



English Teaching and Learning Policy

Aims

- Focus on developing a love of literature and language. Ensuring that children are exposed to a wide range of high quality texts
- Nurture writers. Providing pupils with broad, meaningful and exciting opportunities for developing their writing skills
- Ensure there is accurate assessment of what children can and can't do to inform planning and ensure common errors and misconceptions are addressed.
- Ensure consistent progress. Planning, marking and target setting to ensure all pupils make rapid progress from their individual starting points and that specific areas for development are addressed by each child.
- Focus on the basics. Reading skills, handwriting and spelling are held in the highest regard.
- Aim high. Teachers communicate high expectations, enthusiasm and passion about literacy to learners.
- Place English lessons at the heart of the curriculum.

'Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope. It is a tool for daily life in modern society..... Literacy is, finally, the road to human progress and the means through which every man, woman and child can realise his or her full potential.' – Kofi Annan

At Kiwitahi School, we believe that developing young people with high levels of literacy skills as being of the utmost importance. We believe that supporting the development of literacy is the responsibility of each and every individual who works with our children. This policy document outlines the key elements to our English teaching and learning, but also explains how literacy should be developed throughout the curriculum.

The Basics – Reading, Handwriting, Grammar, Oral Language

We believe that all teachers must take responsibility for ensuring that they provide pupils with opportunities to reinforce the basic literacy skills of reading, handwriting, spelling and oracy. Whilst we do not expect that teachers will be able to address all of these areas in each lesson, we believe that it is important for all teachers to have high expectations in these areas and to reinforce, wherever possible, the pupils' development in acquiring these core literacy skills.

Reading

We believe that reading is of paramount importance, both to enable the acquisition of specific language skills and for full participation across the curriculum. However, much may be done in the classroom, there is no substitute for reading.

Children build phonic skills when they enter school as a New Entrant and progress through Years One and Two using the Letters and Sounds scheme. Jolly Phonics is used from Years Three to Six. In the younger years, the main reading scheme follows the reading colour wheel and pupils progress through the levels at individual rates. Books outside the scheme may be introduced for reinforcement, variety or to follow a personal interest. There is always a wide variety of books available to the pupils. It is school policy for pupils to have a personal reader which is used both at home and at school. Children in Years One and Two read aloud daily to the teacher. In Years Three and Four the aim is for children to read aloud as often as possible but at least twice a week. As they develop into more independent readers in Years Five and Six, children are involved in a range of reading initiatives that target their individual needs; from 1:1 reading support to book groups to acting as reading buddies.

Assessment and Differentiation

Children's development is measured by their progress through the reading wheel, reading to members of staff and use of standardised assessments. We use the New Group Reading Test (NGRT) from GL assessment, and occasional running records, to monitor reading development over the course of the academic year. These tests enable staff to ensure children are working at a level appropriate to their needs regardless of age or year group. Teacher observation also notes how individual children are using reading skills across the curriculum.

The more able children will progress rapidly through the reading wheel (if appropriate, children can be accelerated through the scheme) and are then given guidance in choosing books that extend and build skills.

Children who find reading more difficult will be supported by the use of supplementary material providing further practice and by targeted small group and /or individual work.

Parental support and Librarians

Parents are urged to take an interest and become involved. Pupils are encouraged to read aloud to a parent/responsible adult at home daily, as part of each week's homework programme. School Librarians are elected and tasked with ensuring that the school library and class libraries are kept in good order and regularly restocked. They also support staff in developing topic based book displays where appropriate. We believe that it is important for children to engage in reading around the topics that they are studying and as such, the range of fiction available in each form room is supplemented by non-fiction material from topic boxes. World Book Day is celebrated annually. Everything is done to raise the profile of reading as a skill and as a source of limitless pleasure and discovery.

Handwriting

Handwriting is a skill that affects written communication across the curriculum. It is our aim that all children should achieve a legible, flexible and fluent style empowering them to concentrate on content and creativity.

Handwriting forms an integral part of the curriculum from a child's very first day at school. Time should be made each week to developing particular handwriting skills in class lessons. In Years

Five and Six children are encouraged to move onto using black pen for written work, except in the subjects of mathematics and art.

When a child is struggling with handwriting, he or she will have extra help, which might introduce him or her to different styles appropriate to their needs.

Handwriting is a movement skill best taught through demonstration, explanation and, above all, practice. A printed style is taught to the children when they first start school. However, as children get older, we try to extend them by introducing a joined-up style. We believe that correct formation of letters from the very beginning is absolutely vital as it takes much effort to correct bad habits.

Spelling

All children should be enabled to communicate effectively in the modern world. It is essential that they should be able to express themselves accurately and clearly both orally and in written work. We believe correct spelling is essential, and the aim is for all children to become independent spellers.

The teaching of spelling is not restricted to specific lessons but forms an integral part of the curriculum, with all staff taking opportunities for reinforcement. However, we recognise that encouragement and motivation are important so limit the number of spelling corrections in any one piece of work (generally speaking, no more than 5 corrections would be made in a child's work in order to preserve their motivation). All children are encouraged to use both a dictionary and thesaurus, either a hard copy, or on their iPad.

