

English Policy

Acre Rigg Infant School

Last reviewed in	September 2026
Next review due	September 2027



Every child Every day Every way Experiencing success

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Updated: September 2026

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Introduction

The study of English develops children's abilities to listen, speak, read and write for a wide range of purposes. At Acre Rigg Infant School, we believe that the use of English in spoken and written form is the foundation of all learning. We aim to develop children's abilities with an integrated programme of Spoken Language, Reading and Writing. Children will be given opportunities to develop, practise and consolidate skills through both discrete lessons and wider cross-curricular experiences.

Aims

At Acre Rigg Infant School we aim to:

- provide a language rich environment that promotes a culture of speaking and listening, reading and writing
- develop in children an interest in words, and their meaning, and a growing vocabulary
- enable children to speak clearly and audibly and develop in children the confidence to share their ideas and express their opinions
- encourage children to listen with concentration and respond appropriately
- teach children to value and use books as a basis for learning, pleasure, talk and play
- teach children to understand the sound and spelling system and use this to read and spell independently
- teach children the craft of writing; giving them the confidence and skills to write well for a range of purposes and audiences

Planning

Early Years Foundation Stage

Planning in the EYFS is based on the Early Years curriculum and Early Learning Goals with a particular focus on Literacy and Communication and Language. Long term planning ensures progression towards the Early Learning goals is evident. Additionally, teachers follow our school Phonics Programme to plan daily phonics lessons.

Please see our Phonics Programme for additional information.

Key Stage 1

Planning in Key Stage 1 is based on the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. Until children are confident in applying Phase 5 phonics independently, teachers follow our school Phonics Programme to plan daily phonics lessons. Please see our Phonics Programme for additional information. Once children are confident applying Phase 5 phonics independently, teachers follow our basic skills programme to plan spelling, grammar and punctuation lessons. Please see our Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar Programme for information. Additionally, each half term, teachers produce a creative literacy overview detailing wider teaching and learning opportunities relating to writing genres, text types and National Curriculum objectives. These learning opportunities usually link to the wider class topic.

Lessons

Reception

All Reception children receive a daily phonics input session, followed by a group activity which is tailored to match the ability of each child. Group time consists of practical games and activities and letter formation practice. Phonic group activities take place both indoors and outside. Children receive daily story times as well as opportunities for drama, speaking and listening and writing. Enhancements are evident throughout the learning environment which focus on reading, writing, and language development.

Key Stage 1

Teachers plan skills lessons (phonics, spelling, grammar, handwriting), reading lessons, vocabulary lessons and English lessons, which focus on spoken language and writing. Children are grouped and taught by ability in streamed classes and all classes have daily story time.

Until children are confident in applying Phase 5 phonics independently, they are given opportunities to apply their phonics in reading and writing during English lessons. Within English lessons, their curriculum is also enriched with wider literacy experiences relating to a range of genres. These however, are largely teacher led and modelled at this point to allow children more time to master basic skills, before requiring them to record for different purposes.

Once children are confident applying Phase 5 phonics independently, they are taught the spelling and grammar requirements of the National Curriculum in 'skills sessions' and English lessons are planned in units which relate to the wider class topic. Each unit covers outcomes for spoken language, reading and writing. Children cover a balance of narrative, non-fiction and poetry texts and are given opportunities to write for a range of purposes and audiences.

Spoken Language

Spoken language is fundamental to children's development and we believe that confidence in this area is essential to be successful in reading and writing.

Skills of speaking, listening and responding, group discussion and interaction and drama are taught, modelled and sensitively encouraged in whole class and small group settings. Each class has discussion guidelines which teachers refer to during oracy activities to promote effective speaking and listening skills. Opportunities to develop children's spoken language are planned for and developed across the whole curriculum.

Vocabulary

Research suggests that children's understanding and use of a wide range of vocabulary supports their attainment at school and prepares them for adult life.

A short ten minute vocabulary lesson is delivered each day to support children's vocabulary development. Within the lesson, a new word is introduced and children consider the meaning of the word and how it is used in the English language. The words are taken from National Health Service age related wordlists and topic specific lists and are sent home to share with parents and carers. They are also displayed in classrooms and children are encouraged to use the words during relevant teaching and learning opportunities throughout the school day.

Phonics

Children are taught phonics following our school Phonics Programme.

In daily phonic lessons, children practise knowledge and skills taught previously, including recognition and recall of graphemes, blending and segmenting decodable words and reading and spelling high frequency words, to ensure knowledge and skills are secure before moving on to the next Phase.

New learning is also introduced daily and children are given opportunities to apply it at both the word and sentence level.

As stated previously, English lessons are heavily weighted towards teaching the basic skills required to support the development of independent reading and writing.

Children are also given opportunities to practice their early reading and writing skills both through directed teacher-led tasks and independent learning in the classroom areas.

Children's phonic knowledge and skills are assessed each half term to inform next steps in teaching and inform intervention groups to narrow and close gaps in children's achievement. Please see our Phonics Programme for additional information.

