



West Witney Primary School and Nursery

English Policy

(Including the Oracy, Phonics, Reading and Writing Policy)

Autumn Term 2023

Headteacher: *Mr S Birnage*

Chair of Governors: *Dr K Stenson*

Review Date: Autumn 2025

How do we teach English at West Witney?

At West Witney Primary School and Nursery, the teaching of English allows our pupils to incrementally build their skills and knowledge in reading and writing within a carefully designed curriculum. We believe that an outstanding curriculum, not exclusively an English curriculum, starts with a strong expressive and receptive vocabulary; therefore, the children's vocabulary development is carefully planned and explicitly taught. We believe that the high-quality, systematic teaching of phonics is imperative to children's reading and writing outcomes and is hugely impactful towards their life chances. We believe our literature-rich environment promotes a strong ethos of reading for pleasure. We aim to create successful, fluent readers, who can link their ideas between different concepts. This is achieved by teaching the skills, knowledge and vocabulary needed to read, through carefully and progressively planned whole class shared reading and a philosophy of reading being at the core of our curriculum. We believe that a text-based curriculum is vital to fully immerse our children in English and indeed the wider curriculum. Reading and writing sessions are centred around high-quality texts, with the children being exposed to a range of genres. We believe writing is best taught when each unit of learning follows a carefully sequenced journey, where children are able to consciously and independently apply skills they have been taught. The purpose of writing is central to our teaching.



Oracy Policy

Why is Spoken Language and Vocabulary so Important?

There is a wealth of studies about how we acquire new vocabulary. Incidental learning is the process of acquiring knowledge or skill without setting out to acquire it. Much of our vocabulary knowledge happens in this way. It's through conversations, speaking and listening to each other, through being read to or through reading ourselves.

We know that in a perfect world, every child would experience this in the same way, that it would be a level playing field, but this simply isn't the case. The language rich get richer and the language poor get poorer. Research has found that disadvantaged children hear fewer than a third of the words heard by children from higher-income families and this has significant implications in the long run. This gap does nothing but grow as the years progress, ensuring slow growth for children who are economically disadvantaged and accelerated growth for those from more privileged backgrounds.

A poor spoken vocabulary has significant implications for a child's life chances. A child who is not at the expected standard in language at the age of five is 11 times less likely to achieve the expected level in maths at age 11. DfE (2017). In fact, it goes far, far beyond the classroom. The Early Intervention Foundation showed that children with language difficulties at age five were four times more likely to have reading difficulties in adulthood, three times as likely to have mental health problems, and twice as likely to be unemployed when they reached adulthood. Law, J., Charlton, J., Asmussen, K. (2017)

Language provides the foundation of thinking: therefore, the development (and explicit teaching) of vocabulary is a huge priority at West Witney.



Ensuring all children experience effective language support requires a considered whole-school approach. At West Witney, we use the "Word Aware" process to teach, retain and apply new vocabulary. This system is particularly effective as it involves: explicitly teaching vocabulary; is a multifaceted, multi-sensory approach; uses multiple exposures; teaches words in context; helps children to analyse words and, most importantly, it fires up the children's enthusiasm towards new words!

How do we Develop Vocabulary?

-High quality adult child interactions are important. We think of this as our staff talking with children rather than just talking to children. Adult responsiveness and modelling of language are vital

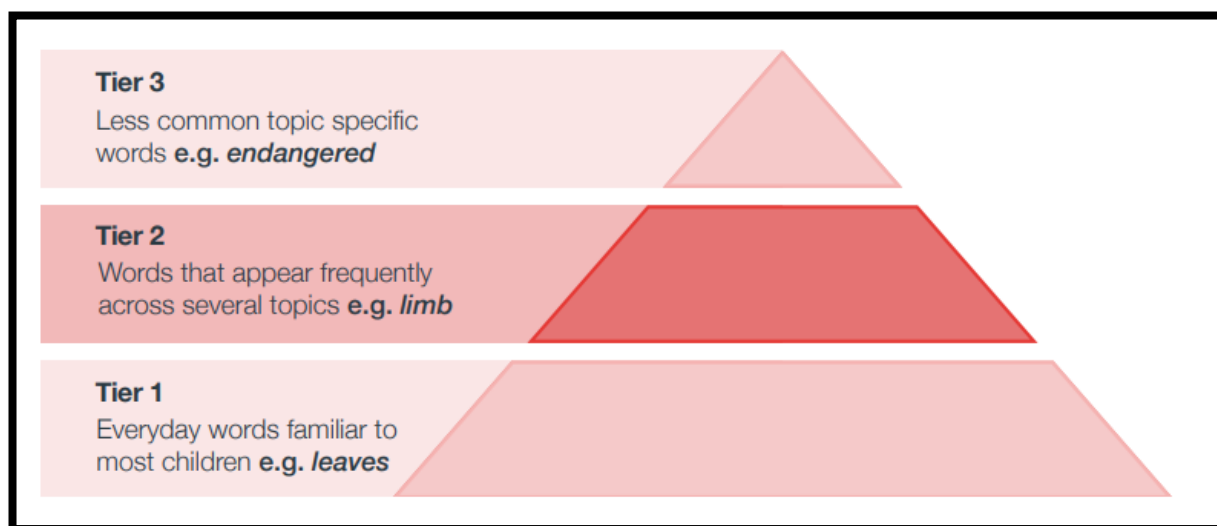
-We use a wide range of explicit and implicit approaches including planning the teaching of vocabulary as well as modelling and extending children's language and thinking during interactions and activities such as shared reading and topic-related discussions, in all curriculum areas. Pre-teaching key vocabulary is so important, across the curriculum.

