

Gawber Primary School

English Policy



'If reading is breathing in, then writing is breathing out.'

Introduction

At Gawber Primary School, English is a core curriculum subject, and every child receives dedicated daily English teaching. We recognise, however, that reading, writing, speaking and listening develop most powerfully when children apply their knowledge in a wide range of meaningful contexts. For this reason, English is deliberately and visibly embedded across our wider curriculum, giving pupils frequent opportunities to practise, consolidate and extend their skills.

We take an evidence-informed approach to curriculum design. In response to current educational research, we place the acquisition of language and literacy at the forefront of our practice, knowing these skills are instrumental in enabling children to achieve highly across all subjects. Our curriculum continues to strengthen and adapt as new research emerges, ensuring that best practice consistently informs teaching and learning. As such, the teaching of English remains a central priority at the heart of our curriculum.

Access to high-quality texts is fundamental to our approach. Carefully chosen books within the English curriculum engage pupils, broaden their vocabulary, and support them to become independent, motivated readers and writers. We know that success in English has a direct impact on children's attitudes to learning, their self-esteem and their achievement across the whole curriculum.

Our aim is to inspire a lifelong love of all aspects of English by equipping children with the essential knowledge, skills and understanding they need to achieve and excel.

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 language, and to develop their love of literature through widespread reading for enjoyment.'

- National Curriculum: English programmes of study (2014)

Gawber School provides a bespoke, carefully planned curriculum in which literature sits at the heart of English. We know that exposing children to a rich and varied body of literature has a profound impact on how they experience and understand the world. The novels we select open doors to worlds both real and imagined, near and far. The poetry we teach works in multiple ways—evoking emotion, exploring language playfully, and offering new perspectives. Drama provides opportunities for children to grapple with moral dilemmas, explore conflict, and engage with powerful moments in history. Across fiction, poetry and non-fiction, texts are deliberately chosen to complement our wider curriculum so that children immerse themselves in what it means to be a reader for different purposes—and, in turn, learn to write for a variety of meaningful reasons.

At Gawber Primary School, reading is at the heart of our whole curriculum. It is our intention that every child becomes a reader. We understand how essential reading is for accessing every stage of education, and we aim for every child not only to love reading but to understand how to read for different subjects, audiences and purposes. This ensures that, as they move to the next stage of their education and eventually into the world of work, they can draw on reading as a tool to achieve the futures they aspire to.

From the very start of their journey with us, children are encouraged to develop a genuine love of reading. They encounter high-quality texts daily, and through a consistent, rigorous approach to phonics, they gain the skills needed to decode confidently. Children who read regularly—or are read to regularly—gain access to countless worlds, ideas and experiences. More importantly, reading equips them with the tools to become independent, lifelong learners.

Writing at Gawber is always purposeful. Motivation for writing is rooted in rich stimuli: high-quality texts, inspirational authors, real experiences and powerful visual prompts. Whether children are writing to entertain, explain, persuade, inform or discuss, their purpose is clear and meaningful. This approach provides them with the knowledge and skills needed to be effective writers across the curriculum and ensures they feel well equipped to continue developing as writers long after their primary years.

Our overarching aim is to ensure that children master the knowledge required to succeed at every stage of their learning journey in English, so that this success positively influences their achievements across the wider curriculum. We want the knowledge they acquire to support them as they move into the next phases of education—and to enrich their lives far beyond the four walls of school.

Phonics

To ensure our children become accurate and automatic readers, we follow Read Write Inc, which is a validated systematic and synthetic phonics scheme. Reading books are closely matched to the graphemes taught and these 'decodable' books are also sent home for children to practise until they become fluent.

Our RWI sessions occur daily, with no exceptions, as the continuity and pace of the programme is key to accelerating the progress of our children's reading development. It is explicitly taught daily to EYFS,

year 1, year 2 (who are not yet fluent readers) and only to children in Key Stage 2 who have not completed the programme. Children are grouped according to their phonic ability.

We follow the five underlining principles of 'Read Write Inc' in all sessions:

- Pace – children complete the programme as quickly as possible
- Praise – children are praised for what they do well
- Purpose – each activity within the programme has a clear purpose
- Participation – all children take part in all of the lesson
- Passion – we model a love of reading and writing

Through using RWI, we ensure that books are closely matched to the children's increasing knowledge of decodable words and red words. As children re-read stories, their fluency increases, so children are asked to practice what they have learned at home also. Every child takes a copy of the text they have been reading within their phonics session plus another book from the scheme, which matches their phonic knowledge. All children also choose a reading for pleasure book which they share with adults both at home and in school.

