

Elmhurst Primary School's Literacy Intent Statement

Our Literacy curriculum provides a meaningful learning experience for all students. Split into the key disciplines of reading and writing, Elmhurst's Literacy curriculum offers all of our pupils high quality, research-based teaching; rigorous teaching of systematic synthetic phonics through RWI Phonics; explicit teaching of reading skills through a rich, broad range of texts with depth; the opportunity to develop a real love of reading; opportunities for developing oracy through high-quality talk throughout the school, discussion and debating; discrete teaching of spelling rules and spelling strategies; explicit teaching on the craft of writing and grammar for writing; and the opportunity to make use of sophisticated, cultivated writing skills and behaviours. This ensures that our pupils grow into highly proficient and accomplished readers and writers who enjoy both for pleasure.

Reading:

Early Reading

At Elmhurst we follow the RWI phonics programme and have been an RWI model school for well over a decade. RWI is a complete phonics programme with high quality training, assessment, intervention and resources (including decodable books). We train all new members of staff in the RWI approach and provide ongoing training and support for existing teachers through practice sessions and coaching. We carry out intervention to support pupils to 'keep up' with the programme. Comprehension is built into the programme with opportunities for pupils to discuss and reflect on the text, building literal retrieval and inference skills. Children's early independent reading is exclusively reading the RWI fully decodable books, ensuring that children are only asked to read books with sounds that they know. The structure of the RWI text means pupils read the text three times, allowing children to become familiar with the text and read it with increasing fluency. We ensure children have other authentic reading experiences through daily storytime, parent reading sessions and borrowing children's literature to read at home with parents.

Once pupils can read accurately and fluently, they move on from the RWI programme and the related decodable books. We do not use 'book bands' for children who are able to decode accurately and fluently. Instead the teacher supports the child to choose a book that matches their interests and reading ability (e.g. suitable length, appropriate themes etc).

Reading in Key Stage Two

Once children can read accurately and fluently (which we teach through RWI Phonics), we teach reading and writing as separate subjects. This way, reading teaching can be more refined and allow children to refine their specific reading skills to a high degree. Pupils at Elmhurst, through 'Take One Book' reading

lessons (produced by Just Imagine) study real books by famous or familiar authors that are carefully selected to challenge and engage the children whilst understanding where their reading needs and interests lie. In doing so, their reading stamina, interest and skills improve significantly.

As part of their reading lessons, pupils are explicitly taught core reading skills such as retrieval, inference, prediction, summarising, deciphering unfamiliar words and exploring the author's use of language and format. This allows them to access increasingly more ambitious reading materials beyond their expected reading level, imbuing them with the in-built skills they will need to access challenging texts in future years and adult life. Additionally, pupils spend reading lessons delving deeper into the characters, genres, contexts and themes of the books that they read. This enriches their reading experience, allowing them to understand the wider social, historical and literary roles books can play in our world - something that they are not always exposed to in our local context. Over time, as pupils are exposed to a wider range of texts, their independence in recognising links and connections between texts and the wider world improves greatly, ensuring that they are true readers, capable of carrying these skills into adulthood.

Reading for Pleasure

We believe that the best way to ensure that pupils achieve highly in English is to ensure that they become life-long engaged readers; children and staff at Elmhurst are enthusiastic readers and we endeavour to foster a love and passion for reading in our children from the outset. Our Reading for Pleasure offer is underpinned by the key principles of Teresa Cremin's Reading for Pleasure (Open University) pedagogy:

- 1) **Teachers' knowledge of children's literature and other texts** - Elmhurst teachers are well read on children's literature and engage brilliantly with book and author-related news, events and releases.
- 2) **Teachers' knowledge of children's reading practices** - At Elmhurst we recognise the importance of meeting children where they are in their reading practices and have adopted a range of strategies to support pupils with this. This is including but not limited to developing a more diverse book offer, listening to and absorbing the books and authors that our pupils most favour, discussing pupil reading habits through our termly reading surveys and engaging with parents on home reading.
- 3) **Reading for pleasure pedagogy** - to maintain a robust Reading for Pleasure offer, we include the four key practices required to keep children reading:
 - Social reading environments - We provide a multitude of opportunities for children to read socially, such as fostering informal book talk in class, library visits, author visits and special events like our annual 'Bedtime Stories' reading evening.
 - Reading aloud - We ensure that all children are read aloud to on a daily basis, both during our 3 - 3:15 pm storytime and our Reading lessons.
 - Independent reading - Pupils are heavily encouraged to read independently at home and are given the opportunity to read during registration times each day.
 - Informal book talk - Pupils have informal book talk modelled for them by teachers and opportunities for this are seized across the school day. Pupils can then emulate this in their own conversations, making for more meaningful reading.

- 4) **Reading Teachers: teachers who read and readers who teach** - Elmhurst teachers share and demonstrate their own healthy reading habits with classes to promote a high standard of reading behaviours in pupils.
- 5) **Reading communities** - at Elmhurst, pupils are provided with ample opportunities to engage in a range of reading communities - their class reading community, smaller communities of like-minded readers, and even the school-wide reading community. School-wide reading initiatives like KS2's Battle of the Books and KS1's Reading Challenge, for example, allow pupils to feel though they are part of a strong, nurturing community of readers.

Our unrivalled Reading for Pleasure culture highly enriches our pupils' reading experience and ensures that, in addition to the explicit and high quality teaching of reading skills, they are passionate, independent readers in their own right.