-Structured questioning, in all lessons, not only develops high quality classroom dialogue, but also develops thinking skills and gives a much greater depth to the children's learning and understanding.

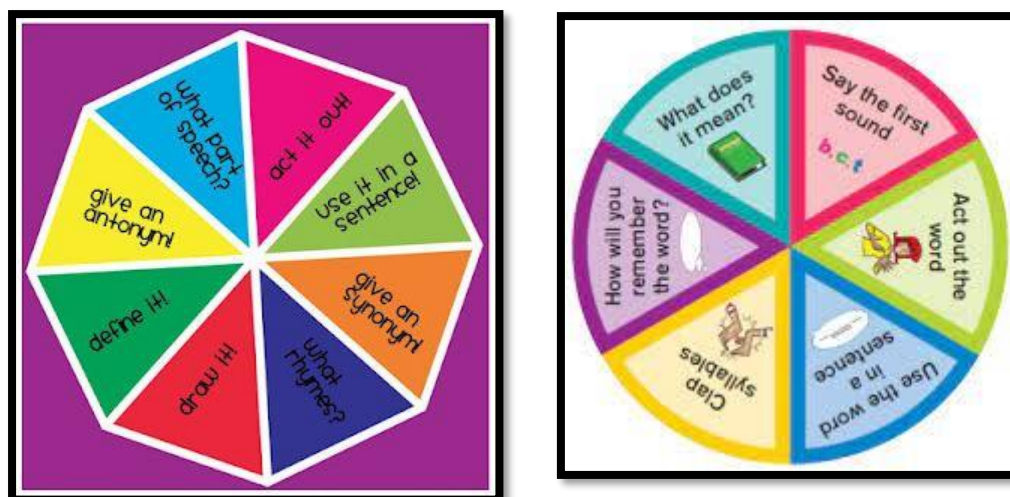
-Collaborative activities that provide opportunities to learn/hear language often are planned for. Additionally, rich classroom discussion is developed not just through adult child interactions, but with talk partners and small group work.

-Social awareness, relationship skills, and problem-solving are developed, as well as knowledge.

-All classes have a *Language learning Environment*: the physical environment and learning context provide important infrastructure for language learning, for example, resources, space, and noise levels



All classes use tiered vocabulary to extend all learners. Displays are added to and the words re-visited. The vocabulary covered is planned from all curriculum areas.



Above: Different methods to teach, remember and link words to different concepts, ensuring children can apply the vocabulary they have learned.

Speech and Language Interventions

A child's core language acquisition occurs between one and four years old, with children acquiring basic phonology, syntax, and vocabulary during this period. This age is crucial to language development. Therefore, our additional targeted support is offered to those with language weaknesses, particularly in this age group.

However, at West Witney, we believe that language interventions are vital for all children. Therefore, we employ a private speech and language therapist to assess children and train our staff to the highest level, in order to deliver our interventions as effectively as possible. Children are then tracked to ensure progress is being made.

Support is present to develop all the key elements within language, such as vocabulary, phonology, narrative skills, listening and attention skills, and social communication.



Phonics and Early Reading Policy

Synthetic Phonics

To teach word reading and spelling successfully, teachers need to understand the principles underpinning the teaching of word reading (decoding) and spelling (encoding). This should include understanding how the alphabetic code of English represents the sounds (phonemes) of the language with single letters and groups of letters (graphemes)

Phonics is a body of knowledge that is necessary for pupils to learn to read and spell, at whatever age. Phonics gives children the key to unlocking this alphabetic code for their reading and spelling. This is why teaching Phonics for reading and spelling is a cornerstone of the English teaching in Early Years and Year 1 at West Witney Primary School.

Following the DFE guidance, at West Witney Primary School we follow a specific synthetic phonic programme, validated by the DFE to teach children GPCs, to blend phonemes into spoken words and segment spoken words into phonemes. Each scheme has its own programme-specific systems and terminology such as actions, mnemonics, prompts, key words and routines to teach knowledge and skills. At West Witney, we follow the 'Time For Phonics' programme across the school, explicitly using their materials to ensure there is 'fidelity to the scheme' across the school.

How do we teach Synthetic Phonics?

At West Witney School we follow the "Time For Phonics" schemes using the resources and materials. Our intent is to have clear and consistent teaching of phonics across the school, to support all children to become confident, fluent readers. This is implemented by following the materials provided by the scheme and having a clear phonics and reading progression plan which moves through Early Years and Key Stage 1. Moreover, we have quality teaching, regular lessons, consistency in each lesson/phase and we will show fidelity in following our long-term plan. We will measure the impact by having a robust system of formative and summative assessment; we see the impact through good progress and good outcomes in phonics and reading assessments, in line with national expectations.

Synthetic phonics starts by teaching children groups of letters. They learn that each of these letters has a name and represents a sound. Children start with single GPCs (grapheme phoneme correspondences), e.g. 's' makes /s/, and then move onto digraphs and trigraphs as they progress.

