



# St. Thomas' CE Primary School Writing Policy

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## Introduction

At St Thomas', we are passionate about ensuring all children become confident and enthusiastic writers. Our high-quality English curriculum underpins learning across all other subject areas and is the foundation for a life-long love of learning. We believe the English curriculum drives forward a strong motivation and desire for our pupils to have their voices heard and make a difference; our aim is to equip them with the necessary skills to do so effectively.

## Writing

- Our writing curriculum is designed using a text-based approach to help pupils acquire the necessary knowledge of grammatical structures and text types in an engaging and accessible way. This also helps to provide pupils with the desire to write and apply their knowledge and skills.
- We follow the Pathways to Write scheme for our writing curriculum from EYFS to Year 6.
- The texts are carefully selected on the basis of their literary merit and to ensure an appropriate level of challenge. They also relate to our school values and the wider curriculum for each year group.
- We aim to develop pupils into confident, positive and enthusiastic writers, with the intention that they will be able to write independently with resilience.
- It is our ambition that pupils will be able to edit and evaluate their own writing to make it the best work it can be, applying a wide range of sophisticated vocabulary, spelling and grammar skills to do this effectively.
- It is important that our pupils develop an awareness of the audience, purpose and context, which will prepare them for their future.

- In every classroom, pupils are able to use the working walls as visual aids to support their learning. These are there to aid learning by providing models, vocabulary, examples or reminders. Although they will be neat and well-presented, they are not displays and the focus is on providing support for current learning rather than displaying pupils' work.

### Oracy

To develop our pupils' Oracy skills, every member of staff at St Thomas' encourages quality talk and endeavours to model quality talk themselves, within a rich language environment. This takes place in lessons, assemblies and throughout every aspect of school life.

In addition we:

- Give children rich opportunities to express their ideas verbally through a range of drama activities related to our writing curriculum.
- Encourage them to listen and respond appropriately to others
- Help them to evaluate and reflect on their own speech and adapt it to different situations and challenges
- Encourage them to use the grammar of Standard English where appropriate
- Encourage multilingual children to use their home language.

### Handwriting

Handwriting is a skill which, like reading and spelling, affects written communication across the curriculum. We follow a consistent approach to the teaching of handwriting. Pupils must be able to write with ease, speed and legibility. We teach all pupils to do this. We make sure that we allow sufficient time for pupils to be explicitly taught and to practice handwriting.

In EYFS the focus is on developing pupils' motor skills and a comfortable pencil grip. Pupils are taught to form letters correctly without joining. This continues into KS1 and once pupils have achieved sufficient fluency with unjoined letters of a consistent size, joins are introduced in a systematic order.

Penpals teaches pupils to join letters and words as a series of flowing movements and patterns. Handwriting skills are taught regularly and systematically. All classes have a taught session on a Monday, followed by daily practice sessions.

At St Thomas' our aims in teaching handwriting are that the pupils will:

- Achieve a neat, legible style with correctly formed letters in accordance with the cursive font.
- Develop flow and speed.
- Eventually produce the letters automatically and in their independent writing.

### What is good handwriting?

Good handwriting is legible, fluent and efficient:

- Legible: adhering to the characteristic letter shapes
- Fluid: writing with an even, quick writing rhythm
- Fatigue-free: writing with little and balanced pressure
- Efficient: quick and yet fatigue-free writing
- Individual: a personal writing style

What do our handwriting sessions include?

- Regular short bursts
- A clear learning focus for the lesson, linking to spelling patterns where possible in KS2
- Start with a warmup
- Clear modelling - show/model/support with letter height
- Practise in Handwriting books on appropriate lines

### Spelling

At St Thomas' we believe that children who can spell feel confident and are able to write with enjoyment. Therefore, we want our pupils to be equipped with the knowledge and range of strategies for learning spelling to be able to apply their strategies when spelling words in their independent writing.

Spelling at Key Stage 2 at St Thomas' is taught using Pathways to Spell. We developed our systematic spelling delivery to complement the teaching of phonics in EYFS and Key Stage 1.

Pathways to Spell follows a mastery approach to the teaching of spelling. It is a programme designed to deliver the statutory content of the Primary National Curriculum for spelling.

Through weekly teaching of spelling objectives and development of a key stage approach to word transcription, vocabulary development and proof-reading, the programme aims to:

- Ensure that pupils become confident and competent spellers
- Enthuse and fascinate pupils about words and language
- Develop pupils' spoken language skills
- Promote collaborative learning in the classroom
- Develop an engaging spelling environment across the school
- Effectively reduce teacher workload with highly detailed, progressive and engaging planning for the delivery of spelling teaching

The Pathways to Spell programme is designed for whole class teaching of the Primary National Curriculum objectives for spelling from Year 1 to Year 6. At St Thomas we use Pathways to Spell in Years 3-6 (EYFS and KS1 use Little Wandle and Bridge To Spelling.)

It is a comprehensive and progressive programme with a clear, research-based teaching sequence. Each week combines consolidation of previously taught spelling patterns and rules in conjunction with new teaching with opportunities to reflect on learning. This will support pupils in the development of key metacognitive strategies.

Each half term, there will be 6 weeks of detailed planning with suggestions for additional sessions focused on pupils' personal development of spelling strategies using personalised spelling lists. They are designed to be used for whole class teaching but sessions from previous year groups could be used as an intervention with smaller groups in addition to the whole class session.

Every year begins with consolidation of rules from previous year groups which pupils often find tricky or commonly misspell. Each term, there is a focus on common exception or word list words and homophones where appropriate. Each week consists of two spelling objectives: a review of a previously taught spelling pattern or rule and a mastery spelling focus - the key learning outcome for the week.

#### **Assessment principles**

Assessment made by the teachers informs daily and weekly planning and allows the learning to be matched to the needs of the pupils. Pupils and teachers work together to identify targets for learning and ways of achieving these and we use peer and self-assessment strategies so children learn to evaluate their own work and that of others.

Assessment of pupils' learning is reported to parents in a way which identifies achievements and what the child needs to do to improve. Core assessment data is updated each year and passed to the receiving teacher or school to aid future planning.

Assessment of writing takes place each half term at the end of the Pathways to Write unit and is recorded. This assessment then feeds into the planning of the following unit of work.

#### **English as an Additional Language**

Children for whom English is not their first language are supported in their use of English and are given opportunities to make use of their home language to assist their learning. Every effort is made to ensure that their cognitive ability is taken into account when assessing their work. In some cases, there is involvement with a specialist EAL teacher or teaching assistant, which takes place outside the classroom.

#### **Equal opportunities**

We ensure that all children have equal access to the Writing curriculum, irrespective of their background or ability.