Writing

Writing in EYFS and Key Stage One

In EYFS and KS1, the children use their phonic knowledge to write simple words early on in their learning. The children write daily, rehearsing what they are going to write until they are confident to write independently. Writing opportunities are built into daily provision in EYFS, with pupils mark making and writing for a purpose across the curriculum. In KS1 and EYFS we aim to embed aspects of Writing for Pleasure pedagogy within RWI Phonics without compromising on our fidelity to the scheme and through writing in response to reading for those classes which move onto Take One Book texts in Year 2.

Writing in Key Stage Two

Once children can read accurately and fluently, we teach reading and writing as separate subjects. Teaching writing in Key Stage Two separately allows teachers and children to focus on the writing processes and writing skills. It prevents writing outcomes from being solely a response to reading and instead allows pupils the freedom to develop and use their own ideas without being overly constrained by the text they are reading.

Our approach to writing, in our 'Writing for Pleasure Centre' lessons, involves embedding a set of key writing behaviours that allow pupils to write truly independently, with the teacher acting more as the facilitator of writing rather than an instructor. We seek for pupils to self-regulate their own writing processes and to make their own choices as to when to move through these. Pupils are given the opportunity to write their own personal writing projects in which they develop their ability to select an audience, genre and topic to write of their own volition, promoting greater engagement and independence in their writing. Pupils are given daily opportunities for writing in which class teachers facilitate extended, meaningful independent writing time for 30 minutes. To further develop pupils as writers, teachers use this writing time to carry out 'conferences' with pupils - considered, 1-to-1 discussions between teacher and pupil in which bespoke advice is given and writing skills are discreetly taught. Pupils develop a strong awareness of the different purposes for which one might write and are taught over time how to write for a range of different audiences and how to adjust their writing for these different purposes. Additionally, pupils develop

a sophisticated knowledge of different writing genres, making for a more meaningful writing experience and higher quality work. The same genres are revisited each year, allowing pupils to make steady and supported progress in each genre over KS2.

Finally, our pupils further develop their maturity as writers by being active participants in a 'community of writers', in which they read, share, think and talk about their writing together. In doing so, they see themselves as truly worthy, accomplished writers whose ideas and written work are highly valued by their peers and teachers.

Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar

At Elmhurst, we recognise the importance of highly accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation in writing. To this end, we provide our pupils with a thorough, well-rounded SPAG curriculum that takes into account their EAL backgrounds.

Our grammar teaching follows two strands: teaching grammar for writing and discrete grammar teaching. We recognise the benefits of both approaches. When our pupils are taught grammatical skills for writing, the overall coherence, quality and precision of their writing improves drastically and allows them to communicate more effectively. We do also believe that in being taught the rules and conventions of grammar discretely, pupils can not only begin using these effectively in reading and writing but also gain greater cultural capital by having an in-depth understanding of grammar.

Spelling is taught through the RWI Phonics in the early years and Year 1. Once children move on from RWI Phonics, they follow the RWI Spelling scheme; this allows for real breadth and depth spelling coverage and provides pupils with the opportunity to not only understand spelling rules but to apply them in a relevant context. In becoming more accurate, confident spellers, Elmhurst pupils are able to write and read far more fluently.

Handwriting

At Elmhurst pupils are taught to write cursively, neatly and legibly, primarily through the use of the RWI and 'Letterjoin' schemes. We feel that handwriting is a fantastic way for pupils to show pride and care in their work; we aim for it to be an automatic process for pupils that does not interfere with pupils' thinking processes. As such, pupils leave Elmhurst recognise the benefits of having legible, speedy and stylistic handwriting to help them communicate clearly in writing, whilst feeling a true sense of achievement and pride.

Spoken Language and Communication:

Early Language Development

The Early Reading Framework highlights the importance of children’s early language development - “the number of words a child has heard and can speak by the age of three is a predictor of later language development, so these early vocabulary gains are critically important” (DfE, 2021). At Elmhurst, many pupils start school having primarily spoken another language at home. It is therefore even more important that we create a language rich environment for our pupils. We run three interventions specifically aimed at developing children’s vocabulary and ability to take part in discussions and express themselves: NELI; Talk through stories; and contingent talk.

The Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) is an evidence-based oral language intervention for children in Reception who show weakness in their oral language skills and therefore might be at risk of experiencing difficulty with reading. The focus is on teaching vocabulary, narrative skills, active listening and phonological awareness.

In Nursery and Reception focus children are identified to receive ‘contingent talk’ (or dialogic reading) intervention. The book is a prompt for discussion and the talk is child-led (the child is the “boss of the book”). The adult helps the child to become the storyteller, acting as the listener, questioner and audience for the child. The adult encourages the child’s participation, providing feedback and adjusting verbal interactions. All children in Year 1 and 2 participate in the Talk through Stories programme, developed by Ruth Miskin to grow children’s spoken vocabulary using real children’s literature. The teaching of vocabulary is based on Isabel Beck’s research, giving children multiple exposure to a word and allowing them to hear and say it in many different contexts.

Oracy - Debating & Speechmaking

At Elmhurst, we realise that reading and writing float on a sea of talk. As such, oracy is at the core of our literacy curriculum to ensure our pupils make the best possible progress. In the day-to-day life of the school, dialogic approaches are embedded in general classroom practice through the use of partner talk and well-planned and facilitated discussions. However, we also stretch our students beyond this with specific units on speechmaking and debating planned into every year of Key Stage Two. These schemes of study directly and purposefully teach public speaking skills, as well as giving all students the opportunity to stand up and speak in front of a crowd during their time with us, something which can be a formative experience for many.