When reading a word, children follow a four-step method:

1. Look at the word.
2. Say the individual sounds represented by the letters (sound buttons are useful for this).
3. Blend (combine) the sounds.
4. Say the word and think about its meaning.

Spelling is taught alongside reading using a five-step method:

1. Say the word.
2. Segment or split the word into sounds.
3. Count the sounds.
4. Write the letters that represent each sound.
5. Look at the word and check it looks right.

Time For Phonics complete programme manual can be found [here](#).

Progression plans can be found [here](#).

What are decodable books?

One way to support the teaching of our synthetic phonics programme in school is through the use of decodable books. These are books that only contain the phonemes which have been taught and means that children should be able to decode all of the words using their phonics knowledge. They should not need to guess or use context clues to work out unfamiliar words.

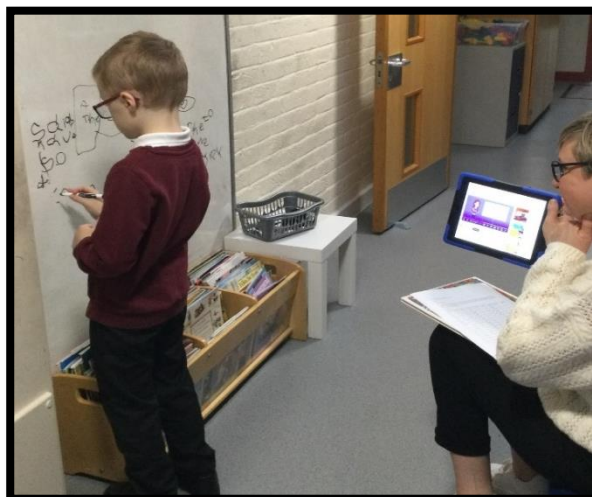
How do we teach phonics to children with additional needs?

In line with the DfE recommends that **synthetic phonics** is the best way of teaching children to develop their literacy skills, for those children with special or additional needs we may support them with:

- Small group or One-to-one teaching.
- Overlearning and repeated practise of teaching points.
- Clear and easy to follow phonics resources.
- Age-neutral and age-appropriate resources.
- Progressing through the stages at a slower pace.
- Physical adaptations for those who experience difficulty with fine motor skills.
- Alternative communication methods for pre- or non-verbal learners, e.g. eye gaze strategies.

How do we teach common exception words and tricky words using synthetic phonics?

Children are not taught to read tricky or common exception words using synthetic phonics as these words are not decodable (certainly they're not during the phase they are taught, though they may become decodable later on when children are taught more complex phonemes). So, instead children are taught that those words contain an unusual GPC, for example 'the', 'what' and 'said' and usually just come to memorise those words since they appear with such high frequency in texts.



Reading Policy

The importance of Reading:

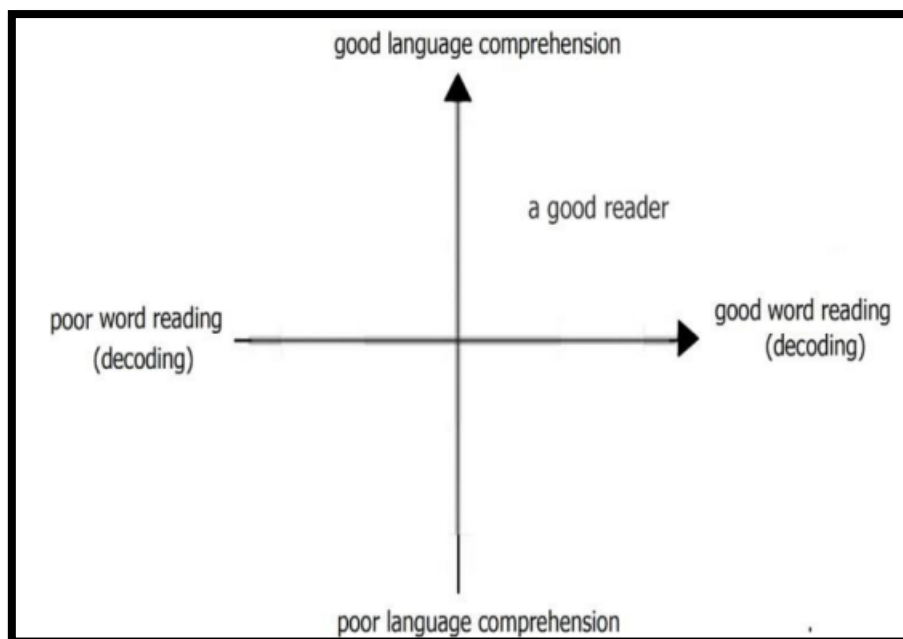
Quite simply, at West Witney, we believe that children might never reach their full potential as human beings if they do not read.

Our aim is for our children to be fluent, skilled and attentive readers. This begins at home: parents are fully encouraged to read (and engage with books) with their children as early as possible. Obviously, the practise aids fluency and many comprehension skills, but the talk around the books, develops a child's receptive and expressive vocabularies enormously, unlocking the door for later life. We believe the rudiments to reading are in developing a child's spoken language, before they can de-code words. This is a major priority, all through the school.

