



Alton Infant School Curriculum Intention for English

English Rationale

English is the language of learning in every curriculum subject. English allows children to learn independently and is therefore empowering. At Alton Infant School we aim to make the teaching of English enjoyable, fun, motivating and challenging. We teach basic skills and provide a rich, meaningful and engaging learning environment. We strive to inspire a love and appreciation of English and encourage every child to be the best reader and writer they can be.

Intent

At Alton Infant School it is our intent to provide children with a broad, balanced and challenging English curriculum. Children will embark on an exciting journey, with rich texts supported by drama and questioning skills that support and develop their speaking, listening, reading and writing. It is our intent that the children will become confident speakers who will enjoy initiating and engaging in discussions with others. We actively encourage curiosity as one of our school's core values and the asking of questions by the children to aid their own learning journey and understanding. We intend to equip children with the necessary skills required to become capable and confident readers, thus providing a love of reading and literature. We aim to immerse the children in a rich variety of texts which will inspire their imagination. Because of the rich choice of texts and daily word of the day that is practised throughout school, it is our intent that children will develop an extensive vocabulary that will inspire them to write clearly and accurately for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences. By developing children's reading and writing we aim to prepare them for lifelong learning.

Implementation

These aims are embedded across our English lessons and the wider curriculum. We have a rigorous and well organised English curriculum that provides many purposeful opportunities for reading, comprehension, writing, speaking and listening and grammar. Pupils are immersed in a range of fiction and non-fiction texts and through engaging lessons that often involve drama we help the children better understand and retell the story or text they are engaging with. The children are equipped with the skills to write for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences.

Writing

Our writing curriculum aims for our pupils to develop key skills and produce quality writing. It aims to inspire pupils to gain pleasure and develop confidence, writing for genuine purposes and for a real audiences across the curriculum, based on rich and exciting texts with other media such as short films or music as inspiration.

By the time children leave our school in year 2 they will have effective transcriptional skills (spelling and handwriting) as these are vital to ensure ideas are communicated legibly and accurately. They will also have compositional skills (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech and writing) which are taught as separate skills and are linked across subjects and experiences. They will understand the process of planning, revising and evaluating and have time to write and revisit writing, valuing the process and craft of writing and begin to edit their own work.

Phonics

In addition to daily English lessons, most children succeed with early reading through the teaching of phonics. In order to implement quality teaching and learning of phonics throughout the school, we use the DFE accredited

Systematic Synthetic Phonics program 'Unlocking Letters and Sounds'. From its careful design, to its complete integration with the popular Reading Stars Phonics readers, and the ability to link it with our existing excellent reading books, Unlocking Letters and Sounds seemed a great SSP programme to suit our school.

Progression in phonics

The progression in Unlocking Letters and Sounds largely follows the progression contained in Letters and Sounds 2007, with some refinements and clarifications of learning elements omitted from Letters and Sounds, and updated guidance, including requirements from the National Curriculum. The progression in Unlocking Letters and Sounds is structured to follow Phases 2 to 5 of Letters and Sounds, but some phases include additional opportunities for structured revision ('Mastery') and for spelling development. The detailed progression for Unlocking Letters and Sounds shows the GPCs (grapheme, phoneme correspondence) and CEW (common exception words) that are taught on a week-by-week basis and which link with our worm words.

At the heart of Unlocking Lessons and Sounds are digital lessons, one for every day of teaching, from the beginning of Reception (Phase 2) to the end of the Autumn term in Year 2. Each digital lesson can be delivered on a screen or whiteboard to a class or group of children, and covers the letters/CEW introduced that day, as well as revision of work covered to date. We also enhance the digital lessons by adding the popular and memorable phonics games and songs that are so well loved by our children at Alton Infant School.

Assessment

Robust and meaningful assessment sits at the heart of teaching. When used well, evidence shows that it has the power to accelerate children's learning more than any other tool available to teachers. Ongoing formative assessment is incorporated into every lesson in Unlocking Letters and Sounds. In addition, summative assessments take place every 2 – 3 weeks, covering recent GPCs and CEW learnt, and at the end of a phase. These are 1:1 assessments that check children's learning of taught phonemes and grapheme-phoneme correspondences, their ability to blend these phonemes and their knowledge of taught CEWs. Unlocking Lessons and Sounds includes dedicated support for children who fall into the lowest-performing 20% called "Ambitious Expectations". This is a set of six focused intervention strategies to support children with reading.