Our early reading leader works closely with staff to support the delivery of phonics, ensuring our children are provided with the best quality delivery of the RWI sessions. All staff who are deployed to deliver the programme receive accredited training and are highly skilled in its delivery.

Team teaching, regular coaching and regular training takes place. The early reading leader meticulously undertakes assessment, tracks pupils' progress, and ensures that pupils are moving through the phonic stages at the expected pace. Children are regularly assessed for their knowledge of speed sounds, reading accuracy, and reading speed. They are then regrouped by the early reading leader, who works with the reading team to determine next steps for groups and identify any pupils needing 1-1 tutoring.

English Teaching Sequence at Gawber

Gawber's English curriculum is underpinned by a consistent, structured teaching sequence from Year 1 to Year 6. This sequence ensures that all children develop strong language comprehension, fluency and writing skills through high-quality texts and purposeful talk. Our approach is cumulative: children begin with oral rehearsal, vocabulary development and structured story engagement in KS1, before progressing to an oracy-rich, text-driven model for reading and writing in KS2.

EYFS and Key Stage 1: Talk Through Stories

Our youngest children follow a two-week teaching sequence that builds deep familiarity with a carefully chosen text. The sequence emphasises oral rehearsal, vocabulary development, comprehension and early sentence construction. It provides repeated encounters with the story, structured talk, and explicit teaching of Tier Two vocabulary.

Across Week 1, children explore the text through activities such as *context vocabulary checks*, *freeze-frame feelings*, *favourite phrases*, and *joining in the story*. They identify the problem and resolution, rehearse key language patterns, and engage in character discussion.

“Context vocabulary – quick check... Read the story... What’s the problem?” “Favourite phrases... Freeze frame feelings... Which is the right sentence?”

Week 2 focuses on applying understanding and practising early writing behaviours. Children revisit key vocabulary, discuss when phrases might be used, and rehearse dictated sentences. They build sentences, justify choices using *because*, and prepare for the next text through immersion.

“Dictated sentences... What’s the word? Because...”

Daily storytime and half-termly *Big Questions* ensure children experience rich language, develop inference skills, and practise respectful discussion.

This sequence ensures that children enter KS2 with strong foundations in oral language, vocabulary, comprehension and early composition.

Key Stage 2: Let’s Talk About English – An Oracy-Based Approach

From the end of Year 2 onwards, children follow *Let’s Talk About English*, an oracy-based reading and writing sequence designed for pupils who have progressed beyond foundational phonics. The sequence develops fluency, advanced vocabulary knowledge, deep comprehension and confident, purposeful writing.

The approach is structured but not lesson-bound; teachers use professional judgement to determine when pupils are ready to move to the next step.

The sequence includes:

- **Context Immersion** — activating prior knowledge through discussion and sensory experiences.
- **Three Teacher Reads** — modelling expressive reading and building understanding.
- **Partner Read** — developing fluency and feedback skills.
- **Context Vocabulary** — ensuring access to the text.
- **Structure Section** — analysing authorial choices.
- **Picture It** — connecting visual and written information.
- **Vocabulary Exploration** — deepening word knowledge.
- **Extract Analysis** — exploring meaning, structure and language.
- **The Toolkit** — identifying features of the text type.
- **The Unseen Text** — comparing texts to strengthen comprehension.
- **Checking Understanding** — debates, sorting tasks and applied comprehension.
- **Time to Teach** — explicit teaching of challenging writing elements.
- **Spellings in Context** — practising statutory spellings within meaningful text.
- **Hugging the Text** — creating new sentences using the model text.
- **Put it Back Together** — writing at length with feedback.
- **Modelling How to Edit** — teaching correctness, improvement and additions.
- **Planning** — preparing for independent writing.
- **Drafting, Editing, and Revising** — improving cohesion and accuracy.
- **The Final Write** — producing a polished piece for an audience.
- **BIG TALK** — philosophical discussion linked to the text.

This sequence ensures that pupils develop the fluency, comprehension and compositional control needed to write confidently for different audiences and purposes.

Poetry

At Gawber, poetry is a daily, deliberate and valued part of our English curriculum. Each year group follows a core set of poems and poets, carefully selected to ensure progression, breadth and rich exposure to language. Poetry is woven through our teaching sequences, our daily reading routines, and our wider curriculum so that children encounter poems that provoke thought, withstand repetition, and extend vocabulary.

