curriculum in the Primary department and through discrete teaching sessions.
- 6.6 The Schemes of Work covering each area of the English curriculum are available in the school system. These are used as the basis for lesson planning, whilst considering individualised learning priorities. The previous term's work is evaluated and used to inform the new term's planning.

7. Styles of Teaching.

- 7.1 English lessons will combine a range of teacher-directed, pupil-developed and pupil-initiated learning opportunities as appropriate to the programme of study and individual pupil needs. The class teacher's role is developed according to the pupil's needs to include: consultant, assessor, monitor, participant, etc.

- 7.2 To support the development of Reading, some individuals, access 1:1 or small group reading sessions with a Reading support assistant. Pupils who will benefit most from this are identified through progress meetings and a timetable is agreed by the leadership team. These sessions may be a short-term intervention or a longer-term part of a personalised timetable e.g. to develop the use of phonics and functional reading. Each intervention is reviewed termly.
- 7.3 The class teacher uses a variety of teaching styles to meet the pupils' educational needs and the differing demands of all areas of the English curriculum. This will be reflected in the diversity of styles of learning.
- 7.4 The delivery of English will relate to the full range of strategies as detailed in the Abbey Court Whole School Learning Policy.

8. Home learning

- 8.1 Pupils are encouraged to undertake educational activities at home to promote the continual and consistent reinforcement of learning and the development of new skills in Communication, Speaking & Listening, Reading and Writing as appropriate.
- 8.2 The Individual Education Plan (IEP) system ensures all parents are aware of their child's targets and of ways to support the target achievement. Parents are invited to discuss and agree on targets for the term, and an evaluation of progress on them is sent home at the end of each term.
- 8.3 The home-school contact book enables parents to dialogue regularly with school staff about pupil progress and achievement, and any further support needed at home.
- 8.4 All pupils are encouraged to take home reading books regularly, and it is expected that parents will support pupils' learning programmes at home. See Homework Policy.
- 8.5 The school Speech and Language therapist, Speech and Language Therapy Assistant and the Reading and Phonics assistants are available at Parents' evenings to offer guidance and support around communication and reading development at home.

9. Assessment.

- 9.1 Assessment of progress within English is carried out in accordance with the Abbey Court Planning, Assessment, Recording and Reporting policy (Section 7) to ensure consistency throughout the school in order to effectively assess, reward and motivate all pupils. Every effort will be made to involve pupils in self-assessment of their work in line with the principles defined in the Abbey Court planning, Assessment, Recording and Reporting Policy (Section 6).

- 9.2 An ongoing profile of achievement is kept on each pupil in all areas of the English curriculum and is evidence as part of each pupil's Tapestry achievement file.
- 9.3 End of year statutory assessments will be undertaken at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 (including Pre-Key Stage Standards, where appropriate). Additionally, the Phonics screening test will be carried out in Year 1 or Year 2, where appropriate, to level of ability. End of year Teacher Assessment will also take place in all Key Stages.
- 9.4 Progress in English is reported to parents both in written and verbal form as part of the Annual Review, evaluated IEPs and Parents' Evenings.

10. Cross-curricular links.

- 10.1 English is an integral part of every area of the curriculum. It is the vehicle for understanding and communicating information being delivered in all areas of the curriculum.
- 10.2 Every opportunity to develop cross-curricular links is taken, so that pupils may extend their language skills through topics and themes when exploring their environment and during everyday tasks and routines.
- 10.3 For pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, particular emphasis is given to planned multi-sensory support to encourage the development of expressive and receptive language and to support the Engagement model approach to learning.

11. Staffing (including support staff) and resources.

- 11.1 Class teachers are responsible for the teaching of English and for the development of day-to-day support from support staff.
- 11.2 Class teachers are responsible for developing appropriate resources within classrooms to enable access by pupils. All classes have a basic range of resources and have timetabled access to the Library, plus equipment stored in the English Resource Area.
- 11.3 Specific training for teaching and support staff is facilitated by the senior management team and advised by the English Subject Leader.
- 11.4 The school Speech and Language Therapist and Deputy Head teachers on each site agree on the SALT timetable. The Literacy core groups are drawn by each head of key stage, as a result of consultation with all staff at the start of each academic year and are evaluated and reviewed once a term.

