**English policy**

**Vision**

We believe that a strong foundation provided by a high-quality English curriculum will enable children to reach their potential in their formal education and as life-long learners. The ability to communicate effectively with others, to share feelings, ideas and experiences is key to giving young people the confidence to participate fully in society.

Cultural capital gives our pupils the vital background knowledge required to be informed and thoughtful members of our community. By the time they finish their Belle Vue journey, the children will have been exposed to a wide range of texts. The English curriculum is deliberately broad and ambitious (the class novel reading spine books have been chosen precisely *because* they are challenging texts). Not only will this develop their vocabulary and background knowledge – through both classic and contemporary stories, and non-fiction detailing other people, places and times - but will provide them with new ways of thinking about the world that they might not have otherwise encountered. This powerful knowledge raises cultural capital, opening doors that might otherwise have remained shut. We want Belle Vue children exposed to as many different texts as we can possibly fit in so that their knowledge and understanding of themselves, other people and the wider world constantly develops during their time with us.

Reading

**Intent**

At Belle Vue, we believe that reading is an essential life skill. Not only does it give children the chance to develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually, but it is key to successful learning across the curriculum during their school years, and as adults later in life. Without the ability to read fluently, children are likely to miss out on so many enriching opportunities. For this reason, our aim is not merely for all pupils to read fluently and with good understanding, but to understand the many benefits this will bring. It is our intention that Belle Vue children experience a rich and varied range of texts and, by the time they leave us, see books as both gateways to other worlds and as powerful sources of knowledge. Children are given a strong reading foundation in KS1 with a focus on phonics and decoding skills. This enables the children to successfully tackle a varied range of texts in different areas of the curriculum as they move through the school. Through regular exposure to high quality texts and explicit teaching, children will leave Belle Vue with a rich and extensive vocabulary.

**Implementation**

Through the broad reading curriculum we offer at Belle Vue, we aim not only for children to enjoy reading but also to ensure that, over time, they become better able to comprehend *other* texts in future and to do so increasingly independently. In order to achieve this, it is important that all children acquire a sound understanding of all texts read in class. We employ a number of strategies to ensure that this occurs:

* explicit vocabulary instruction (for both individual texts and the curriculum more generally)
* pre-loading of requisite background knowledge to maximise contextual understanding
* regular explication and summaries during the reading process

By ensuring the most efficient transfer of all that each text has to offer, our reading curriculum will strengthen/expand mental models of how texts and the world more generally work. Developing background knowledge through texts will in turn better equip children to access other texts in the future.

Traditional reading comprehension strategies (e.g. predicting and summarising, inferring etc) are only used in so far as they help make sense of each individual text and develop the experience of reading it, revealing how parts contribute to the whole.

In short, the aim of our reading lesson is not to assess the extent to which children have understood a text but to ensure that the children *have* understood it.

EYFS

In Nursery, the focus is on phase 1 of the phonics programme, which is primarily speaking and listening skills. Activities will include listening to environmental sounds, body percussion and rhyming. The characters from Monster Phonics are introduced using the new nursery scheme. In the summer term, there is a focus on phase 1 aspect 7oral blending and segmenting in preparation for entry into Reception in September.

In Reception, the children have a daily phonics lesson of 20-30 minutes using the Monster Phonics scheme. The children are also read to daily. The books chosen for these sessions might be chosen by author or topic. In addition to adult-led sessions, the children also have access during the day to books that they can read independently.

Once they can recognise the first few GPCs and can blend them to produce words, Reception children are allocated decodable books to read at home. In addition, children also take home a ‘reading for pleasure’ book, to be enjoyed with an adult, in order to develop their knowledge and love of stories.

KS1

In KS1, reading lessons take place five times a week (in addition to daily phonics lessons). Three of these lessons are spent practising decoding using books from the Monster Phonics scheme. For these sessions, children are grouped according to teacher assessment in phonics lessons and an adult supports each group to read the book. The other sessions are whole class reading lessons using The Teach Hub resources. Each text-based unit starts with a focus on vocabulary, supports phonics work and helps develop fluency through the use of echo reading, choral reading and partner reading, as well as providing questions to stimulate discussion and develop understanding. Although there are non-fiction titles included, the texts used are predominantly fiction, helping to develop our younger readers’ mental models of story structures while they grapple with learning to read.

