

St. Mark's English Curriculum

(Updated Sept 2023)

Our Vision & Rationale

At St. Mark's, we believe that reading and writing are the most important skills that a child will learn. Children will need these skills in almost all other subjects across the curriculum. Good reading enables children to enjoy and learn about the world around them and good writing gives children a voice so that they can share their ideas with the world. Our aim is for all children to leave primary school having acquired these essential skills and for children to view their spoken, reading and writing experiences positively with a real understanding of how these skills can help them to contribute to wider world discussions and real life experiences.



For children, both reading and writing can be tricky skills to acquire and master. Becoming a good reader requires: the ability to use phonic skills to decode; building an understanding of vocabulary; and the development of fluency and comprehension skills. Writing can be an equally tricky process requiring children to develop handwriting skills through fine motor control; spelling knowledge; an awareness of grammar terminology; and punctuation skills. These skills and knowledge develop alongside the child having an increasing awareness of composition with children being required to write for a range of purposes: to engage, entertain, inform and persuade their reader.

Our approaches to English encourage the use of all of our school learning behaviours, promoting resilience and pride in all that they do. We understand that children learn best when they have clear instruction, so modelling is a key aspect of our English teaching, including widening and deepening vocabulary acquisition through exposure to quality texts and vocabulary tasks. Children are given wide-ranging opportunities to embed these skills, and this rich language, through exciting opportunities and experiences within our English lessons and across the curriculum.

National Curriculum Aims:

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. The national curriculum for English aims to ensure that all pupils:

- Decode with ease to read fluently and with good understanding
- develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information
- acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language
- appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage

- write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting their language and style for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences
- use discussion in order to learn; they should be able to elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas
- are competent in the arts of speaking and listening, making formal presentations, demonstrating to others and participating in debate

Our Aims:

English is a subject that spans the whole curriculum and includes the development of skills in phonics, reading, writing, spelling, handwriting and the spoken word. Each area is interconnected but components are taught through discrete lessons to develop children's skills. Each area of our learning in English, is applied across our rich and varied curriculum and we try to ensure learning in English is connected to other areas of our curriculum where it is appropriate to do so. In addition to the National Curriculum Aims we want our children to:




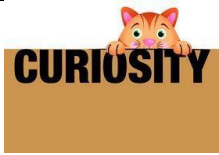
- develop a life-long love of reading
- be enthusiastic about books and the information they read
- see themselves as writers and authors, able to confidently communicate their thoughts, ideas and imagination through the written word
- be 'have a go' and investigative spellers who: are keen to correct and learn from mistakes; can spot and apply patterns; and can use their knowledge of morphology and etymology to develop their understanding and accuracy of spelling
- take pride in their presentation and their handwriting
- be confident to share their views and thoughts on a variety of subjects, even when they feel they are in the minority or they feel that their views may be controversial
- to be good, considerate listeners who welcome the thoughts and viewpoints of others even when they are at odds to their own

In order to achieve our aims, and those of the National Curriculum, we have created our own bespoke English curriculum, which is built on the latest research in how children learn best in each of the aspects of English. Research comes from: [DfE Reading Framework 2023](#); [Ofsted Review Series: English](#); [Educational Endowment Foundation reports](#) and recommendations from recent educational books such as the 'Closing the Reading/Writing/Vocabulary Gap' books by Alex Quigley, 'The Art & Science of Primary Reading' by Christopher Such and 'Reading Reconsidered' by Doug Lemov, Colleen Driggs and Erica Woolway. Key elements of our curriculum are provided in this document as an overview.

Curriculum and Planning

Reading

An effective reader:

Decodes	Reads Fluently	Deduces meaning	Comprehends	Infers meaning
These learning behaviours are particularly helpful in becoming a confident reader:				
National Curriculum Objectives:	To ensure that all pupils: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read easily, fluently and with good understanding • develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information • appreciate our wide and varied literacy heritage 			

Children in Reception and throughout key stage one use Read Write Inc. to acquire the tools of reading by learning the phonetically decodable sounds needed.



When children are confident with these, typically by the middle of Year 2, they develop their fluency and comprehension of increasingly complex texts as they move through the school.



To develop fluency and comprehension we use quality texts and resources from Plazoom based around core themes for each year group. The resources and approach that we use ensures consistency and a deeper connection to the text and the theme. These themes are also explored through class readers from inspirational authors of the past and present including chapter books, picture books, information and poetry texts.

