

English Policy

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'English has a pre-eminent place in education and in society. A high-quality education in English will teach pupils to speak and write fluently so that they can communicate their ideas and emotions to others, and through their reading and listening, others can communicate with them. Through reading in particular, pupils have a chance to develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually. Literature, especially, plays a key role in such development. Reading also enables pupils both to acquire knowledge and to build on what they already know. All the skills of language are essential to participating fully as a member of society; pupils who do not learn to speak, read and write fluently and confidently are effectively disenfranchised.' (DFE, 2014).

'The overarching aim for English in the national curriculum is to promote high standards of language and literacy by equipping pupils with a strong command of the spoken and written word, and to develop their love of literature through widespread reading for enjoyment.' (DFE, 2014).

Intent

At The Baird Primary Academy, we recognise the importance of equipping our pupils with literacy skills to prepare them for the future and aspire for them to achieve excellence in both reading, writing and phonics.

We strive for our pupils to become active listeners who are confident, and well-equipped, to speak aloud in a variety of contexts. For this reason, we place an emphasis on oracy, particularly within the early stages of education where pupils retell stories verbally and are encouraged to tell their own stories verbally as well. In the later years, pupils are encouraged to discuss and debate topics, and to present their learning using verbal presentations.

We are passionate about reading and strive to promote a lifelong love of reading and texts. This in turn supports children on their journey to become confident writers and 'allows them to access the full curriculum on offer' (Ofsted, 2019). We strive to offer a text-rich learning environment where imagination and creativity can be fuelled. Carefully selected quality texts lie at the heart of our curriculum and we strive to immerse our children in quality literature at every opportunity. The wide variety of texts used in each year group, not only underpins children's learning in reading, writing, speaking and listening, but enhances learning across the broader curriculum.

Aims

We strive for all children to be prepared for their lives beyond our academy and to exceed expectations. Our broad aims as an academy are that our pupils:

- Develop a love of reading, establishing the habit of reading regularly, widely and for pleasure, as well as for information
- Read with ease (using effective phonics knowledge to support), fluency and with good understanding
- Acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language
- Are able to write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting their language and for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences
- Develop confidence and competence in spoken language and listening skills and are able to use discussion in order to learn, elaborating and explaining their thinking
- Develop an appreciation for our rich and varied literary heritage through the celebration of quality texts across the curriculum

Implementation

Reading

'The most important gift a school can give a child is the power to read.'
(Ofsted, Reading by six. How the best schools do it, 2009).

Through a range of reading strategies, we aim to develop a lifelong passion for reading which inspires children and gives them the cultural capital to succeed in their future. Explicit teaching of reading is through the use of Daily Supported Reader in Reception and Year 1 and Destination Reader from year 2 to Year 6.

Early Reading (also see Phonics Policy) / Daily Supported Reader

We have a sharp focus on ensuring that younger children gain the phonemic knowledge and language comprehension necessary to read, and the skills to communicate so that they have the foundations necessary for all future learning. Alongside high-quality phonics, teachers promote early book talk and pupils develop a bank of stories that they are able to recite with enjoyment.

From the moment pupils start with us at The Baird, we begin to systematically develop pupils' vocabulary using the Word Aware and Concept Cat programmes. We assess all pupils on entry to Reception using both Language Link and the RAPT and deliver highly focused Narrative Therapy Interventions, led by qualified adults.

Daily Supported Reading (DSR) is a scripted classroom programme that is introduced in Reception that ensures that all pupils progress in their reading. It is delivered fully from Year One, but introduced into Reception when pupils are ready. It is used to support our lowest attaining pupils across the remainder of the academy for maximum impact.

DSR helps children make accelerated progress by reading daily, with trained adults in small groups. At the start of the programme, pupils are benchmarked and books are accurately matched to their independent reading levels. Pupils are re-assessed regularly to ensure that they are progressing through the book bands and always reading appropriate books for their ability.

Progression in Reading / Destination Reader

Destination Reader is taught from Year 2 to Year 6.