Reading for Pleasure is a virtue in itself. We believe one of life's great pleasures is to read! Consistent engagement in reading is shown to be vitally important for a child's life chances. In order for reading to become more pleasurable, reading fluency is important. This is done through much practise, both in and out of school, but also through the excellent delivery of a high-quality synthetic, systematic phonics scheme, resulting in children having the capacity to fluently decode words.

Reading expands knowledge about the World and develops language, significantly aiding children's engagement with the wider curriculum and the world at large. Strong levels of well-being are associated with regular readers; additionally, reading allows our children to adopt new perspectives, develop empathy and become more socially conscious. In order for all these to happen, children must be taught and have modelled to them, reading comprehension strategies.

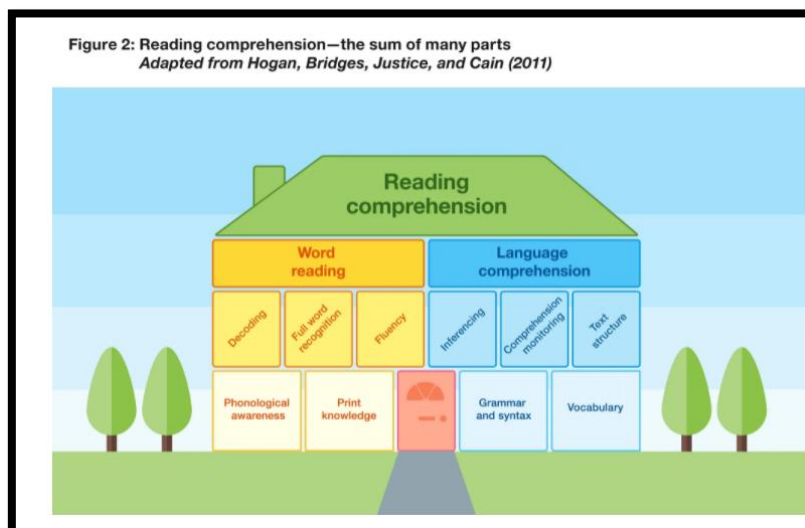




The Teaching of Reading

The simple View of Reading

Reading has been described as the “product of decoding and comprehension.” Word reading and language comprehension require different sorts of teaching.