Children hear and enjoy poetry every day. This consistent exposure—supported by Pie Corbett’s poetry spine and high-quality collections chosen for each year group—helps pupils develop a deep appreciation of language, rhythm and sound. The poems selected include those that elicit strong emotional responses, those that play with language, and those that connect to themes explored across the curriculum.

Across the school, poetry is used to strengthen fluency, intonation and expression. Each term, children learn and perform a poem. This expectation ensures that pupils develop confidence in speaking, listening and performing, while also deepening their understanding of rhythm, rhyme, vocabulary and phrasing.

Poetry is also embedded within our wider reading and writing curriculum. Daily poetry choices in each year group—from Valerie Bloom and Brian Bilston in Year 4 to Michael Rosen, Matt Goodfellow and Ted Hughes in Year 6—support vocabulary development and provide models of language that inspire children’s own writing.

In addition, poetry is used as a stimulus for writing across the school. Children encounter calligrams, narrative poetry, free verse, and performance poetry, and they use these forms to explore imagery, structure and voice. Poetry units and short writing opportunities (such as narrative poetry in Year 6 or calligrams in Year 3) help children understand how poets craft meaning and how they can apply these techniques in their own compositions.

Through this structured, progressive and joyful approach, poetry at Gawber develops children’s fluency, enriches their vocabulary, strengthens their comprehension, and nurtures a lifelong love of language.

Assessment in reading

Our early reading leader assesses phonics using the RWI assessment system. From this, children are grouped so that the teaching can be tailored towards the needs of our children. Once off the RWI programme, children continue to change their books regularly with assistance from adults. All children read with an adult in school, with this logged in a reading record to track how this is progressing. Pupils in all year groups who are behind age related expectations- particularly the lowest 20% - read more regularly than this with adults as defined in the school’s intervention planning. Dibel and YARC assessments are used across school by the reading team to determine the reading fluency, accuracy and comprehension age of the children, enabling staff to closely monitor those who may not be meeting age related expectations so that small step progress can be tracked. When children in upper key stage 2 are ready, they access formal comprehension SAT style papers. However, there is an expectation that staff use their expertise to formatively assess in each session and react appropriately depending on the needs of the children.

Progression in writing

Leaders have carefully mapped out the key knowledge required by the end of each year group so that staff have a clear understanding of what constitutes successful writing—not only at the end of each Key Stage, but at every stage of a child’s journey through school. This ensures that teachers know what ‘readiness’ for each year group looks like and can plan teaching that builds towards these expectations with precision.

In addition, leaders have identified the small steps within each year group that build securely on prior learning. Writing objectives have been sequenced and defined at three levels of accomplishment: *working towards the expected standard*, *working within the expected standard*, and *working at greater depth within the standard*. This structure enables staff to monitor progress closely, identify gaps swiftly, and support every child in moving confidently to the next stage of their development as a writer.

Leaders have also mapped out a clear progression in writing genres, ensuring that the purposes for writing are explicit and that knowledge of these purposes develops year on year. From the end of Key Stage 1, children who are secure in the key knowledge for Year 2 begin to explore these genres by writing for a given purpose. In EYFS and Year 1, where the focus is fluency and transcription, children are not expected to write for specific genres; instead, they encounter these purposes through reading and language comprehension sessions. These sessions provide rich opportunities to explore why writers write and how texts differ depending on their purpose.

By the end of Key Stage 2, we expect Gawber pupils to have developed a strong and secure understanding of how to write for different purposes and to meet at least age-related expectations in doing so. This knowledge equips them not only for the next stage of their education but for the wider world beyond primary school.

Our purposes for writing are:

- To entertain
- To inform
- To discuss
- To persuade
- To describe

Dictation

The use of dictated sentences features heavily in the RWI programme and so children are exposed to this method of teaching from EYFS. At Gawber, we firmly believe that dictation is a key process to use in helping children to understand how to compose sentences, whilst also allowing them the opportunity to focus on the key elements of sentence writing, avoiding cognitive overload.

The method of dictation is also used once the children have completed the RWI programme and is used across the curriculum when applicable. Children in KS2, who are not yet writing at age related expectations, may make use of dictation to aid their development in writing.