Reading comprehension requires knowledge of vocabulary, context, syntax and narrative structure, as well as the capacity to read fluently. Our reading lessons incorporate fluency practice in most lessons and use paired and class discussion to explore vocabulary, syntax and meaning. These tasks develop children's ability to more deeply engage with texts and are used to support comprehension skills and to develop a life long love of reading.





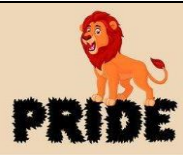
Reading for pleasure is an important aspect of teaching reading at St. Mark's. We know that there is a strong correlation between engagement and attainment in reading. When children experience success with reading, they are more likely to read for pleasure.

To learn more about how we teach reading at St. Mark's see the link below:

<https://www.stmarksprimary.net/reading/>

Writing

An effective writer:

Can compose writing for a variety of purposes	Demonstrates an awareness of the reader	Can use a variety of grammar and techniques for impact	Writes coherently	Has neat legible handwriting	Can spell accurately
These learning behaviours are particularly helpful in becoming a confident writer:					
National Curriculum Objectives:	To ensure that all pupils: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting their language and style for a range of contexts, purposes and audience 				

At St. Mark's, we want all children to see themselves as writers and become skilled writers who can write in an engaging way for a range of purposes and audiences. To give children the best understanding of the writing process, we have adopted **The Write Stuff** approach designed by Writing Consultant, Jane Considine. Through this approach, children work in a collaborative way with their class and teacher to gather vocabulary to match the purpose of their writing and to carry out the process of 'Sentence Stacking'. This refers to the fact that sentences are stacked together chronologically and topically. Lessons are organised to engage children with short, intensive moments of learning that they can immediately apply to their own writing. They watch and listen to the teacher's modelling of how and why to use the gathered vocabulary in their sentences to generate the appropriate impact on their reader. The children work at sentence level and discover how these sentences can be stacked to create cohesive paragraphs. This style of teaching improves their knowledge of grammar and enables them to interweave different sentence types to have the desired impact within their writing.

An individual lesson is based on a sentence model that is broken into three learning chunks. Each learning chunk has three sections:

1) Initiate section- a stimulus to capture the children's imagination and to generate the vocabulary options required for the sentence.

2) Model section- the teacher models a sentence that outlines clear writing features, grammar and techniques.

3) Enable section- the children write their own sentences, using the vocabulary that they have gathered and the modelling process as a guide.

Children are challenged to 'deepen the moment' which requires them to independently draw upon previously learnt skills and apply them to their writing during that chunk.

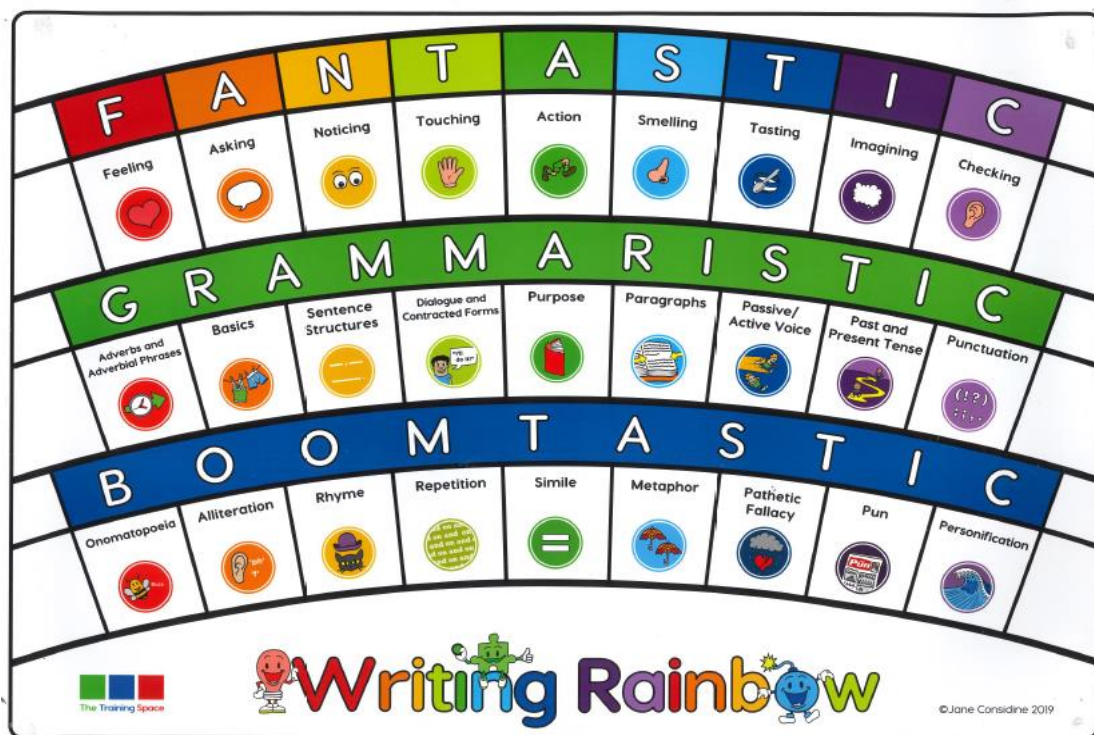
The Write Stuff uses three essential components to support children in becoming great writers:

The three zones of writing:

Ideas- The FANTASTICs uses a child friendly acronym to represent the nine idea lenses through which children can craft their ideas.

Tools- The GRAMMARISTICs are the grammar rules of the English language and help us to target specific grammatical and linguistic structures to secure children's understanding of grammar.

Techniques- The BOOMTASTICs which help children to capture nine ways of adding drama and poetic devices to their writing.



By using sentence stacking lessons and experience days (to excite children about the writing process or purpose), children learn the craft of writing for a given purpose and about the choices that we make as writers. At the end of each unit, children plan and complete related independent writing to put the skills that they have learnt into practice.

To see more information on the texts that we cover see our yearly overview document. This is a document that is regularly updated as we change our curriculum to match the needs of

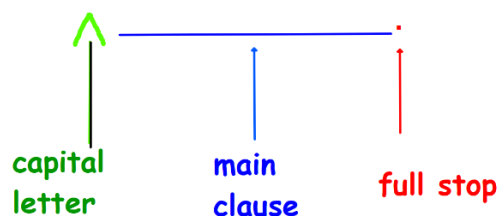
our learners. The progression document gives an overview of the grammar, punctuation and organisation aspects of writing based on National Curriculum requirements.

Grammar

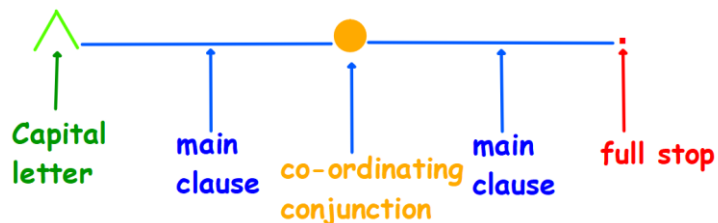
Children are taught grammar skills explicitly through our curriculum, with a focus on national curriculum expectations for each year group and the needs of the children through ongoing formative assessment. Throughout each unit of work there are two or three lessons of grammar teaching with further opportunities for children to apply these skills throughout each unit of work and in subsequent units.

As part of our grammar teaching, we use a pictorial representation of key sentence types to support children's understanding of the key components. These are referred to often and revisited across the school.

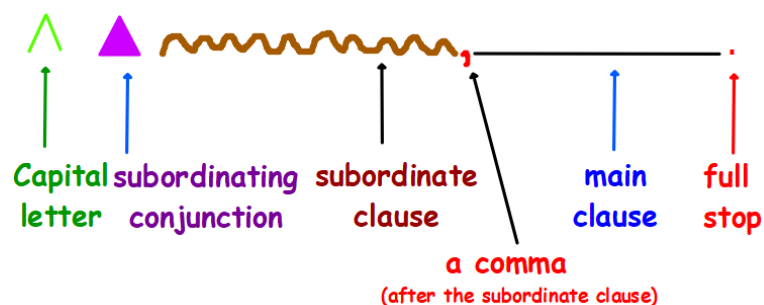
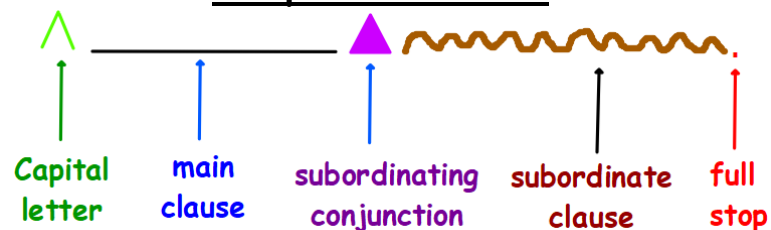
Simple sentence



Compound sentence



Complex sentences



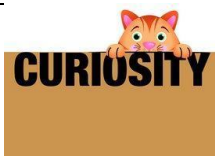




Groovy Grammar

To aid grammar understanding and revise grammar the children that have been taught, children will revisit and retrieve prior learning in their 'Groovy Grammar' session. These are 10-minute sessions which occur at least 2-3 times each week. This session enables children to practise grammar skills that they have been taught in previous year groups, as well as grammar that they have been taught within the year. It keeps grammar fresh and provides teachers with opportunities to test prior knowledge and understanding and provide additional teaching where needed.