Pupils are assessed in Year 2 in order to determine when they are ready to move from Daily Supported Reader to Destination Reader. In some instances, pupils will transition to Destination Reader, but continue to receive Daily Supported Reader sessions. The aims of Destination Reader are as follows:

- To foster a life-long love of reading.
- To develop a consistent approach to reading from Year 2 to Year 6.
- To guide and support teachers in terms of best practice in reading.
- To have a consistent approach to developing vocabulary from Year 2 to Year 6.
- To accelerate pupils' progress in reading.
- To provide a robust assessment approach, centred on formative assessment.
- To develop pupils' reading stamina.
- To place high quality book-talk centrally within the reading curriculum.
- To develop pupils' thinking and understanding.

Through the programme, pupils are first introduced to three key learning behaviours, which foster both engagement and independence. These are:

1. Support and actively listen to others.
2. Discuss and explain ideas.
3. Take responsibility for their own/their group's learning.

Once these learning behaviours have been embedded, the pupils learn seven key reading strategies, which help them to deepen their understanding of texts. These are:

- Predicting
- Inferring
- Asking questions
- Evaluating
- Clarifying
- Making connections
- Summarising

Once the reading strategies have been taught and practised independently, the children move on to 'combined strategies'; at this stage, the teachers use a variety of strategies and key questions to explore texts. Sessions consist of whole class teaching, 25 minutes of paired reading (to develop reading stamina), during which the class teacher will work with a group of pupils on a shared text, and a short five-minute activity to assess understanding. Pupils then complete a Big Picture task on a Friday, which assesses in depth across the seven strategies.

Pupils are again benchmarked at the start of the year to ensure that the texts they are reading are accurately matched to their ability. During Destination Reader, pupils read texts which are carefully selected to both promote engagement and enjoyment, but also to develop pupils' vocabulary and understanding of the conventions of writing.

Developing a love of reading

In order to promote a love of reading, teachers across the academy read to pupils on a daily basis. All staff within the academy are reading role models for our pupils and are expected to engage with recent children's literature in order to be able to share that interest with all pupils.

Quality texts underpin our broader curriculum and teachers are supported to select texts to engage all pupils and broaden their horizons.

In order to support parents and pupils to develop a love of reading at home, we use a range of strategies and approaches which encourage engagement with reading and which parents are invited to get involved with.

We believe in the importance of giving pupils access to high-quality books and in ensuring that pupils have special spaces to enjoy reading. For this reason, every class has an ever-developing reading corner which includes a range of high-quality texts.

Reading across the curriculum

Reading is integrated throughout the curriculum as carefully selected quality texts underpin the broader curriculum and provide the cohesion to our curriculum. These enable pupils to engage in meaningful learning experiences and subject-specific research.

Reading also underpins our Talk for Writing curriculum. Pupils start by imitating quality texts through the use of text mapping and storytelling.

Reading at home

We place an emphasis on the importance of reading daily at home. All pupils are provided with a home reading book and a reading bookmark to track their reading at home. We engage with a range of initiatives to encourage pupils to read at home.

Reading Books

Within reception, our pupils read phonetically decodable books, matched to their stage of learning within Letters and Sounds (read in conjunction with Phonics Policy). These books are read both within Daily Supported Reader time and for home reading.

Within year 1, our pupils read banded books appropriate to their ability within Daily Supported Reader. These books focus on both phonetically decodable words and non-decodable high frequency sight vocabulary. These

are matched to the pupils' ability using benchmarking and read within the classroom on a daily basis, as part of Daily Supported Reader. Pupils are then allocated a phonetically decodable book, matched to their stage of learning within Letters and Sounds to read at home.

From Year 2 to Year 6 within Destination Reader, pupils read both a banded book, that is appropriately matched to their year group, as well as a banded book that is matched to their ability. Pupils are benchmarked to assess their level of banding, in September and an appropriate book allocated. This band of book is read both at home and also within Destination Reader for part of the week.