5-minute SPaG sessions

In KS2, as children begin to build their knowledge punctuation and grammar, 5-minute sessions deliberately designed to revisit this knowledge are taught daily. This allows teachers to check that children are retaining knowledge from their own and from previous year groups and plug and gaps in

knowledge that may emerge. Leaders have carefully mapped out this knowledge alongside staff so that all areas of the English curriculum are able to be monitored. Leaders have also provided teachers with examples and explanations of each area to ensure that there is consistency in the delivery.

Spellings

Children accessing the RWI programme learn spellings linked with the sounds/ words for the focus of their learning. Leaders have carefully mapped out the expectations of sounds, spelling patterns and key words for the whole school in a progression document that all staff use to ensure that children learn the sounds, spelling patterns and key words for their year group. Children no longer accessing RWI, access short spelling sessions that focus on a particular spelling pattern. They learn the rules of this pattern and take home a list of spellings to learn along with an explanation of the spelling rule. Children are tested on the words sent home but are also given a 'mystery spelling' where they are expected to demonstrate their knowledge of the spelling rule in an unfamiliar word. Staff are then able to establish if the child has managed to gain knowledge of the rule rather than just memorise a list. Children are also given key words from statutory spelling lists to learn regularly. These are available in the classroom for children to use in their independent writing across the curriculum.

Handwriting

At Gawber, we use Ruth Miskin's handwriting programme consistently across the school to ensure a clear, coherent and progressive approach to letter formation. This whole-school consistency means that children encounter the same language, routines and expectations from FS1 through to Year 6. The programme provides explicit teaching of correct starting points, letter orientation and formation, supporting children to develop automatic, fluent handwriting. In the early years, children build the motor skills and pre-writing patterns needed for secure formation, while older pupils apply accurate handwriting within increasingly complex writing tasks. By using one systematic approach, staff model high-quality handwriting daily and pupils develop confidence, accuracy and pride in their written presentation across all curriculum areas.

Assessment and Moderation

The RWI assessment process is adopted and used to assess the accuracy of transcription in EYFS and Year 1. By the end of Year 2, children begin to produce extended pieces of writing for assessment using the teacher assessment framework. Leaders have carefully mapped out a progression of assessment criteria for each year group adopting the Year 2 and Year 6 TAF as the model for this. All staff in KS2 use these criteria to assess their children after each writing unit. Staff are supported by the writing lead, who is the Lead Moderator for Barnsley Local Authority, in assessing accurately so that 'spotlight' children can be highlighted and intervention can take place quickly. The writing lead conducts moderation of each year group in the summer term to determine the accuracy of the writing gradings.

As Gawber Primary School is part of Barnsley Local Authority, it sees the benefit of being part of the LA moderation process and utilises the knowledge gained by the writing lead from Standards and Testing Agency training to constantly review assessment processes to ensure they are as accurate and effective as possible. Gawber works with other schools (from Barnsley LA as well as schools from other LAs) to standardise collaboratively.

Oracy

At Gawber, oracy is taught through a carefully mapped progression that ensures children develop confident, articulate and purposeful spoken language from EYFS to Year 6. The progression outlines how pupils build the skills needed for **partner talk, group talk, whole-class talk, performance, debate,** and **reading aloud**, with expectations increasing year on year. In EYFS, children learn to *"take turns*

when speaking... listen to what is being said and respond maintaining the same topic”, laying the foundations for respectful and reciprocal talk. By Year 2, pupils can “listen and respond... making simple comments and suggestions” and begin giving reasons for their ideas. As children move through Key Stage 2, they learn to build on others’ viewpoints, sustain arguments, adapt tone and style for different audiences, and participate in structured discussions. By Year 6, pupils can “present ideas coherently, supported with reasons... refer to the viewpoints of others... and counterbalance these with their own opinions”. This progression ensures that talk is not incidental but explicitly taught, practised and valued. It underpins reading comprehension, writing development, vocabulary acquisition and wider curriculum learning, enabling all children to become confident communicators who can express themselves clearly, listen actively and engage thoughtfully with others.

Use of Standard English

All staff endeavour to always use Standard English and accurate grammar in resources, their own speech and on classroom displays. It is vital that pupils are exposed to consistent use of Standard English and accurate grammar, to support the progress of literacy skills across the curriculum. Staff understand that they are able to correct themselves or each other to model correct Standard English in front of the children. Staff also endeavour to correct the children where necessary, maintaining high expectations in the use of SE across school.