12. Equal Opportunities.

12.1 All pupils at Abbey Court School are given appropriate opportunities to access all areas of the English curriculum in line with our school's equal opportunities policy. The school regularly review the range of English resources, including reading materials to ensure they appropriately represent and are accessible to all cohorts of learners

13. Health and Safety.

15.1 English teaching and learning is subject to the Abbey Court School's Health and Safety policy. All staff are responsible for becoming familiar with and adhering to this policy requirement.

14. Evaluation and review.

14.1 The Abbey Court School Subject Leader's role details the necessary processes and responsibilities.

14.2 This English policy will be reviewed biannually in the light of: -

14.3 Changes to the National Curriculum and monitoring and evaluations of the Coverage plans and Schemes of work.

14.4 OFSTED requirements.

14.5 Monitoring of its effectiveness in the light of its implementation.

14.6 Changes in Abbey Court School's organisation.

Phonics at Abbey Court School

The National Curriculum (2014) states that *"Phonics should be emphasised in the early teaching of reading to beginners (i.e. unskilled readers) when they start school"*.

Additionally, the Rose Report (DfES 2006) directed teachers to teach literacy through synthetic phonics. However, it is suggested that this is *"unlikely to be suitable for many children with SLD and may obscure the importance of teaching in alternative media"* (Lacey et al, 2007). The Rose Report also recognises that synthetic phonics teaching in its conventional form will not be suitable for 8% of pupils.

As a result, at Abbey Court, we continue to teach phonics as appropriate to the individual needs of pupils. In April 2021 a new list of validated systematic, synthetic phonics teaching programmes. As a school, Essential Letters and Sounds was selected as the most appropriate for our pupils. Phonological awareness is taught through the ELS scheme, a systematic, high-quality programme that guides pupils through five phases of phonological development, at a rate which is appropriate to individual need.

We teach pupils to:

- Decode by identifying each sound within a word and blending them together to read fluently
- Encode by segmenting each sound to write words accurately.

The structure of ELS lessons allows children to know what is coming next, what they need to do, and how to achieve success. This makes it easier for children to learn the GPCs we are teaching (the alphabetic code) and how to apply this when reading

The boundaries between each phase and strand are flexible and not fixed: practitioners should plan to integrate the activities according to the developing abilities and interests of the students. The overarching aim is to ensure that pupils experience regular, planned opportunities to listen carefully and to talk about what they hear, see and can do.

In addition, the following strategies are used to support early phonological awareness:

- Communication sessions with PMLD pupils may incorporate Intensive Interaction sessions, usually beginning with the pupil initiating communication (either through verbalisation or movement) which an adult mimics, to encourage understanding of two-way conversations. These sessions contribute to the development of early literacy skills.
- We encourage working from left to right in everything that we do. Thus, early phonological awareness skills are developed through tracking activities with pupils who are functioning within the Engagement Model – note the use of ICT programs here and in the Sensory room.
- Pupils are encouraged to ‘play’ with sounds –encouraging vocalisations.
- Photographs/pictures of activities and events are a useful tool. Pictures can capture the attention of very young children and our pupils and teach the skill of extracting meaning from illustrations to help them make sense of the text. This continues to be used by our pupils as we read stories to them, and is an important skill for those who are not going to read or write conventionally.
- Objects of reference are used extensively, and objects of reference stations are placed around the school to support pupils’ awareness of their school environment. Objects of reference are the first stepping stone to learning about symbols.
- Many pupils will read symbols. Symbols are important in supporting communication and reading skills. They are also used for timetables, sequencing skills such as dressing, etc., in the SLD context
- We use strategies to access literature through means other than reading, for example, call and response (Keith Parks), drama, television, film and storytelling are all valuable alternatives to conventional literacy. This is also important in making the canon of literature accessible to our pupils.
- Our more able pupils can access phonics teaching in a more conventional way.
- Hearing loss has a serious impact on speech perception. We use additional strategies that can support communication, such as signs, gestures and facial expressions.