Implementation

Writing

At The Baird Primary Academy we teach writing using Talk for Writing, which places an emphasis on the development of both pupils' speaking and listening skills as well as their reading and writing skills.

Talk for Writing

The approach is used consistently from Nursery through to Year 6 and enables pupils to develop the skills and knowledge required to communicate effectively and creatively through spoken and written language.

Talk for Writing enables pupils to read and write independently for a variety of audiences and purposes within different subjects. A key feature is that pupils internalise the structures needed to write through 'talking the text' as well as close reading. The approach moves from dependence towards independence, with the teacher using shared and guided teaching to develop the ability in children to write creatively and powerfully.

There are several phases to the approach which are as follows:

- **Baseline Assessment and Planning – The Cold Task**

Teaching is always focused by initial assessment. Teachers plan an interesting and rich starting point to provide a stimulus for writing and content and pupils then complete a 'cold task', prior to any initial teaching. The aim of this is to see what the children can do independently at the start of the unit, drawing on their prior learning. Teachers then assess this writing thoroughly and use it to plan their model text, as well as their whole class and small group teaching.

At the end of the unit, after teaching, pupils complete a 'hot task' which is an independent task on a similar type of writing with an interesting stimulus. This enables teachers to assess progress and identify the impact of teaching.

- **The Imitation Phase**

Teaching begins with a creative hook which engages the pupils, with a sense of enjoyment, audience and purpose. Writing challenges provide a sense of purpose. A model text is pitched above pupils' level and has built into it the underlying, transferable structures and language patterns that students will need when they are writing. This is learned using a 'text map' and actions to strengthen memory and help pupils internalise the text.

Once pupils can 'talk the text', the model, and other examples, are then read for vocabulary and comprehension, before being analysed for the basic text (often through boxing up) and language patterns, as well as writing techniques or toolkits.

All of this first phase is underpinned by rehearsing key spellings and grammatical patterns. Short-burst writing is used to practise key focuses such as description, persuasion or scientific explanation.

During this phase, pupils develop toolkits that they are able to refer back to, to support their writing.

- **The Innovation Phase**

Once pupils are familiar with the model text, then the teacher leads them into creating their own versions. A new subject is presented and the teacher leads pupils through planning. With younger pupils, this is based on changing the basic map and retelling new versions. Older pupils use boxed-up planners and the teacher demonstrates how to create simple plans and orally develop ideas prior to writing.

Shared and guided writing is then used to stage writing over a number of days so that pupils are writing texts bit by bit, concentrating on bringing all the elements together, writing effectively and accurately. Feedback is given during the lessons, so that pupils can be taught how to improve their writing, make it more accurate, until they can increasingly edit in pairs or on their own.

- **The Independent Application Phase – the ‘hot task’**

Pupils then independently apply what has been taught and practised. Pupils are provided with a rich starting point, which taps into what they already know and what matters to them, so that their writing is purposeful.

Writing may be staged over a number of days and there may be time for several independent pieces to be written. With non-fiction, pupils apply what they have been taught across the curriculum. The final piece is used as the **‘hot’** task, which clearly shows progress across the unit.

Throughout the imitation and innovation stage, teachers use modelled, shared and guided writing to develop writing. This may be as a whole class or in small groups.

Spelling

We teach spelling using the No Nonsense Spelling scheme from Year 2 to Year 6. Spelling is taught as a discrete session between 3 and 5 times per week, however this teaching is then reinforced throughout all teaching.

The approach to teaching spelling is progressive throughout the academy and the curriculum in order to reinforce techniques and demonstrate the importance that spelling should be given in the creation and presentation of all writing.

Pupils all have their own ‘toolkit’ books which act as spelling journals (in the rear of the book). Spellings are reinforced with a clear understanding of the most common spelling rules and exceptions within the English language.

Vocabulary

We recognise that, due to our demographic, the development of a broader range of vocabulary is an essential target for many of our pupils. For this reason, we take every opportunity to explicitly teach vocabulary and refer back to previously taught vocabulary. We strive to develop pupils’ language at every opportunity by modelling a range of vocabulary and utilising teaching vocabulary opportunities as often as possible.

