



English is at the heart of learning at Holmer Green Junior School. The study of English develops children's abilities to listen, speak, read and write for a wide range of purposes. It also equips them with language to be able to communicate their own ideas, views and feelings effectively: key skills in enabling them to live happy and fulfilled lives. Studying English allows children to express themselves creatively and imaginatively, as we encourage them to become enthusiastic, life-long readers.

We teach English to all children, whatever their ability. Teachers provide learning opportunities matched to the needs of the children in their class. They support pupils with barriers to their learning, taking into account the targets set for individual children from their Support Plans. Children who are more able are given work to challenge them. They have a designated 'challenge' section of books in the school library and teachers use a wider range of targeted questions to promote higher-order thinking to meet the needs of these children.

The aims of our curriculum are to:

- read easily, 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 in and 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

Speaking and listening

Speaking and listening are skills children are expected to practise daily at Holmer Green Junior School. Teachers regularly engage the children in class discussions through carefully targeted questions across all subjects. Our 'no hands up' approach ensures all children are encouraged to participate and they are taught how to speak confidently, clearly and expressively when it is their turn. One of our schools' Golden Rules is 'We listen to people'. Children are expected to listen to their teachers and peers throughout the day so they can understand what is being taught; respond and engage with the views of others; develop their own arguments and allow their own minds to be challenged and changed.

Drama is used as a vehicle in our school to support children's understanding of themes and concepts in many different subjects. We know it helps them to empathise with others and gives all children the confidence to speak in front of others by playing a character. In addition, drama gives children the chance to rehearse sentences before transferring them to the written form which leads to more effective pieces of writing.

Aside from daily experiences in class, children are given the opportunity to speak in front of larger audiences as part of organised school events such as Christmas productions and whole school assemblies. Speaking is also practised frequently using tools on the iPads to record the children's voices in a range of tasks.

Reading

Reading is a huge focus in our school as we know how important books are for a child's education, not just academically but also playing a large part in developing a child's social and emotional skills. Through reading, children have a chance to explore new places, meet new people and learn about our world, breaking free from the small bubbles they reside in. Reading can expand the mind and teach us tolerance, so all children are encouraged to read books from our 'Diversity' section in the library about a range of people who are living lives which might be different from their own.

We teach children that reading is fun and is a way in which we can take time out for ourselves, helping us to relax and forget about the pressures we sometimes feel around us. We can escape into other worlds or immerse ourselves in facts or even go back to the past! Every week, every class has a dedicated time to visit the library to spend a whole hour choosing and reading a book from our wide selection of fiction and non-fiction titles. Books are grouped into genres so that children have a chance to experience a range of themes and characters. Teachers enjoy reading to their class and children are able to talk about books they have enjoyed and make recommendations to others in their group.

We also celebrate our love of books each year on World Book Day, where children come in dressed as their favourite book characters and, in school, we plan lessons based around books and reading for the children to enjoy. In past years, we have invited authors to come and inspire our writers and we have enjoyed drama groups teaching the children about Shakespeare and telling his stories through theatre.

Reading nurtures creativity, fuels curiosity and sparks imagination. Children are inspired by what they read so we ensure that children have read books covering a range of themes and authors by the time they leave us. Every term, children study a different whole class text in our Guided Reading lessons with the intention of developing their fluency and comprehension skills, widening their vocabulary and developing their understanding of the structure and conventions of a range of text types.

Writing

A writing process

Before they even begin to write, our children are given exciting and interesting stimuli to help support their ideas and boost vocabulary ready for writing. These could include a colourful picture book, a video clip, a trip outside or a visiting author during World Book Week. Armed with creative ideas and information, children are taught to write for a range of purposes and audiences across Key Stage 2. As well as writing different types of stories and poems, children are asked to produce non-fiction texts such as instructions, persuasion, discussion and recounts.

Teachers are skilled at modelling effective writing for the children. They use their own ideas alongside carefully chosen examples from known authors to show children what effective writing looks like. Children explore key features of the chosen texts including what the purpose of the text is and who their audience (reader) might be. They may be asked to 'deconstruct' a text and formulate their own set of success criteria for their writing. All writing is planned beforehand: this helps children to structure their text correctly and make sure they have included everything.

Next, using a wide range of vocabulary with the support of dictionaries and thesauri, children learn to replicate the text type, constructing quality sentences and manipulating grammar and vocabulary to add detail and interest for the reader.

Throughout this process, children are frequently asked to edit or proof-read their work, checking for missing or incorrect punctuation and spelling errors. We also value redrafting as another skill crucial to the writing process. We explain that, even as adults, our first drafts are rarely perfect so they mustn't worry if there's aren't either! Redrafting and editing is completed in purple pen and children are encouraged to share their writing with their peers to help them to identify successes and targets for improvement.

Becoming a competent writer means being able to change and adapt our writing to suit a specific purpose. Therefore, we believe that giving children opportunities to write across our curriculum is essential to give them time to practise and develop the skills they have learnt in English lessons. This might be writing an explanation text in Science or a set of instructions in a Cooking lesson, for example.

Handwriting

Children are asked to join their letters using a 'Handwriting for Windows' (HfW) font. Teachers have access to a range of resources to teach the children the letter formations, including tracing sheets, handwriting paper and use of the font in Microsoft Word in order to produce tailor-made activities for handwriting tasks. Children are supported with:

- Daily handwriting practice in Years 3 and 4 in their English books. Children are taught handwriting explicitly during English lessons and linked to phonics and spelling where possible.
- Weekly handwriting practice in Years 5 and 6 in English books during English lessons. Cursive script is reinforced alongside other types such as printing for labels and a fast script for notes. Experimentation with personalised styles is encouraged with the aim of increasing speed whilst maintaining legibility.
- Teachers model handwriting using neat, joined-up cursive writing for all handwritten tasks including writing on the boards and marking in books.

Spelling and grammar

Spellings are given out weekly and are taken from the lists in the National Curriculum document. These cover one spelling pattern or rule per week and we also include several words from the commonly misspelled word lists. Spellings are practised at home but activities are also planned during school time in some English and Guided Reading lessons to embed new learning.

It is our intention to cover the teaching of grammar and punctuation within our English lessons as part of the writing process as explained above. However, often extra practice is needed and teachers can teach explicit grammar lessons or give children short tasks at the beginning of an English lesson to give the more confidence and a better understanding of grammatical terms and different types of punctuation.