Spelling

Until children are confident in applying Phase 5 phonics independently, they are taught to spell high frequency words and decodable words in line with the phonics being taught.

Having mastered Phase 5, children are taught spelling patterns in line with the National Curriculum statutory requirements.

Sight vocabulary

Children are taught to read high frequency words on sight. They are taught in Phases.

Year 2 children progress to reading the Common Exception Words as listed as an appendix in the National Curriculum. High frequency words are read daily in school and sent home for further practise with parents and carers.

Grammar

Children are taught the objectives from the National Curriculum statutory requirements for Key Stage 1 in skills lessons. Knowledge and skills are then embedded within planned activities in English lessons. Please see our Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar Programme for additional information.

Handwriting

Handwriting and letter formation is explicitly taught throughout the school. The correct way of forming letters with joining flicks is modelled by the teacher and patterns of letters are taught where appropriate. Incorrect formation is corrected whenever directly possible. Good presentation is emphasised at all times and through all forms of writing. Support is given to children with poor pencil grip through triangular pencils and pencil grips. Children with poor fine motor skills access intervention work to support the development of these skills.

Reading

We believe in developing a reading culture throughout the school by promoting the written word at all times, creating a print rich environment, providing welcoming book areas and managing a school library which has a variety of fiction and non-fiction books.

Reading is taught through:

1. Whole class reading - to develop children's listening skills, a love of story and poetry and reading for pleasure. This is teacher led reading with children listening and responding to the text.
2. Discrete reading lessons - to develop children's reading fluency and comprehension skills.
3. Independent reading in school - to develop children's love of reading and their independence and stamina for reading.
4. Reading at home. Graded books are read in school and sent home to share with parents or carers. Children can also access Bug Club, our online reading programme.
5. One-to-one reading sessions. Teachers hear children read individually in school at regular intervals to assess progress and determine their reading level.
6. The reading environment. A print rich environment encourages children to interact with displays and follow instructions and signs. Each classroom has a reading area with comfortable seating and a range of reading material. Additional topic related books are also included as part of continuous provision in classroom areas. Book sets, story props and puppets are also available from Durham Learning Resources which can be used to enhance the reading environment. Reading material is also available in outdoor areas in the Early Years and on the playground during break times.
7. The school library. The library provides reference and reading materials for children and teachers. Children visit the library each week; they choose a book to take home and electronically scan their issues and returns.

Writing

Writing should be a creative, developmental process both at a functional and imaginative level. All attempts at writing are valued and we know that all children have potential to be successful writers. We believe that immersion in reading, talk and preparation for writing is essential to the writing development process.

Writing is taught through:

1. Shared writing
This is teacher-led writing with children watching and contributing ideas. Shared writing is not exclusive to literacy sessions and can be taught within all subjects. The emphasis may be on the generation of ideas, grammatical awareness, spelling and phonics, compositional, presentational and text level skills or other key strategies needed in writing. The teacher as the expert writer leads the writing process.
2. Guided writing that targets children at their point of writing.
Guided writing takes place in small groups with a teaching focus using targets and writing already modelled. The main part of the session is spent with the child writing and the adult intervening as appropriate. In Early Years, the child receives more individualised support from the teacher at the point of writing.
3. Developmental and child initiated writing.
Opportunities for emergent and child initiated writing are available through all areas of learning throughout the learning environment. Children's own attempts at writing are celebrated and promoted alongside the direct teaching of the key skills that enable them to progress through the more formal stages of writing development.
4. Independent writing.
Across the school children are given opportunities to develop their confidence and practise their writing skills. Children are given directed tasks to practise and develop independent writing supported by word banks, writing frames and phoneme cards.
5. Writing environment.
The school environment celebrates quality writing through displays of work in both handwritten and typed form. All classrooms have an attractive and well-equipped writing area. Opportunities for writing are also available as part of the continuous provision in classroom areas.

Cross Curricular Links

English underpins the whole curriculum as children are both developing and reinforcing their skills of speaking and listening, reading and writing in all subject areas.

In **Mathematics**, children will develop their understanding of key concepts and skills by singing rhymes and songs, talking with adults and peers, and recording their work and presenting their findings in a variety of ways. Children will be taught to use relevant mathematical vocabulary.

The use of **ICT** will enable children to develop, use and apply their developing skills in English in a variety of ways. Children will use ICT to practice word level work, present their work effectively and as a source of information and resource for learning.

In **Science**, children will be given opportunities to discuss their work using appropriate vocabulary - making predictions, discussing their plans, describing their observations and drawing conclusions. They will be using their reading skills to follow instructions and study information texts and they will be recording their findings both orally and in text form.

English contributes to the teaching of **PSHE and Citizenship** as children are given opportunities to take part in class and group discussions on topical issues. Planned activities in the classroom encourage children to work together and respect each other's views. Their work with a range of text and media brings them into contact with their own heritage and texts from other cultures. Children can give critical responses to the moral questions they meet in their work, develop their cultural awareness and understanding and appreciate the value of similarities and differences.