KS2

In KS2, when, for the majority of children, the focus begins to shift from ‘learning to read’ to ‘reading to learn’, the range of texts broadens considerably. At this stage, there are five reading lessons per week: two based on the class novel and three based on extracts linked to the wider curriculum. Use of longer texts enables discussions about themes and character and plot development whereas the use of history/geography/science-based extracts reinforces learning in other subjects, develops background knowledge alongside knowledge of text structure.

In Y3, both class novel lessons have a fluency focus. From Y4 onwards, however, one of these two sessions switches to ‘close reading’. This involves the careful study and discussion of a part of the much larger text. Close reading lessons will also sometimes involve written responses to questions in addition to the more usual discussion.

Across KS2, lessons centred around curriculum-linked extracts have either a fluency focus or are ‘extended reading’ sessions, where the priority is for children to accumulate reading ‘miles’ and accrue the benefits of this : increased background knowledge, practise at decoding unfamiliar words, knowledge of text structure etc

Reading Spine

Across KS1 and 2, teachers select their story time or class novel books from a reading spine. Based on Doug Lemov’s ‘5 Plagues of Reading’, this list is comprised of books that challenge young readers in different ways, helping to extend their thinking while an adult is present to support their understanding. Teachers link these texts together for the children as they move through the school by referring to these five categories, reminding children of texts they have previously read and drawing out the similarities that connect them together e.g. use of archaic language or a non-linear structure.

Story/class novel time takes place daily, reflecting how crucial we believe that it is that children are exposed to and develop a sound understanding of a range of quality texts.

Reading at home

In line with current recommendations, children in KS1 have both a phonically decodable book (based on their phonics level) and a ‘reading for pleasure’ book that they take home. Parents are encouraged to record home reading experiences using a reading record.

In KS2, children choose a reading book from a ‘band of colour bands’ While this is based on their reading age as given by their most recent test score, they can select from a couple of bands above or below their ‘correct’ band, giving them far greater choice over what they read but retaining the class teacher’s ability to steer them towards an appropriately challenging read. A simple list kept by the class teacher allows staff to monitor their children’s reading but a reading record might also be used for those with reading difficulties.

SEN/support for struggling readers

We expect that the needs of most children will be met through quality first teaching in class. Where needed, additional support (in the form of scaffold materials and/or adult support) will be provided to ensure that all children are able to fully access reading lessons.

We have recently introduced a fluency intervention programme that runs alongside our whole-class fluency lessons. All children in KS2 are fluency assessed and those deemed to be more than 2 terms behind their chronological age are now being given extra support with fluency.

The children that fall into the lowest 20% nationally (as identified by a scaled score of 87 or below on NTS reading comprehension written tests) are assessed using the YARC tool to diagnose their specific area of need: reading speed, accuracy and/or comprehension. According to the outcomes of YARC screening, a targeted intervention program will then be set up, focusing on either reading accuracy or fluency, or more rarely, both. (Comprehension, we feel, is best addressed by quality first teaching if it is not caused by lack of fluency or phonics knowledge.)

**Impact**

Learning in reading will not be visible immediately. Instead, the accrual of skills and knowledge is a gradual process, with every successful encounter with a text creating or expanding mental models and, in so doing, leading to a better understanding of the next text.

As the most important aspect of a reading lesson is ensuring the children understand the text rather than assessing the extent to which they have understood the text, not all reading lessons involve written recording, especially with the youngest children. Teachers will be assessing both children’s fluency and understanding on a daily basis through listening to their reading and their responses in lessons.

Assessment

Reading is formally assessed termly using NTS written tests for Y1-Y6. Reports on test performance then suggest whether or not a child has reached age-related expectations. In addition to this, KS2 children are fluency assessed termly as we recognise that a lack of fluency can greatly impact understanding and will need to address this promptly.

In KS1, the staff complete reading records in every decodable books session, enabling them to build up a picture of each child as a reader.

Writing

**Intent**

We want all children to become confident and enthusiastic writers who have an appreciation of writing’s importance for education, communication, culture and entertainment. For this reason, it is our aim that each child develops the ability to write effectively for a range of different purposes and audiences. As they progress through the school, they will become increasingly aware of techniques that help them engage the reader. We hope that they will learn to love words and become confident to experiment with language, over time developing an understanding of the power of a highly developed vocabulary. As increasingly skilled writers, they will learn to adapt their language and style according to the purpose of the piece and its intended reader. A wide range of exciting opportunities to write, based on either inspiring, high-quality texts or links to the wider curriculum encourage imaginative responses, and help develop a love of the craft of writing. Strong transcription skills and a focus on the ability to structure pieces effectively, enable the children to capture their ideas accurately and shape them into final pieces they can be proud of, confident that the reader will enjoy their work.