Dedicated time is set aside for teaching spelling rules, high frequency words, subject specific words. Essential spelling lists are started immediately upon arrival at school.

In the senior room, weekly spelling tests are used as a method for encouraging good spelling practice behaviours. Rewards are given to those pupils who show effort in this area. Children are encouraged to use strategies such as 'look, say, cover, write, check'.

The amount and difficulty level of the words that children are asked to learn are differentiated where necessary to take into account individual needs. Where a child has a significant difficulty in learning spellings they should be given a focus of learning relevant spelling rules with words that they will use frequently and of learning the necessary high frequency words, as opposed to subject specific vocabulary.

Oracy

Verbal communication is the most important form of interaction between humans. We believe that we have a duty to ensure that all pupils are able to express themselves verbally with confidence and clarity. We strive to provide pupils with the widest possible range of opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. Although there is no defined style of teaching, it is true that a key part of teaching across the school is that of high quality discussion. Children are given space to discuss concepts in detail and encouraged to ask more questions than they give answers.

In addition to drama opportunities, opportunities for public speaking are wide-ranging with verse speaking competitions, house events, class assemblies, show and tell assemblies, public speeches, reading aloud to younger pupils and acting as guides for visitors.

The Planning Process

Long-term Plan

Our planning is based on the New Zealand Curriculum age-related objectives, achievement criteria and aims to ensure that pupils are provided with sufficient opportunity to explore a wide range of texts, styles of writing and basic skills. We strive to incorporate cross-curricular links where appropriate to the wider curriculum and school values.

Medium-term Plan

Units of work are prepared using either a core text, a theme derived from another subject area, or occasionally from readers or School Journal articles. Each unit of work should include a broad range of English activities including opportunities to read, write, speak and develop their basic language skills.

Short-term Plan

Units are adapted to ensure that individual pupils are sufficiently supported and challenged. Additional learning activities may be introduced during each unit if an opportunity presents itself and teachers are encouraged not to be shackled by the constraints of each unit, but instead to seek further ways to enrich their teaching where possible.

Effective English Teaching

Modelling

We believe that in order for children to be successful in developing their literacy skills and understanding, they must be provided with opportunities to see examples of 'what a good one looks like'. Effective modelling of what is expected of the children forms an integral part of our teaching in English. We create working walls and displays that children can utilise to support their own independent work. We also utilise technology such as iPads and document cameras to engage with examples of pupils' work, which can be used for peer modelling.

Planning for Progression

The teacher needs to ensure daily opportunities are provided for children to deepen their understanding of the learning. This may include:

- redrafting work
- making corrections
- sharing examples of work
- discussion about previous and current pieces of work
- peer critique and evaluation
- next step challenges

Mini Plenaries

The teacher should use mini plenaries throughout the lesson to assess the understanding of those children working independently through posing questions such as, "What is the most effective sentence that you have written?" "If you could make one change in your piece of work so far, what would it be?" "What is the most challenging part of this activity?" Mini-plenaries should also be used to address misconceptions or an area of common difficulty.

Plenary

A review of the learning should take place at the end of the lesson in relation to the learning objective: "Where are we now?" "What do we know now that we didn't know at the start of the lesson?" "Are we ready to move on?" "What key points do we need to remember?" "How can this learning help us in other lessons?"

Marking

The marking code for the school must be followed when marking all work. Teachers mark using a code known as 'bubble and step'. The bubble represents what the teacher think about the piece of work. The step relates to the next action that the child must take to develop their learning. An example might be: (*bubble*) "I really like the way that you have used a variety of different adjectives in your sentences" (*next step*) "Go back and see if you can insert the missing full stops in your sentences." For English, it would be expected that there are at least two examples of deeper marking resulting in 'pink pen' work for the older children each week. To ensure that 'pink pen' work is completed effectively, teachers must ensure that they plan for dedicated improvement and reflection time every week.

Environment

We believe that the environment in which the pupils learn is vital. We strive to ensure that each classroom demonstrates a love of literacy. Each classroom has a dedicated class library with a wide range of age-appropriate fiction and topic relevant non-fiction books. It is expected that each classroom will have a regularly updated display. Examples of pupils' work should be on display and should not always be the finished product, but also demonstrate works in progress and the steps taken to achieve the final piece. However, we stress that we wish to avoid 'environment pollution' - have too much up on the walls. This can be distracting for children and also create an environment that appears chaotic and untidy. As always, we strive for balance.

Writing Assessment

We are developing school-wide writing criteria for children in relation to their age-related expectations. We have developed these to run parallel to the Literacy Progressions which is a cousin document to the New Zealand Curriculum. The writing criteria give teachers the content knowledge that needs to be covered with the pupils, and also allows for effective assessment of writing. Once per term, all of the children will complete a 'cold writing task'. This means that they will write, unaided, about a chosen topic. The purpose of this is to allow teachers to see what children can do completely independently. It also allows us to track the pupils' development in writing as they progress through the school. High quality daily marking and conversations with pupils will also inform progress and be used when writing bi-annual pupils reports and teacher interviews.