Year 6 Groovy Grammar - Week 1				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Add a or an: ___ a kitchen ✓ ___ an oven ✓ ___ a kettle ✓	Add a or an: ___ a bottle ✓ ___ a chip ✓ ___ an empty office ✓	Add a or an: ___ an angry monkey ✓ ___ Anglo-Saxon ✓ ___ an unhappy camper ✓	Add a or an: ___ a bright umbrella ✓ ___ an unopen book ✓ ___ a university ✓	Add a or an: ___ a ukulele ✓ ___ an honest girl ✓ ___ a European destination ✓
What type of conjunction has been underlined: I was feeling happy, so I did a dance. <i>so</i> ✓	What type of conjunction has been underlined: After they pass the church, they must turn to the left. <i>After</i> ✓	What type of conjunction has been underlined: Lily is teaching here, for she loves this school! <i>for</i> ✓	What type of conjunction has been underlined: I met them when we were in Paris. <i>when</i> ✓	What type of conjunction has been underlined: Do you want to come with us, or do you want to stay here? <i>or</i> ✓
Type of word: Circle the verb : Yesterday, Sarah <u>could have visited</u> her friendly auntie.	Type of word: Circle the adjective : Yesterday, Sarah could have visited her <u>friendly</u> auntie. ✓	Type of word: Circle the adverb : <u>Yesterday</u> , Sarah could have visited her friendly auntie. ✓	Type of word: Circle the proper noun : Yesterday, <u>Sarah</u> could have visited her friendly auntie. ✓	Type of word: Circle the modal verb : Yesterday, Sarah could <u>have visited</u> her friendly auntie.
Punctuate: Did she say anything before she left? ✓	Punctuate: If you find out, let me know what happened! ✓	Punctuate: After French we will have music! ✓	Punctuate: How clever you are! ✓	Punctuate: Celia who left first, reached the shop last! ✓

Spelling

An effective speller:

Can use phonic knowledge to support encoding	Investigate and spot patterns by becoming word detectives	Have a go! Challenge themselves to take risks with spelling	Work to improve their spelling and become a more automatic speller	Persevere to improve their spelling	Celebrate their success as a speller!
These learning behaviours are particularly helpful in becoming a confident speller:					
National Curriculum Objectives:	To ensure that all pupils: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can use common phoneme-grapheme correspondences to support their spelling • Can spell common exception words • Learn common spelling rules • Are supported in understanding the rules of morphology (the meaning of words and their parts) and etymology (the history or root of words) 				

Spelling needs to be taught not caught!

Although some will come from reading, we cannot rely on children to 'pick up' the patterns or memorise spelling through tests. Teaching time needs to be dedicated to spelling so that children can learn the structure of words and find strategies that will help them make connections. This will help their writing become more coherent and their spelling to be consistent as they apply what they have been taught when sounding out words.

We no longer complete spelling tests

Spelling tests are fundamentally flawed as they go out into the community and become a memory test and nothing more.

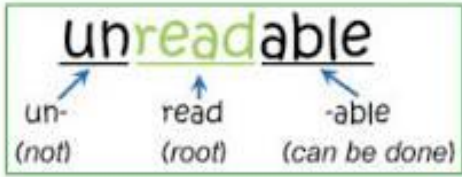
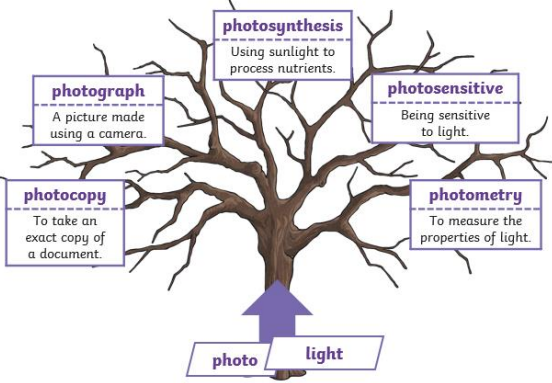
Why not spelling tests?