In **Art and Design Technology**, children will be developing their language skills when discussing their work and that of others; talking about their designs and intentions, describing what they are doing in the making process and evaluating their end product. Children may also use information sources and reference books to inform their work. The skills associated with recording information in various forms e.g. lists, diagrams, notes and more detailed plans and evaluations may be developed as children progress through the art and design process.

In **History**, children will be given opportunities to recount historical stories, describe artefacts, contribute to discussions, hypothesise and consider all other points of view. They will be encouraged to participate in and respond to drama based activities. Children will use their reading skills when using reference sources and they will write in a range of forms about the past e.g. labels, lists, accounts, letters and diaries.

In **Geography**, children will be taught relevant geographical vocabulary to enable them to describe and compare places, geographical features and follow directions. They will use their reading skills to search for information, use maps and follow directions. Children will develop their writing through a range of forms e.g. labels, maps, plans, accounts.

Marking and Feedback

When writing, the work will be marked as 'independent, supported or guided' to inform teacher assessment. Successes will be acknowledged in green pen and improvements and corrections in orange. Where possible, teachers will give verbal feedback by marking the work with the child present.

Please see the Marking and Feedback Policy and Guidelines for additional information.

Homework

Early Years Foundation Stage: Reception

Reading books are sent home in Reception. Initially the books may not have text in them. Parents are encouraged to focus on retelling events, using story language and using books correctly. When the child has developed early blending skills and has a bank of sight words, books with text that match the sounds the child knows are sent home.

Homework is also given on a weekly basis. Parents are provided with phonic activities as the children learn each new sound, and lists of high frequency words are also shared with parents.

Key Stage 1

Reading - Children are required to read their reading book four times each week.

Spellings - Children will be given spellings to practise at home which will focus on high frequency words, decodable words, taught spelling patterns and specific topic words.

Vocabulary – Children will take home vocabulary word lists to share with parent/carers each half term.

Assessment

Early Years Foundation Stage: Nursery

Evidence in learning journals, floorbooks and adult led activities is used to make judgements towards the Early Learning goals. Teachers assess a child to be emerging, expected or exceeding. Tracking sheets are completed on a termly basis, and are used to identify any children needing additional provision.

Early Years Foundation Stage: Reception

Teachers assess children's phonic skills, including phoneme recognition, blending decodable words and reading high frequency words, using the school's Phonic Assessment Packs each half term. Progress is monitored on a class skills tracker and is used to plan next steps in teaching and learning and inform intervention groups.

Evidence in books and adult led activities is used to make judgements towards the Early Learning goals. Teachers assess a child to be emerging or expected. Tracking sheets are completed on a termly basis and are used to identify any children needing additional provision.

Key Stage 1

Phonics – Teachers assess children’s phonic skills, including phoneme recognition and recall, blending and segmenting decodable words and reading and spelling high frequency words, using the school’s Phonic Assessment Packs each half term. Progress is monitored on a class skills tracker and is used to plan next steps in teaching and learning and inform intervention groups.

Reading and Writing - Teachers use the school’s assessment criteria sheets to award a teacher assessment judgement for reading and writing. Progress is monitored during progress review meetings with the Head Teacher. Reading assessments are moderated by senior leaders. Writing assessments are moderated both in school during staff meetings and externally within Peterlee Partnership cluster meetings and with Local Authority advisers and moderators.

End of Key Stage 1 Assessment

Teacher assessment: Teachers base their teacher assessment judgement on a broad range of evidence from across the curriculum for each pupil. The three standards for reading and writing are: ‘working towards the expected standard,’ ‘working at the expected standard’ and ‘working at greater depth within the expected standard.’ To demonstrate that pupils have met a standard, teachers will have evidence that a pupil demonstrates attainment of the statements within that standard and the statements in the preceding standard(s).

Roles and Responsibilities

English Subject Leader

- keep abreast of new developments in the teaching and learning of English through appropriate in-service training, attending County and Peterlee Partnership network meetings and self-study
- prioritise improvements for the teaching and learning of English across the school and contribute to the school improvement plan
- audit, organise and deliver in service training for staff in English
- audit, purchase and organise resources to support curriculum delivery
- lead by example and provide ‘expertise’ to assist staff in the delivery of the curriculum
- provide support for ECTs and teaching students
- monitor the teaching and learning of English across the school in conjunction with the Head Teacher
- support staff with assessment procedures and the tracking of progress in English
- evaluate the policy and scheme of work for English
- liaise with the Foundation Stage Co-Ordinator, Reception Lead Practitioner and English Subject Leader at Acre Rigg Academy to ensure smooth transitions between each Key Stage
- liaise with the Governor for English
- keep a subject leaders file which is informative and relevant

English Governor

- liaise with the English Subject Leader
- visit planned English events in and/or join English lessons in school and report back to the Governing Body
- monitor standards across the school in English and report back to the Governing Body
- attend any County training for governors on English

Head Teacher

- analyse assessment data to track the progress of identified groups
- hold pupil progress meetings with class teachers and lead on interventions for underachieving children
- lead, manage and monitor teaching and learning in English across the school
- ensure English remains a high profile in the school improvement plan