Within EYFS, we develop vocabulary using Word Aware and Concept Cat – these are structured approaches which focus on whole class development of vocabulary. More information on these approaches can be found in the Supporting Communication Protocol.

From Year 1 to Year 6, all classes have a vocabulary display that is ever evolving. Teachers teach vocabulary within Destination Reader and Talk for Writing. In addition, within all other lessons, there is a five-minute focus on vocabulary. We use the pre-teaching vocabulary approach to support with the teaching of vocabulary.

We then divide the vocabulary taught into three groups:

Tier 1 – These are basic words that usually appear in the majority of children’s everyday vocabularies. They are generally not taught explicitly, although may be if pupils are struggling with the spelling of these words.

Tier 2 – These words are not necessarily specific to subject domains but require students to have a ‘mature’ vocabulary in order to comprehend the meaning of the word. They can sometimes be termed ‘Goldilocks words’. These words are often the focus of teaching during reading and writing as they are words our pupils should aspire to use. They are also words that are often integral to a pupil’s comprehension of later exam questions. Teachers plan Goldilocks words in their model texts in Talk for Writing sessions to ensure that vocabulary is an explicit teaching point within these texts.

Tier 3 – These words are specific to subjects, or topic vocabulary. These words require expert knowledge to explain to the pupil and aid comprehension.

Teachers always place an emphasis on teaching vocabulary, ensuring that tier 1, 2 and 3 words are collated on vocabulary displays in classrooms. They are revisited regularly so that the pupils remember them and are able to apply them to both their spoken language and writing.

Grammar and Punctuation

Teachers understand, teach and demonstrate in their everyday practice, the formal conventions of Standard English.

We teach grammar and punctuation throughout Talk for Writing, as well as in broader curriculum lessons. Teachers use the initial cold task to assess their pupils' writing and develop an understanding of the elements of grammar and punctuation that need to be developed. The teaching of this is then carefully woven into the model text, and the teaching over the following weeks. Teachers use a range of games and activities to develop the teaching of grammar.

Handwriting

See Handwriting Policy.

We teach handwriting using the Letter Join program. Handwriting is taught and practised for 10 minutes every day, using the models, and following the progression, in the Letter Join Programme. All lessons begin with a warm-up of gross and fine motor skills up to Year 3, and fine motor skills only from Year 4 to 6. Children use books with printed guidelines in Year 1 to 6. In Year 6, pupils who have achieved all handwriting targets may present their writing across the whole curriculum to the Senior Leadership Team. They may then be extended to write in standard lined books.

Pupils are taught to use the tripod 'bird beak' pencil grip. They are taught the correct sitting and book position. Children are taught the correct letter and number formation and which letters belong to which families.

Impact

Pupils are assessed on an ongoing basis throughout all reading and writing lessons.

In reading, pupils are initially assessed using the PM Benchmark Tool. This is regularly reviewed to ensure that pupils are reading books that are accurately matched to their ability and to track their progress. In addition, this data also ensures that pupils who require additional support, receive rapid and targeted intervention. Assessments take place on a daily basis in DSR and DR sessions and teaching is adapted accordingly to ensure that pupils make rapid and sustained progress.

In writing, pupils are initially assessed using the cold task. The assessment of this piece informs all teaching for the following weeks and teachers ensure that the model text has specific teaching points included within it, that they can draw on to move learning forward. Assessments again take place on a daily basis in Talk for Writing and teaching is adapted accordingly – this may include the use of shared and guided writing to support or challenge pupils further.

Pupils' understanding and knowledge of the spelling rule taught that week (from No Nonsense Spelling) is assessed on a Friday. Pupils are not given lists of words to learn but are tested on their ability to apply the spelling rule. These assessments are then used to inform the following week's teaching of spelling.

Pupils are also assessed using Target Tracker, as well as the Teacher Assessment Frameworks in Years 2 and 6.