**Implementation**

In EYFS, the initial focus is on developing the children’s physical readiness to write. Activities are designed to develop essential abilities such as eye tracking, spatial awareness, use of positional language, and fine and gross motor skills. Not only do adults model writing on a daily basis, but the children are immersed in writing with daily opportunities to write on both a large and small scale.

Across KS1 and 2, our writing curriculum gives equal time to fiction and non-fiction pieces, but the three-part structure of all units is very similar. We see the ability to construct a wide range of sentences as an essential part of being an effective writer and this is reflected in the structure of the units. In line with Rosenshine’s recommendations, the 1st and 2nd parts of the units are crucially important as they involve direct instruction, scaffolding and modelling of the writing process before the children begin to work more independently.

The writing curriculum

Cognitive science tells us that learning, which involves a change to long-term memory, requires the creation of interconnected knowledge webs called schema. In order for this to happen, children need to be able to assimilate new information into their existing schema and this happens more effectively when those connections to prior knowledge are made explicit. For this reason, text types are revisited across KS1 and 2, with the children encouraged to make links with previous units of work.

English is a subject that involves both ‘knowing’ and ‘doing’. The more technical aspects of writing - for instance, the ‘skill’ of constructing sentences effectively - requires procedural ‘doing’ knowledge that has a vertical structure. In drawing on such writing ‘skills’, we are still drawing on knowledge webs/schemas. It is knowledge gained through repetition and practice that results in English ‘skills’ such as sentence construction and effective word choice. Therefore, as children gradually gain knowledge, they become more skilful writers. These technical aspects are taught through direct instruction and practised as discrete skills in the 1st two weeks of a unit before being modelled in context during the ‘practising writing’ phase.

Each year group has a set of sentences that the children will be taught, and these get more demanding as the children move through the school. The 2nd section of each writing unit focuses on practising writing a full-length piece, using both the recently taught sentences and those from earlier units. In this way, the children are expected to regularly retrieve and use knowledge and sentences, keeping this information available to be brought into their working memories.

As an academic subject, English generally has a horizontal structure (unlike the vertical structure of maths, where certain underlying principles must be in place before new learning is appropriate). Through encountering many different examples of the same text type, and having these links made clear, children will form bigger and better schemas, i.e. they gain a deeper understanding over time of what each type of writing requires.

Curriculum time devoted to writing is shared equally between fiction and non-fiction from Y2-Y6. Fiction units are based on high quality texts and non-fiction units are linked with either the history, geography or science units the children study during the year. Not only does having to recall and combine this information for writing strengthen their schemas, it helps prepare them for the disciplinary literacy they will need in secondary school. In addition, using knowledge the children have already acquired from other curriculum areas allows them to focus on the writing itself without having to engage in lengthy research sessions.

Vocabulary

Although obviously of great importance in English, a significant part of our explicit vocabulary teaching does not take place in English lessons. Instead, we ensure we plan for children to encounter and develop a good understanding of tier 3 (subject specific) vocabulary in other curriculum areas. It is our belief that this, together with the broader background knowledge that supports it, will in turn improve children’s abilities to both read with good understanding and make more effective word choices when writing.

Within English lessons, but also across the curriculum, we develop children’s vocabulary through high quality talk in the classroom. In particular, we model the use of tier 2 vocabulary, with the intention that this will enable children to fully access lessons across all areas of the curriculum at Belle Vue and beyond.

Spelling lessons also aid vocabulary development as we focus not just on letter strings but also look at meaning, etymology and morphology, the intention being that children are then better able to access unfamiliar words independently in future.

Grammar, punctuation & spelling

Almost all of the grammar and punctuation content of the National Curriculum is taught via our sentence curriculum, but a small number of standalone lessons are needed to ensure complete coverage. Previously taught content will be revisited during starter activities and will also be used during shared writing.

In KS1, spelling is taught through our phonics scheme, Monster Phonics.