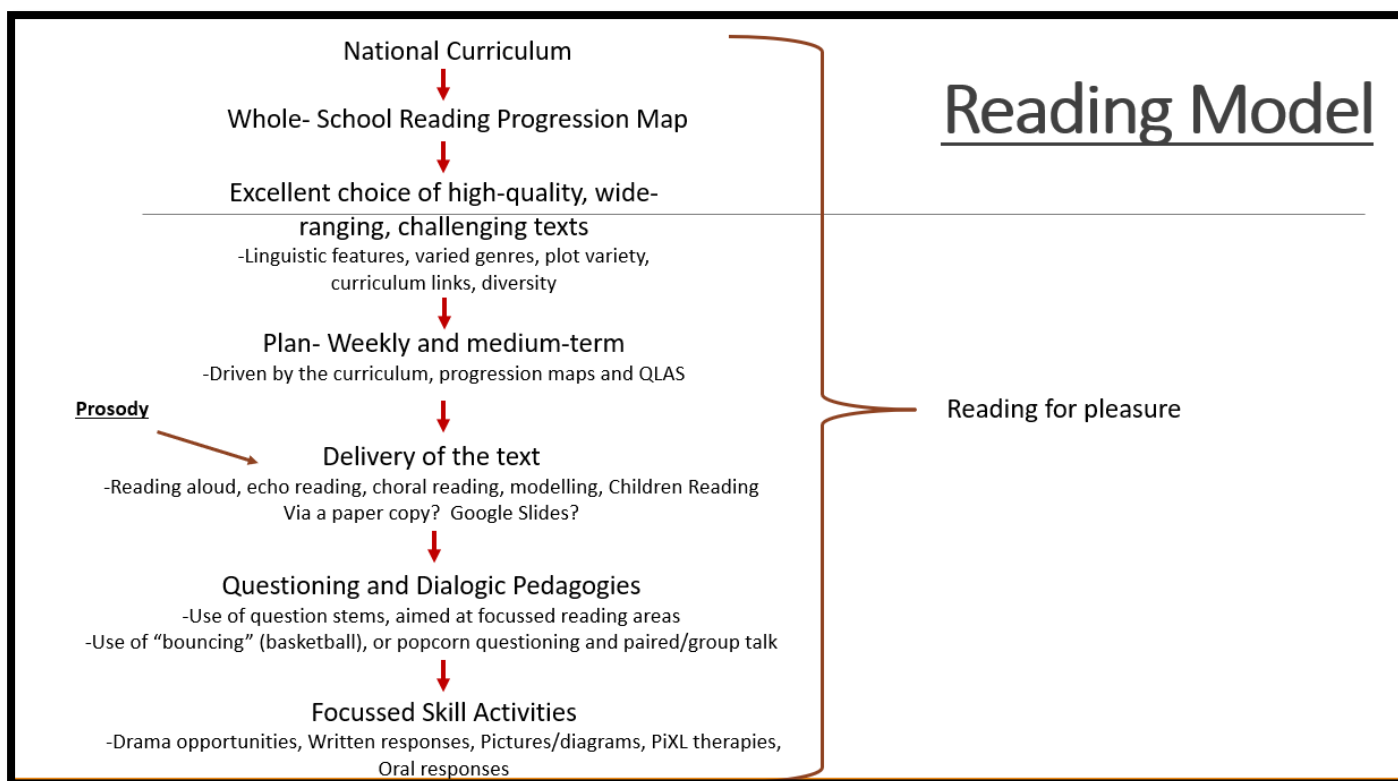
The teaching of Reading

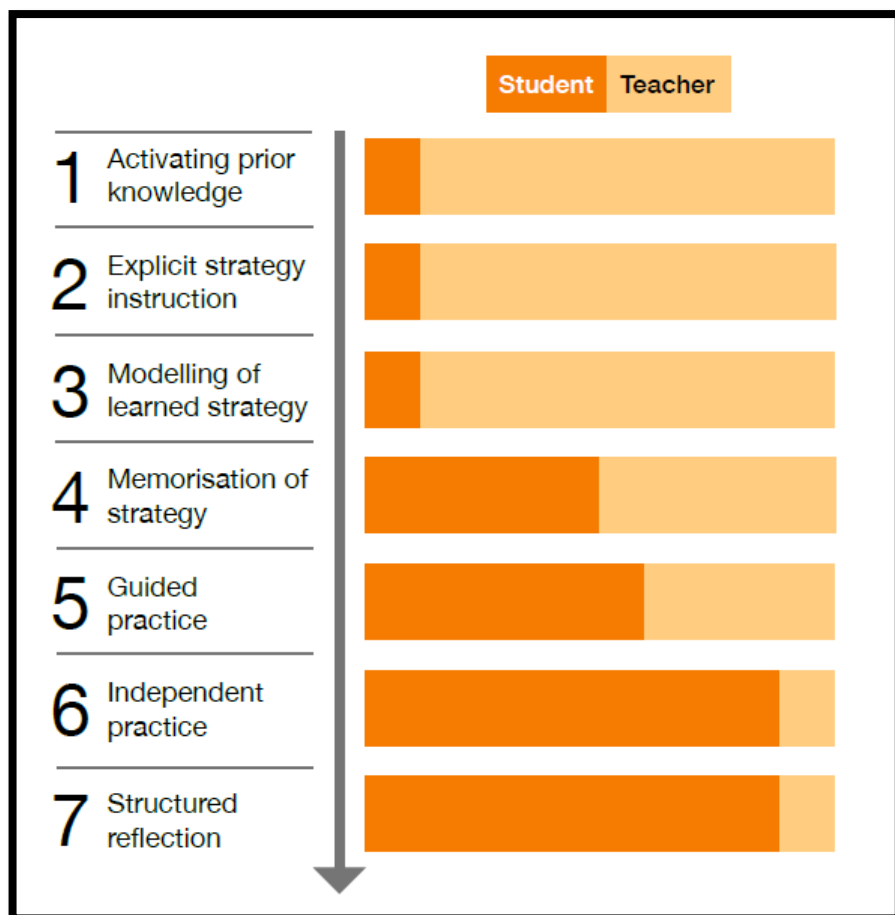
As well as many other strategies to develop the ability to read, children must directly and through explicit instruction and conscious effort, be taught to read.

The teaching of Reading

Whole Class Shared Reading is our main strategy for the explicit teaching of reading. The model below shows the sequence in which we order our lesson delivery, based around a variety of texts; full novels are often used. Principally, teachers read to the class, with children reading along, often aloud. Much modelling of reading happens, detailed explanations and a great deal of (planned for and impromptu) questioning to promote rich discussions. There is much paired talk. Whole class shared reading is one aspect of our balanced reading diet.

Highly effective reading interventions are planned for and monitored, using the school's diagnostic assessment system as well as much formative assessment.

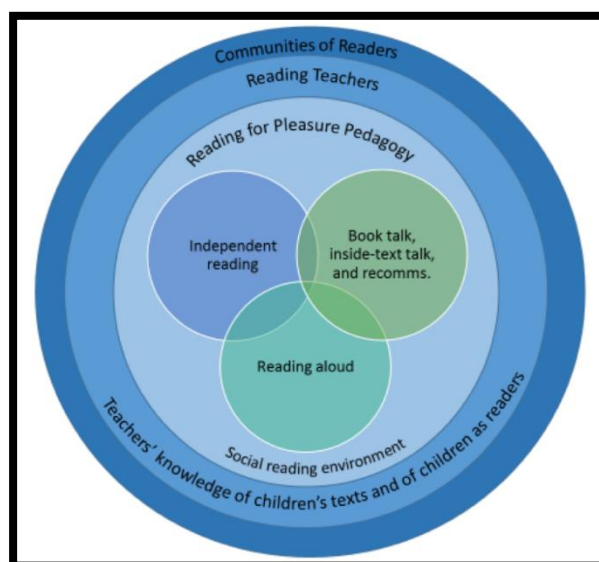




Our teachers use skilled strategies to teach the children how to read. Ultimately, we must reduce the reliance on adult-input, where necessary, so that reading can be carried out effectively and independently.

Quality Texts and a Range of Texts

Every classroom has a class library, where books are carefully chosen, displayed and promoted to the children and by the children, making recommendations to one another. We see this as the most significant place children can choose from a range of high-quality texts. This includes picture books, graphic novels, decodable books (where appropriate), novels, books for the wider curriculum and those texts that support knowledge and vocabulary, linking to different subjects. We also have an excellent school library that has a wide-range of high-quality texts and provides a wonderful, social space to read and share books.



