

Springwell School



English Policy

Last review: June 2026

Next review: June 2027

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Position: Assistant Head Teacher

Aims

English at Springwell aims to equip our pupils with the necessary literacy skills and tools to succeed to their full potential whilst developing a love for literature. Reading and writing is not exclusive to English lessons, and we encourage pupils to transfer these skills across their school day.

English is at the heart of our work at Springwell School. Our aim is for all our pupils to be heard and understood in every aspect of their lives and to have complete access to all subjects within the curriculum. We believe English has an important part to play in fulfilling this aim.

English is underpinned by robust phonics teaching delivered through Spring into Phonics and Read Write Inc (RWI). Spring into Phonics is an approach devised by the RWI Reading Leaders at Springwell to teach pupils the very early skills they need to be ready to move onto more formal phonics teaching. It is embedded across EYFS and continues through to Year 6 as part of the EYFS, Linking and Keystone curriculums. When pupils are ready, they move onto the systematic phonics approach of RWI. RWI was introduced to the school in 2020, it teaches and develops the knowledge and skills pupils need for reading, comprehension, spoken English, spelling, grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, composition, and handwriting.

In addition to formal RWI lessons, all pupils are given rich opportunities to experience and engage with a wide range of literature—including stories, poems, and non-fiction texts—through reading activities, Shared Attention sessions, Sensory Stories, massage stories and story retell sessions. . These experiences are designed to nurture curiosity, enjoyment, and a lifelong love of reading. Through quality teaching of English, we aim to ensure that all our pupils:

- Communicate their needs and feelings using communication aids such as Aided Language Boards, Communication books, PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System), photos, Makaton, switches, and approaches including Intensive Interaction, Shared Attention, and TAC PAC.
- Discriminate between different sounds — strengthening auditory awareness through activities that help pupils notice, compare, and respond to sounds in their environment, laying foundations for phonological development.
- Recognise and use symbols and print — developing familiarity with symbols, environmental print, and a range of reading genres, supporting pupils at all stages of communication.
- Develop an understanding of language — building awareness of how words carry meaning, exploring the semantics of vocabulary, and learning how language helps them make sense of the world.

- Engage with multi-sensory literacy experiences — using tactile, visual, auditory, and movement-based approaches to ensure all learners can access and enjoy English.
- Communicate through writing — whether through mark-making, using alternative tools and technology, or developing conventional writing skills, enabling pupils to express themselves in ways that are meaningful and accessible to them.
- Build confidence and independence — developing the communication and literacy skills needed to participate more fully in school life and the wider community.
- Access learning at their own level — through personalised, differentiated teaching that recognises each pupil's strengths, needs, and preferred ways of learning.
- Access the curriculum and resources, regardless of ethnicity, gender, class, or ability.

Procedures

Implementation

Our curriculum fulfils the requirements of the National Curriculum but is carefully adapted to meet the diverse and complex needs of our pupils. As all pupils are working below age-related expectations, learning objectives are selected according to each learner's developmental stage. Targets are informed by descriptors from the Holistic Assessment Framework, ensuring that teaching is matched to pupils' abilities rather than their chronological age or key stage.

To maintain consistency with the RWI approach, lessons are planned using the RWI handbooks that follow a clear and structured progression. Teachers adapt these sessions to ensure they are suitable and engaging for all pupils.

Read Write Inc reading books and writing activities are matched closely to the sounds that pupils know and are organised in stages from Red through to Grey. As a school we have a subscription to Oxford Owl; all teachers are provided with a login allowing them access to online versions of the RWI handbooks as well as online and printable resources to support the teaching of RWI.

Planning and Organisation

Pupils accessing the bridging curriculum have five English sessions a week. English is also integrated into other sessions within the timetable in addition to incidental learning opportunities.

Pupils accessing the EYFS and Keystone curricula develop early communication and literacy skills through a play-based, exploratory, and incidental learning approach. Communication and Spring into Phonics are embedded throughout the day, allowing pupils to learn in meaningful, motivating contexts that reflect their interests and developmental needs.