- Pressure on parents
- Testing is not teaching
- Poor application in writing

Instead, we need to have **progress checks**. These will help make connections and keep patterns and phonics at the heart of the teaching.






Spelling teaching is supported, both in school and at home, by the Spelling Shed resources using a spelling scheme that has been created around the [national curriculum spelling objectives](#) for each year group. This scheme is based upon the latest research around spelling and incorporates strategies that build on children's phonic knowledge, and builds their understanding of the meaning of different parts of words (morphology) and the root/history of words (etymology). This supports their orthographic mapping: a process where they learn to connect sounds in words that they already know to help them spell words and permanently store words in their long-term memory.

Morphology- meaning of words	Etymology- root of words
 <p>The diagram shows the word 'unreadable' in a green box. Arrows point from the prefix 'un-' (not), the root 'read' (root), and the suffix '-able' (can be done) to their respective parts in the word.</p>	 <p>Greek Root Words</p> <p>A tree diagram illustrating the etymology of words. The trunk is labeled 'photo' and 'light'. Branches lead to: 'photocopy' (To take an exact copy of a document.), 'photograph' (A picture made using a camera.), 'photosynthesis' (Using sunlight to process nutrients.), 'photosensitive' (Being sensitive to light.), and 'photometry' (To measure the properties of light.).</p>

Spelling is taught through discrete teaching activities across each week which focus on building understanding of each spelling pattern or rule via investigative tasks. The teaching is then supplemented with online games and activities that can be accessed in school and at home. Research has shown that as little as 20 minutes per week of word study including discussing spelling patterns, morphological exploration and orthographic mapping can have a bigger impact on spelling than the repetitive daily copying of wordlists.

Handwriting

To be effective at handwriting:

Can use the correct posture and pencil grip	Practise the correct joins	Take pride in their handwriting	Demonstrate consistency in sizing and style	Have an awareness of the reader
These learning behaviours are particularly helpful in becoming confident with handwriting				
National Curriculum Objectives:	To ensure that all pupils: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil/pen comfortably and correctly • Can form upper and lower case letters correctly and use spacing between words • Progress to being able to join lower case letters with increasing legibility and pace • Consistently size and style their handwriting • Choose the writing implement that is best suited for a task • Take pride in their writing 			

Children begin to acquire handwriting skills in the early years through fine and gross motor activities. Handwriting requires effort and attention and with suitable motor skills, children become better through repeated practice of accurate letter formation. Within lessons, pupils begin in reception class by learning to form recognisable letters in print form. We encourage the tripod grip in almost all cases. Joins are introduced once fluency has been achieved.





From year 2 through to year 6, children learn cursive handwriting. To achieve consistency across the school, videos have been created that are part of our handwriting teaching in each classroom (from year 2 onwards) to support correct letter formation and development of joins and lead in lines, to lead to joined, fluent handwriting. Lined handwriting books support this and are part of our handwriting lessons from Year 2 onwards.

Pride is a core learning behaviour of our school and our focus on handwriting supports this. Neat handwriting and efforts towards this are celebrated and rewarded in our school. When children are ready, they also receive a pen licence and are encouraged to use pen for their written work. This is usually from the end of year 4 onwards.



Speaking and Listening

An effective speaker and listener:

Can discuss with their peers	Can share their ideas with others (partners, class or larger groups)	Can listen to others and form a viewpoint	Can formulate an argument and convey their viewpoint effectively	Can make formal presentations
These learning behaviours are particularly helpful in becoming a confident reader:				
National Curriculum Objectives:	To ensure that all pupils: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use discussion in order to learn; they should be able to elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas • are competent in the arts of speaking and listening, making formal presentations, demonstrating to others and participating in debate 			

The national curriculum for English reflects the importance of spoken language in pupils' development across the whole curriculum – cognitively, socially and linguistically. Spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing and strong spoken language skills correlate with positive academic outcomes, social development and emotional development.

At St. Mark's, we encourage speaking and listening within our English lessons and across the curriculum. Pupils have frequent opportunities to contribute to 'exploratory' and 'presentational' talk and teachers plan opportunities to deepen and widen children's vocabulary. We know that the quality and variety of language that the pupils hear and speak are vital for developing vocabulary and grammar and their understanding for reading and writing. Teachers ensure the continual development of pupils' confidence and competence in spoken language and listening skills. See our Speaking and listening progression document for more information.