- As a school, we recognise that the teaching of phonics needs to be consistent and sustained throughout. We use ELS to enable a consistent approach and strategies. Opportunities to access a wide range of decodable texts enable us to capitalise on pupils' interests and motivations. These include Read Write Inc. resources, Oxford Reading Tree books, Magic Key books and other quality phonics reading scheme books.
- Our pupils develop a range of sight vocabulary which will be increasingly linked to life skills such as social sight signs. The recognition of this sight vocabulary is essential to our pupils as they prepare for life beyond Abbey Court.
- Our Literacy Core Groups recognise the need for differentiated, targeted phonic input.

Phonics is taught discretely, and there are also opportunities to reinforce and apply acquired phonics knowledge and skills across the curriculum.

Progress in developing and applying phonics knowledge is carefully assessed and monitored, with records on progress kept to track individual pupil progress.

Teachers will develop the classroom environment to have an age-appropriate display concentrating on both sounds and keywords.

APPENDIX I

Communication and Literacy Core Groups

Classes are organised into groups within each separate Key stage (Key Stages 3 to 4) by the Key stage leaders and Class Teachers at the start of each academic year. These groups are organised into Higher Achievers, SLD and PMLD. Information about teaching and learning, and any further planning is then discussed as needed at Department meetings.

Pupils of similar ability are grouped together, and staff, rooms and resources are allocated to each group for that term. Any changes needed are decided by Department staff in consultation with the English Subject Leader and Department.

The groups take place three times weekly, each for 1-hour duration. The content for each session is planned by the teacher leading the group. The work undertaken within these groups supports the aims of the National Curriculum as well as focusing on the individual needs of each pupil within the group. Every session has at least twenty minutes of structured time working on speaking and listening based on individual pupil targets and the Communication and Literacy schemes of work.

1. Pupils can practise and develop language and literacy at a similar level of ability.
2. Pupils are provided with the appropriate resources to aid the development of their communication and literacy skills.
3. The smaller groups allow intensive teaching of language and communication.
4. Specific language and communication objectives can be set and generalised to the classroom.
5. The groups promote social skills by providing each pupil with the opportunity to interact with every other member of the group.
6. Small groups allow intensive pupil-adult interaction.
7. Teachers/assistants are provided with a structured framework for promoting language and communication skills.
8. Opportunities for teachers/assistants to skill share and develop new skills arise.
9. The groups allow close monitoring of each pupil's language and communication level through ongoing assessment.

Rationale into practice

1. The teacher leading each group is responsible for the planning, organisation, delivery and recording of the group.
2. The speech and language therapist will act as a support adviser for every group, observing, assessing and consulting with the teacher on teaching/learning techniques for the group.
3. Where groups are taught by classroom assistants, the group will function under the direction of a named teacher. The teacher will plan for the Group, i.e. Schemes of Work and weekly sessions, and evaluate the teaching and learning regularly.
4. All teaching staff are to ensure that previous lessons/breaks run according to time and that pupils arrive promptly to their core groups, seated and ready to start each session promptly.
5. The English Subject Leader consults regularly with the Speech and Language Therapist and organises training and support sessions needed from the Speech and Language therapist for the groups and particular pupils as necessary.
6. Individual recording is undertaken by the teacher responsible for each group. This is to be available to class teachers and disseminated as needed.
7. The Key Stage leaders and teachers evaluate each group termly and, in consultation with staff, make any changes needed.
8. Venues for each group will be set each September by the Key Stage Leader and reviewed termly.
10. The Communication and Literacy core groups are evaluated each term by teaching staff at a department meeting.