Pupils accessing the Linking and Bridging curricula receive five English sessions each week. Three of these sessions focus on phonics, supporting the development of early reading and sound-discrimination skills, while the remaining two sessions concentrate on writing and comprehension linking to a chosen story. In addition to these timetabled lessons, English is embedded throughout the wider curriculum, with communication, reading, and writing skills reinforced across other subjects and through incidental learning opportunities during the school day.

Story time is an opportunity for the whole class to share a meaningful story experience, regardless of the curriculum pathway they are working on. Teachers tailor story time to the needs, interests, and sensory preferences of their pupils, helping to foster engagement and a love of reading. Pupils access this through a whole class, small group or 1:1 approach. A key strategy used at Springwell is story retell and reading through Shared Attention, which enables pupils to revisit stories, build familiarity and develop early comprehension and communication skills through rhythm, rhyme, repetition, modelling, and joint engagement.

Phonics

Spring into Phonics is a research-informed pre-phonics programme designed to give children the foundational stepping stones for early reading and writing success. The programme is structured around the core building blocks of language and is divided into three progressive stages:

Pre-phonics, Early Phonics, and Phonics Ready. Together, these stages provide a clear, supportive pathway that prepares children to become fully phonics ready and begin their Read Write Inc. journey.

It is of paramount importance that all our pupils start their phonics learning with the best chance of succeeding and with a range of knowledge, skills and experiences that enable them to become literate. Spring into Phonics provides a clear, developmentally informed pathway that prepares pupils for phonics with a high likelihood of success. Many of our pupils have significant and atypical language development and start school with a vast range of literacy experiences. It is therefore vital that we provide rich, enabling experiences that encourage the pupils to engage in pre-phonics learning and support the development of the Building Blocks of Language'.

Spring into Phonics extends beyond the traditional focus on letters, sounds, reading and writing and places a strong focus on functional Communication, engagement, social interactions, and physical development, recognising these as vital precursors for phonics readiness.

Pupils working within the Early Years, Linking and Keystone Curriculums are provided with many opportunities to talk, listen, and engage in literacy practices that are developmentally

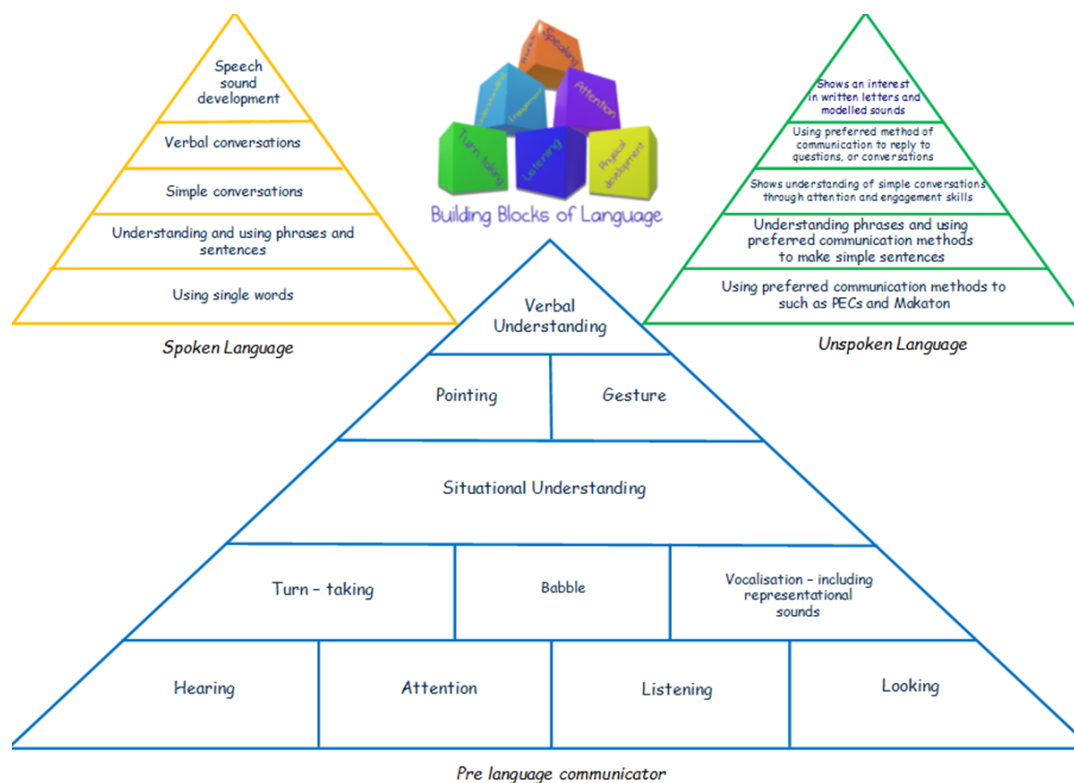
appropriate, purposeful, and meaningful. Our classrooms display and provide access to a variety of prints, symbols and literature that are suitable to the pupils' first language. The learning provides rich, sensory motor opportunities for pupils to build strong physical foundations and deep connections between their body and mind in preparation for later reading and writing practices.