Reading for Pleasure

Reading for pleasure is a central culture at West Witney. We aim to cultivate this by adults regularly reading aloud to their class. Many informal book talks are encouraged, including children giving recommendations in celebration assemblies. Reading certificates are awarded on a weekly basis, as well as staff giving recommendations in assemblies. We have many sociable opportunities to read, including book clubs and the school library, which is a hub for sociable reading. Our staff are highly skilled in selecting high-quality texts, because of their knowledge of literature. We have many “wow” moments, including author visits, reading to other community members, visits to the local library, World Book Day, book fayres and book exchanges.



Decoding and Phonics

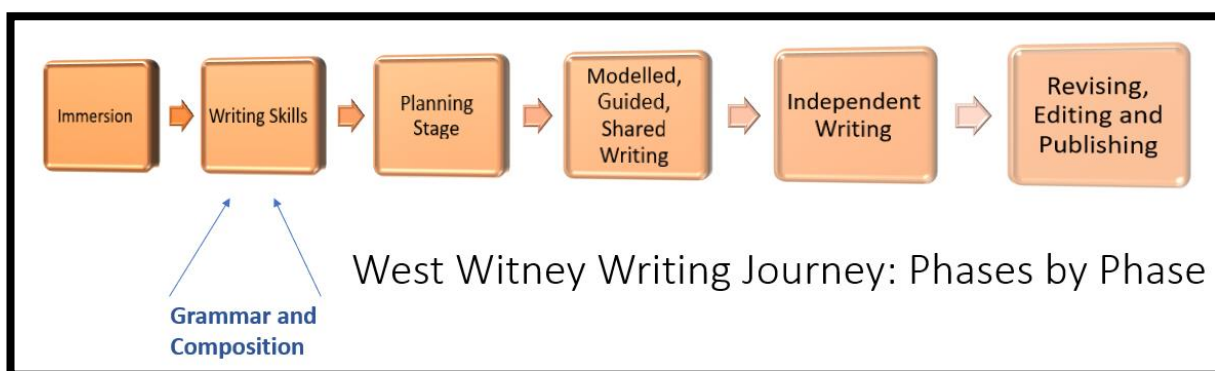
Phonics is a body of knowledge that is necessary for pupils to learn to read and spell, at whatever age. It gives children the key to unlocking the alphabetic code. This is why our teaching of phonics is the cornerstone of our English teaching. At West Witney, we spent a great deal of time choosing and opting for the right systematic, synthetic phonics scheme, to ensure consistency. We deliver “Time for Phonics”.

*Please see our Phonics Policy for more detail.

Writing Policy

The West Witney Writing Journey (The Writing Process):

At West Witney, we recognise that writing is a complex process, which has been compared to playing chess in terms of the levels of cognitive load it places on an individual. When journeying through a unit of writing, which will have a specific written outcome, the children progress through planned phases. During these phases, modelling and structured support will be gradually reduced until our children are capable and ready for independence. Much importance is also placed on the development of the children's transcription skills, such as handwriting and spelling, which allows our children to move from oral language into fluent written language. Transcription skills are not specific to any one phase, but taught and practised on an almost daily basis, including the children's exposure to our systematic, synthetic phonics scheme: *Time For Phonics* and our spelling programme: *Spelling Shed*.



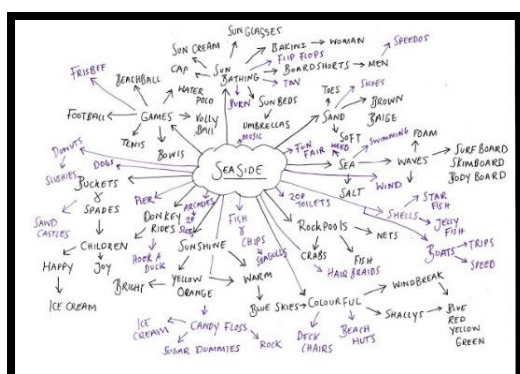
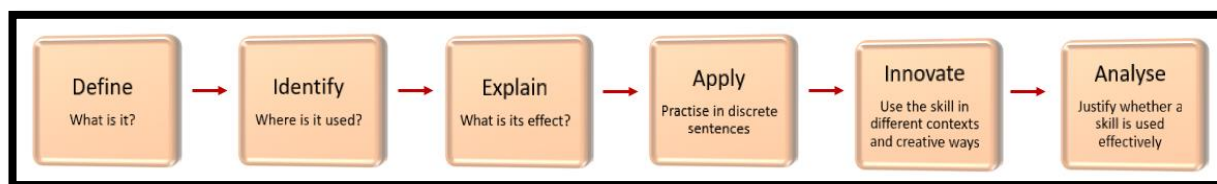
Immersion:

Through careful lesson-planning, thoughtful consideration around the intended purpose and audience of writing is developed. To support our children's learning, there is plentiful exposure to a rich range of genres, where key features of the particular style are identified. These features may be structural, grammatical or vocabulary based. Bespoke "WAGOLLS" (What a Good One Looks Like) are examined and children are fully encouraged to evaluate and analyse the style and quality of the texts they are presented with. From 'hooking' the pupils in at the start of a unit and exploring the text in order to build an understanding of the writer's craft, pupils develop a deep understanding of the components of writing. The immersion phase is also used to enthuse the children, with diverse stimuli for writing, making the unit of writing as enjoyable as possible. The texts used are carefully chosen to deepen pupils' knowledge of the wider curriculum, while ensuring pupils are immersed in our rich and varied literary heritage. Often, a central stimulus will be a carefully chosen, high-quality book.