Handwriting

The teaching of handwriting is built into Unlocking Letters and Sounds and letter formation is taught as part of each phonics session. So as the children learn each new letter, they learn how to write it. In addition, regular, 5-10 minute handwriting slots should be timetabled across the week. Children need to practise handwriting under the guidance of a teacher, so that they do not develop habits which are then difficult to undo later on. Short rhymes are used to support the children with letter formation, to help them visualise the letter before they write it down. These are based on the handwriting families.

Guided and Shared Reading

Alongside daily phonics lessons, children practise their reading skills through daily reading practise and reading lessons using fully decodable reading books.

Unlocking Letters and Sounds includes a week-by-week book matching chart and full planning for group reading sessions (for Phases 2 to 5), using the Ransom Reading Stars Phonics readers. Each session gives opportunities to teach and practice decoding, fluency and prosody, with every child having at least one guided reading session a week.

Ambitious vocabulary is also celebrated with our well-established Word of the Day. Children in all year groups are excited to learn a new word each day and enjoy the challenge of trying to use it in context and in a sentence. In year 2, the word of the day often appears in children's writing as they experiment with trying out this new vocabulary.

Individual Reading

All children are provided with a school reading book that is matched to their reading and phonics ability and children are encouraged to read frequently at home. Oxford Reading Tree and Collins Big Cat books are colour banded to match children's phonic level and comprehension skills. Books are changed as often as required but most children are encouraged to change their book at least twice a week. Parents are encouraged to read with their children via Class Dojo, through conversations with teachers and via the Reading Diary, which offers a valuable link between parents and school. It is very much our view that children who read succeed. We share this view with parents from their first Early Years meeting when they first come into our school community. Where children are reading below the expected level for their age, reading is also taught through targeted interventions led by Teaching Assistants (supported by our SENCO) which can include daily individual reading and Early Literacy Support interventions such as SIDNEY (Screening and Intervention for Dyslexia Notably in the Early Years) and Reading Reflex. We also value volunteers who give their time to support children who perhaps do not get the opportunity to read as much at home.

Story Time

Children are read aloud to in class on a daily basis. Story time is inspiring and exciting for everyone. We aim to develop children's English skills and inspire them to develop a love of reading and a knowledge of a variety of authors. The fiction and non-fiction texts are carefully chosen to elicit a strong response, curiosity, laughter, anger, excitement and empathy, to extend children's vocabulary and build empathy through discussion of wider issues. We engage children through illustrations and endeavour to reflect children from all backgrounds and cultures. Books are chosen to help children connect with who they are and the different types of families they come from. From time to time we run a Bedtime Story event where children come back into school in their pyjamas to enjoy a bedtime story with their teacher. It is a wonderful community event where everyone brings in their favourite cuddly and enjoys a book or two, a hot chocolate and a biscuit, before bedtime.

Alton Infant School and Class Library

Throughout the school, children are encouraged to choose books independently. Each classroom has its own designated reading area, which teachers try to make inviting and comfortable. The reading areas include a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books, some of which are linked to current class topics. Each week every KS1 class visits the school library to choose a book that they take home to enjoy reading for pleasure with their families. Our library is run by two of our Governors who come in especially to make sure that the children have the opportunity to take out a book to share with their families.

Reading for Pleasure

Our aim is to develop a love of reading and children that read for enjoyment. Reading for pleasure is promoted in a variety of ways, in school and with families and the wider community. Every week on Class Dojo, as part of our "We love reading" premise, a member of staff shares a recommendation for a book for either adults or children on the Whole School page. It is hoped that by encouraging our parents and carers to read too, the love of reading will become something that our families can enjoy together.

Impact

At Alton Infant School we use both formative and summative assessments to inform medium term and weekly planning. Assessments are also used at half termly pupil progress meetings. Target children are identified and interventions planned and implemented. Assessment data is submitted half termly and achievement and progress of groups of learners is analysed. Lesson observations, book scrutiny, learning walks and pupil/parent/staff voice are all used to monitor the teaching and learning of English across the school.

Published data shows that the majority of our children attain at or above the expected level in Reading, Writing and Phonics. Our Phonics Screening Check results have either been in line with, or above the national average. Our English Curriculum therefore impacts very positively on our pupils as the majority of them become confident readers and writers.