We promote pupils' interest and awareness of early literacy and pre-phonics through Child-Initiated Learning and our Continuous Curriculum which is underpinned by the Characteristics of Effective Learning and schemas. (See Curriculum policy).

Practitioners play a key role in building trusting, positive relationships with both pupils and their parents to understand, provide, extend, and consolidate their literacy experiences.

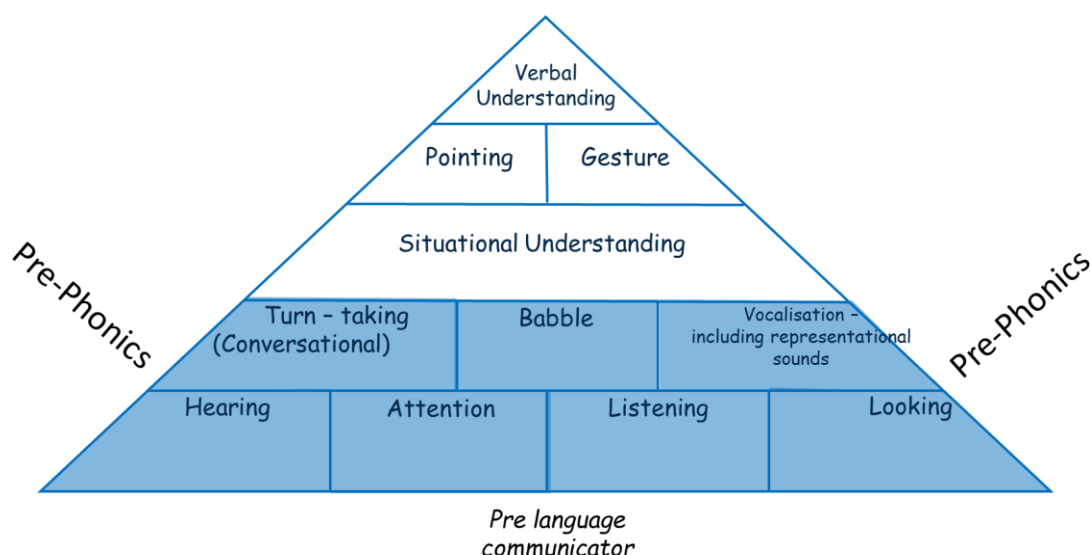
Building Blocks of Language

The Building Blocks of Language tool is used to assess pupils' current pre-phonetic skills and informs us where our children are best placed within our phonics system. Regular teacher assessments using the Building Blocks of Language demonstrate pupil progress through the pre-phonics skills. The Building Blocks of Language is widely used by Speech and Language Teams and is derived from Every Child a Talker (ECaT). Springwell has taken this model and adapted it to support our children's pre-phonics learning.