At Belle Vue, we also use a phonics-based approach to the teaching of spelling in KS2. The most common GPCs are taught in Reception and KS1, and KS2 then teach the more unusual ways of representing phonemes. Each week’s spelling lessons will focus on one phoneme but look at a variety of ways of representing the sound so that earlier GPCs are revisited and new GPCs are introduced. Teachers model segmenting words into syllables and then phonemes and ensuring that each phoneme is represented by the correct grapheme. Spelling words are revisited each day, with the more challenging words taught earlier in the week to allow for more opportunities to practise them and embed securely. Our spelling curriculum also includes morphology work so that children grow to understand how morphemes such as prefixes and suffixes alter the meaning of words. In order to help children more easily understand word meanings and acquire new words, etymology is also included in our spelling work.

At the end of the week’s teaching, children are tested on both these spelling words and previously taught ones. Records of their scores are kept and monitored.

\* We are currently running a whole-class spelling intervention across KS2 to plug gaps in code knowledge and develop segmenting skills to enable our children to tackle KS2 spelling words more successfully.

SEN/struggling spellers

We expect that the needs of most children will be met through quality first teaching in class. Adaptive teaching methods are used to support all children to access the sentence curriculum and to combine sentences to produce longer pieces. Where needed, additional adult support may be provided to ensure that all children are able to fully access writing lessons.

Children regularly scoring less than 75% on weekly spelling tests will be phonics-tested to identify gaps in code knowledge or segmenting issues. These children will then be given an appropriate spelling intervention and will focus either on words from our KS1 phonics programme or a version of our KS2 spelling programme that focuses on only one GPC at a time.

**Impact**

Because learning is a change to long-term memory, it is impossible to see impact in the short term (i.e. individual lessons.) However, if a child is able to demonstrate the sentence construction skills and knowledge at the end of a unit that they were unable to show at the start, then it is highly likely that their mental model of the text/genre has been developed and learning has taken place. This change should be visible over the course of a unit but certainly more so across the terms of a school year. Given that many writing genres will be encountered again and again across the school, the expectation is that the writing produced, although sharing some key features, shows increasing levels of skill and complexity as the children move through the year and the school.

Assessment & Marking

Teachers in both KS1 and 2 use a marking key to highlight errors in written work so that children can make corrections. This will include ‘secretarial’ errors such as spelling and punctuation problems, as well as issues with composition and effect. Once the teacher has reflected on the success of the lesson, common errors will then be addressed in whole-class feedback in the next lesson, or the planned sequence of learning might be modified accordingly.

Each piece of independent work produced is assessed against the relevant year group criteria for WT, EX or GD standards, with a judgement being made on every independent piece.

Speaking & Listening

**Intent**

At Belle Vue, we believe that children also need to acquire a strong command of spoken language. Speaking and listening skills are important not only for successful learning in school but also for the conversational skills of articulating their own feelings, opinions, and ideas and treating the views of others with respect and consideration.

The ability to tell stories effectively, capturing the interest and imagination of the audience, is very closely linked to their success as writers, relying as it does on rich vocabulary and knowledge of sentence structures. Opportunities to present and discuss their ideas with their peers will develop self-confidence, understanding of linguistic conventions and thinking skills through having to elaborate on, explain and defend their opinions.

**These three key areas of English are very closely intertwined, and it is our belief that an effective curriculum must recognise this.**

**Implementation -** under review

Our whole-school curriculum offers many opportunities for children to develop their speaking and listening skills. In reading lessons, poetry allows children to practise effective delivery, and discussions are often held in writing sessions about word choices and authorial intent. Many of our other subjects such as history, geography, science and R.E. provide opportunities for debates and presentations to form part of the lessons and/or end of unit assessments.

**Impact** - under review

**Leadership and management**

The subject leader’s role is to empower colleagues to teach English to a high standard and support staff in the following ways:

* By keeping staff up to date on current issues; disseminating relevant information and providing training for staff members (either directly or through other professionals).
* Leading by example by modelling lessons or styles of teaching.
* Having knowledge of the quality of subject provision across the school and using this to provide a coaching and mentoring role.
* Identifying and acting on development needs of staff members.
* Monitoring expectations, provision and attainment across the school and providing feedback to develop practice further in order to raise standards.
* Providing necessary equipment and maintaining it to a high standard.

**Monitoring and evaluation of subject**

English provision is monitored through:

* formal lesson observations by SLT
* learning walks/drop-ins by subject lead
* book trawls
* pupil voice
* data analysis