Explicit Teaching of Writing Skills:

For many, both children and adults alike, writing is a physically and intellectually challenging task. Our aim throughout the phases of a unit of writing, is to reduce the cognitive load on the children. Therefore, the skills of writing, that are covered when they are most suitable for a genre/purpose, are taught explicitly, before any attempt at application. Skills, both compositional and grammatical, are learnt in great depth first. Children understand the skill, identify it, create sentence/paragraph level compositions with it, innovate with it, analyse its use and evaluate its impact on writing, all before any independent application. There is much practise of the skill in this phase, the outcome of which can be “magpied” for the compositional phases.



Introduction	
Answer the 5ws	
Use the passive Voice	
Use a rhetorical question	
Main Content	
Who? What? When?	
-Lots of relative clause and parenthesis to give detail.	
Main Content	
Explain how it happened	
Main Content	
Use quotes to reinforce an argument	
Change the formality of the speakers	
Conclusion	
Summarise	
Look to the future.	
Use the subjunctive. Use modal verbs to be formal	

Planning:

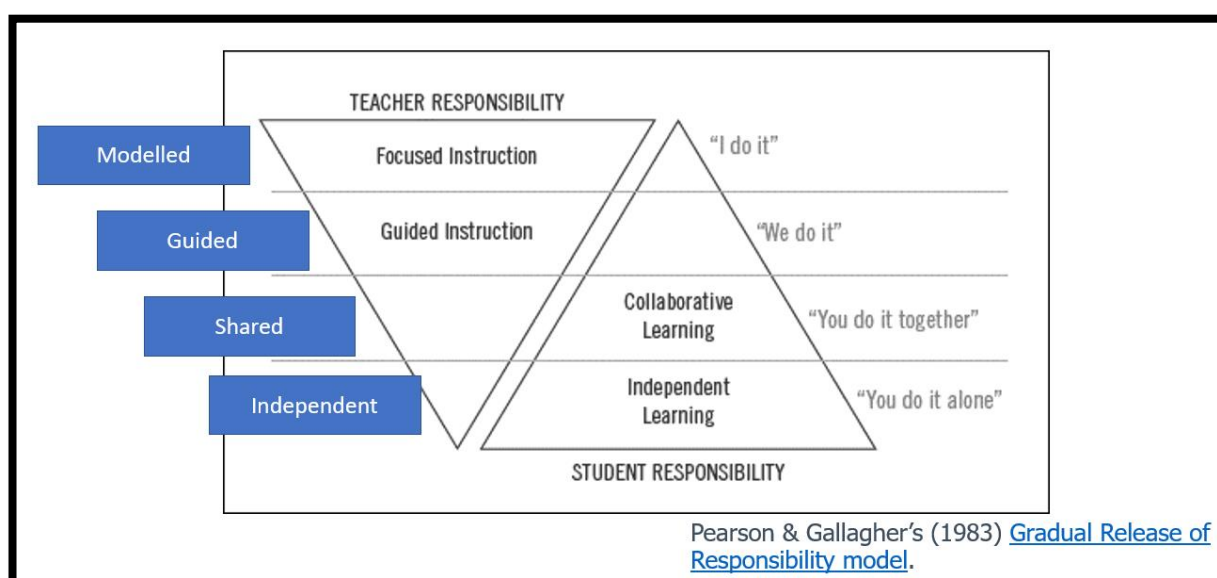
Because of the development of knowledge around a genre and the acquisition of skills, the planning/pre-writing phase can be used for children to set goals, as they clearly know the intended writing outcomes. Pedagogical approaches are not exclusive to one particular phase; there will be much cross over. So, notes and initial ideas may have been recorded during the initial phases, ready to be developed in the planning phase. Much immersion into a text and a subsequent stimulus gives our children the ideas to write about, further reducing cognitive load. Discussing of ideas, through debate, drama and high-quality classroom talk occurs, before recording of ideas into a plan. Many scaffolds are provided to support slower-graspers and extend quicker-graspers. Children are encouraged to “box-up” their ideas into an appropriate structure, before the compositional phases begin.

Modelled, Guided, Shared Writing and independent Writing:

Once again, to reduce the cognitive demands of writing, we give our children extensive instruction, practise and feedback. We believe that by children taking smaller steps, they can achieve better writing outcomes.

- Modelled- *'I'll show you and explain'*
- Shared Writing- *'Now let's have a go together and you explain'*
- Guided- *'I'll support you in a small, focused group'*
- Independent

During these phases, teachers will model the application of grammar skills, compositional skills (such as cohesive devices) transcription skills (spelling and handwriting) as well as ensuring adventurous, powerful vocabulary is chosen, that maintains semantic accuracy. Additionally, teachers will use metacognitive modelling to ensure our children can independently tackle a draft from start to finish.