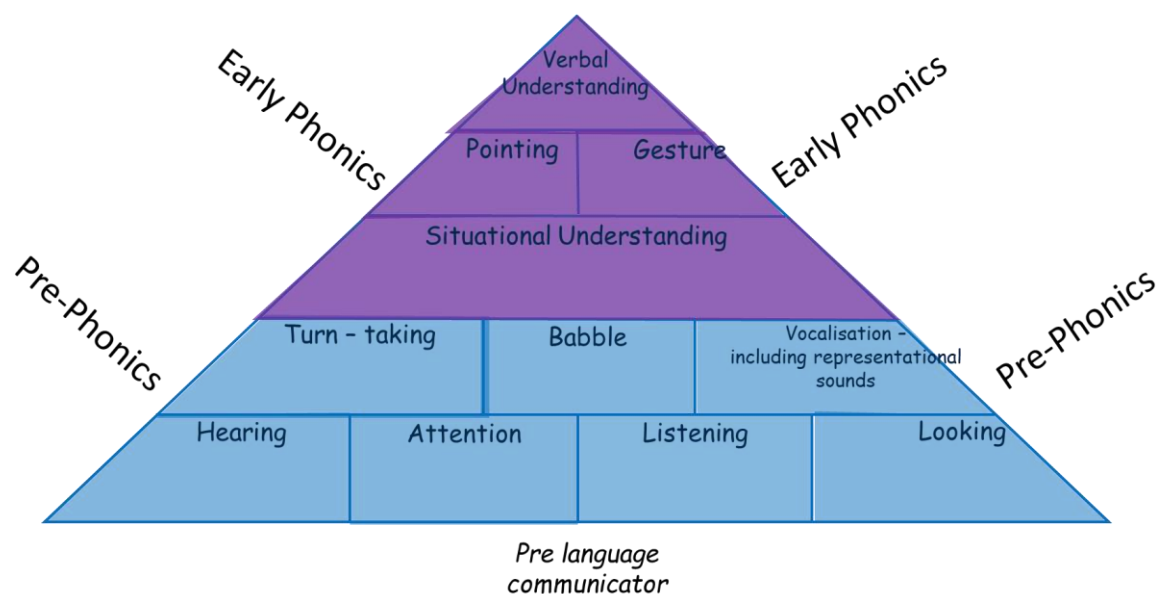
Pre-Phonics

Pre-phonics is the starting point of our children's phonics journey. Our children focus on skills needed for engagement, listening and attention, interaction. These skills run throughout. Children who are working on pre-phonics focus on pre-phonics activities that include Learning to Learn, which is embedded in our school daily practice.



Early Phonics

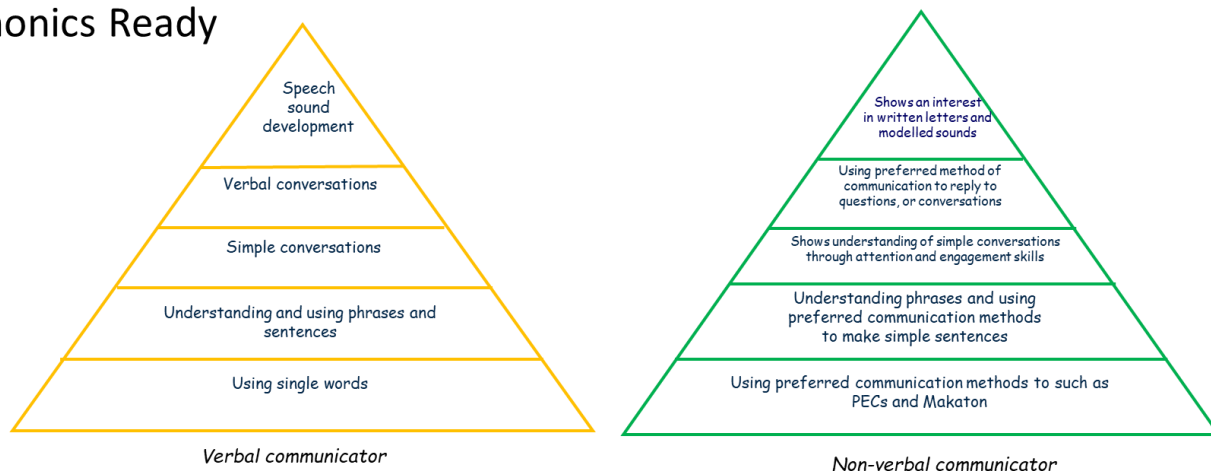
Early phonics builds upon and continues the pre-phonics skills. Children who are engaging in Early Phonics learn to develop skills in: environmental sounds; body percussion; mark making; initial letter sounds and alliteration; instrumental sounds; rhythm and rhyme; stories and stories retell; imaginary play; voice sounds; and fine motor activities. In addition to these, the pre-phonics activities are continued to further consolidate and strengthen the skills.