SEND

Children with SEND are quickly identified at Gawber and School Focus Plans are put in place to support the needs of these children. Where a need regarding reading, writing or spoken language is identified, leaders are aware of the targets and work alongside the SENDCo to ensure these are relevant and achievable. Leaders provide support for staff in order to find ways in which to support children with SEND.

Agreed strategies to use for children with SEND in reading:

- Pedagogy and content adapted to suit the needs – children are assessed and grouped according to their ability – homogenous groupings
- Decodable books whilst on RWI then age-appropriate books
- For those working more than 2 years behind, adapted sequencing to plug earlier gaps
- Additional phonics teaching for the lowest 20% and any children needing additional support
- Pre reading of texts and vocabulary
- Less demand on written answers
- Use of multiple choice
- Children accessing reading electronically
- Using the same high-quality texts but shorter extracts to lower cognitive demand
- Daily one to one reading
- Focus on fluency
- Use of age-appropriate books
- Dyslexia friendly texts
- Scribe used where necessary to record responses
- Paired discussions of longer answers
- During whole class reading – select appropriate parts to read
- Inference groups as additional support
- Small group interventions
- Use of Kagan to support LA children (mixed ability groupings)
- Access to a C-Pen
- Use of coloured viewing strips when reading texts

- 1:1 support and helicopter support from adults when needed
- Story time and whole class reading – using high quality texts to allow pupils to experience texts and develop vocabulary beyond their reading ability
- RWI QR codes and website links sent home for lowest 20% to practise at home

Agreed strategies to use for children with SEND in writing:

- Pedagogy and content adapted to suit the needs
- Pre reading of any texts used
- Coloured paper/ dyslexia friendly texts/adapted font and lined paper
- Word cards to support writing sentences
- Spelling tables to help with HFW/ Common exception
- Vocabulary mats
- Grammar prompts
- Colourful semantics
- Word prompt sheets
- Key vocabulary displayed
- Differentiated by expectations not demand
- For those working more than 2 years behind, adapted sequencing to plug earlier gaps
- Removal of barriers to writing such as:
 - Matching activity*
 - Missing words*
 - Sticking activities*
 - Scribes*
 - Talking tins*
 - Angled writing boards and equipment such as pencil grips to support the physical aspect of writing*
- Differentiation by outcome
- Dictated sentences for those not able to compose fluently yet and need to focus on transcription
- Opportunities to orally rehearse
- Opportunities for peer support when editing and redrafting
- Visual prompts for sentence needs
- Assistive technology – iPad, laptop, etc.
- Manipulative to support writing – e.g. sticks for finger spaces
- Paired writing
- Use of Kagan to support LA children (mixed ability groupings)
- Reminders and writing prompts
- Tick and fix sentences
- 1:1 support and helicopter support from adults when needed
- Red words taught using red rhythms
- Emphasis on spelling using phonic knowledge – Fred Fingers and sentence structure
- Scaffolded prompts to support writing structure

English across the curriculum

At Gawber, we are keen to ensure that modelling a love of writing happens throughout the day, maintaining the same high standards in English across all curriculum areas. We equip our children with a strong command of the spoken and written word across all areas of the curriculum, encouraging our

children to understand how they can write effectively in all areas of learning. Strategies taught in our reading and writing lessons are then used when children read and write in other subjects.

We ensure that all children are provided with opportunities to widen their vocabulary and gain a secure knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language by integrating this across our curriculum. This then ensures that our children move onto the next stage of their education as competent writers, able to take on the challenges of secondary school subjects.

Extra-curricular activities are planned with the development of English in mind. For example, Debate club provides our children with the ability to become competent in the arts of speaking and listening, making formal presentations, demonstrating to others and participating in debate.

Children are provided with opportunities to celebrate when they have furthered their learning regarding the English curriculum, sharing stories they may have written at home with their peers in class for example. The school's 'Amazing Me' initiative is used to support this, as is the use of 'Children's University', where the school can monitor any clubs children may access that help further their English education.

Eventually, we aim for Gawber children to become adults who are able to write effectively for the jobs they dream of acquiring.

Marking and Editing

Across the school, children's work is live marked where possible so most marking takes place within the session. This way, we can give instant feedback to children. Dialogic and whole class feedback ensure children understand strengths and next steps.

The key knowledge document is used to aid the corrections made in the independent writing produced by children in both core and noncore subjects. There is an expectation that key spellings and punctuation are corrected in accordance with the ability of the child. Children are given opportunities to act on verbal and written feedback by editing their own work.