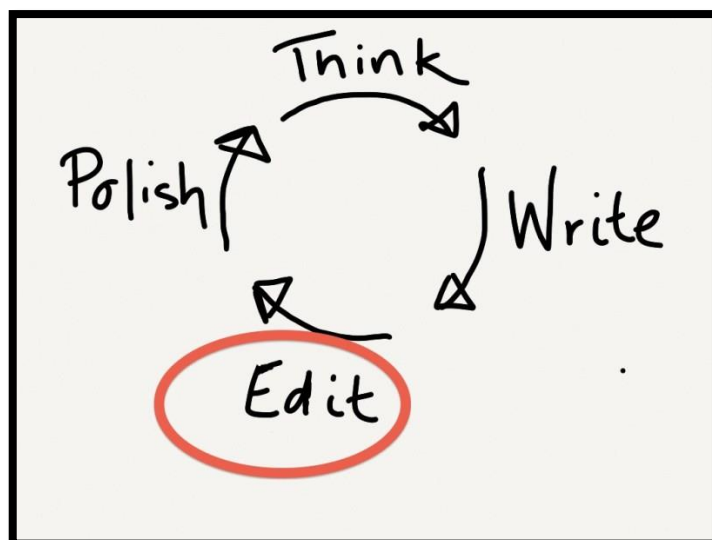
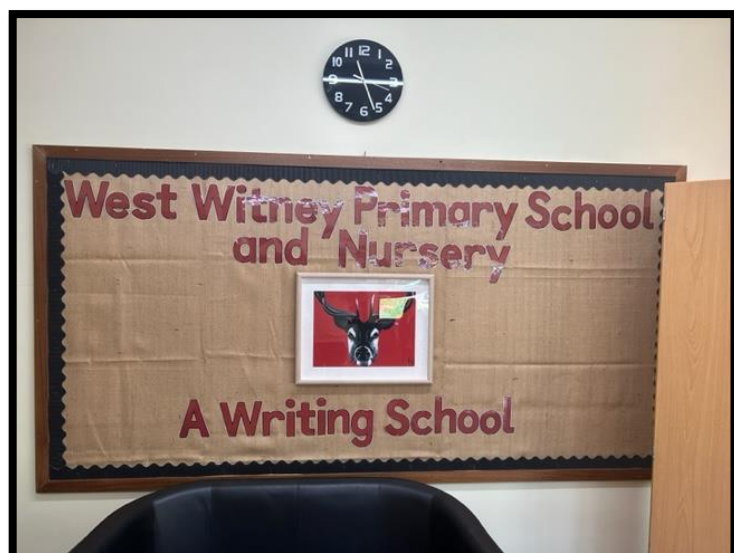


Revising, Editing and Publishing:

When children are drafting their writing, they are encouraged (and taught) to make revisions. In order to independently make revisions, children MUST know the purpose of what they are writing and the skills they are using. Goal-setting is very helpful here. Without this deep, prior knowledge, children are not able to make effective revisions. In light of feedback and self-evaluation, children make conscious changes to their writing, to improve the content. This may be whether the piece makes sense yet also, answer the question: *Have writing goals been achieved?* So, have the specific grammatical devices been applied; particular vocabulary used and the correct structure been employed? Editing, which like revising, is explicitly taught will encourage children to ensure their writing is accurate and coherent. The correct spelling and grammar assume more importance here. We employ a range of feedback methods including self and peer-led feedback, as well as high-quality oral and written feedback, on an individual/group basis and also, whole-class feedback.

Publishing:

At the beginning of our writing units, based on the full immersion into a text-type and acquiring specific knowledge, our children are encouraged to set goals for their writing. Often, this will link to how we aim to "publish" our final drafts, ensuring writing has a clear purpose and audience. Ways in which our writing may be published include: Displayed on the school writing wall; a class anthology; writing to the local MP; a parent gallery; pen pals; reading to the community and simply having the opportunity to read aloud.

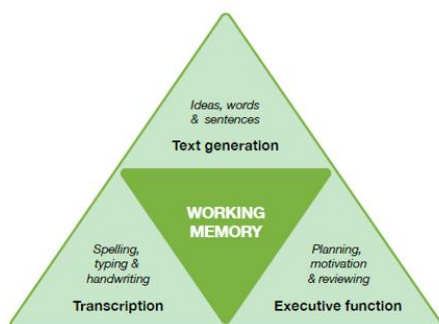


In summary:

Acquiring the skills to write is a challenging yet rewarding process. Our teachers' approach is underpinned by ensuring children develop the learning behaviours to have the necessary executive functions for writing. Our aim is to make writing engaging and fun, with a clear purpose.

Writing is not a mutually exclusive component of our English curriculum; opportunities for reading and spoken language are integral to our teaching of writing. Targeted teaching (pre and post writing interventions) are carefully planned to have a positive impact for those pupils with SEND. Pupils who struggle with writing have more opportunities for repetition, where necessary. This can secure essential knowledge to automaticity. Rigorous formative and summative assessment methods, diagnostic in nature, help ensure gaps in children's learning are filled. Comparative judgements on an intra and inter-school level are conducted to aid the tracking of progress.

Challenges of Writing



The Simple View of Writing

- **text generation**—which involves thinking of ideas and using oral language skills to put those thoughts into words and sentences;
- **transcription**—which enables the writer to move oral language into written language; and
- **executive functions**—such as self-regulation (controlling one's own behaviour, thoughts, and emotions), planning, problem-solving, and monitoring writing.