Phonics Ready

Phonics Ready builds upon all the skills acquired during Pre-Phonics and Early Phonics. It is the bridge between Spring into Phonics and the RWI programme. Phonics Ready is a combination of Early Phonics, RWI Nursery and RWI Phonics. Pupils working within the Phonics Ready stage of phonics are developing letter sound understanding as well as key skills needed to access the RWI programme.

Skills needed for Phonics Ready



Moving on to Read Write Inc

Our pupils learn to read and write effectively and quickly using the Read Write Inc. Phonics programme.

The aims of the Read Write Inc. Phonics programme are for pupils to: -

- Decode letter-sound correspondences quickly and effortlessly, using their phonic knowledge and skills.
- Read common exception words on sight.
- Understand what they read.
- Read aloud with fluency and expression.
- Write confidently, with a strong focus on vocabulary and grammar.
- Spell quickly and easily by segmenting the sounds in words.

The aim is for pupils to rapidly learn sounds phoneme-grapheme knowledge enabling them to recognise the sounds and the letters or letter groups that represent them. Where appropriate, pupils also engage in frequent practice regarding high-frequency words with irregular spellings, known as common exception words. We ensure that pupils read books

that are matched to their developing phonic knowledge, allowing them to experience early success and to build confidence in themselves as readers.

The school's shared vision is that every pupil has a love of reading and learns to read quickly and continues to read – widely and often (Appropriate to their developmental needs and stage of learning).

The Headteacher will work with the staff to ensure that this happens. They work closely with the English and Reading Leaders who monitor the quality of teaching and provide coaching for staff (teachers and teaching assistants).

A key element of Read Write Inc. is consistent whole-school practice, underpinned by appropriate professional development. All teachers and teaching assistants are trained to teach reading. Staff attend regular Phonics training.

Story Time

Each half term, each colour chooses a story book to focus on and break down the elements. This can be linked to the half termly topic to support planning and ability to access the story across various parts of the school day. The story may be adapted, shortened, or simplified to meet the needs of the pupils to allow for all pupils at Springwell to access it. At Springwell, it is important that our pupils understand and are exposed to all the areas of a story and language. The teaching of a story book is broken down into the following key elements:

- Warming up the book – During these sessions it is important to expose the pupils to the elements of the story. For example, 'Farmer Duck' - the teacher would spend 2 or 3 lessons looking at farms, ducks in a range of appropriate and engaging lesson. Therefore, it gives the pupils the understanding of the context of the book title and key language before being exposed to it.
- Front cover – The session would involve an exciting and meaningful exposure to the front cover (hidden in a box and revealed, building a puzzle together etc).
- Story re-tells – Teachers follow the re-tell approach of repeating each line 3 times, the first time just the teacher, second time supporting adults to join in and then the third time the pupils are encouraged to join in using their own communication methods. This lesson is repeated to support understanding and recognition of the story.
- If appropriate, pupils accessing the bridging curriculum can move onto ordering the story, commenting on events in the story and the character, creating alternative endings and book reviews.

The planning and implementation of these lessons are decided by the teacher based on the needs of the pupils in the class.

Reading Home learning

Pupils at Springwell are exposed to a range of texts and stories at school. Parents and carers are encouraged to share stories with the pupils at home; however, this is not compulsory nor an expectation. We promote 'reading for pleasure' and natural exposure to language and storytelling. Where appropriate and with the agreement with parents, Read Write Inc books are sent home for pupils to practice their reading fluency. These books are books the children have read in school and include sounds and words that the children have already been taught.

Speaking and Listening (Communication)

We recognise that communication is a fundamental skill in every child's development. Without it, children struggle to express themselves, engage with others and access learning effectively. The importance of storytelling and rich language experiences in building a pupils' vocabulary and communication skills is strongly supported by recent research. At Springwell we have drawn on EEF guidance to shape our English curriculum, ensuring that spoken language and high-quality stories sit at the heart of our approach.

Communication forms part of every lesson and social context within Springwell. Pupils are given the opportunity to comment and communicate using their own methods during each Phonics and Writing and Comprehension lesson.

Springwell is a communication rich environment which empowers all pupils to communicate across the school day, establishing meaningful and positive interactions. Every pupil has a voice, every voice is heard, valued, and understood. (See also Springwell Communication Charter).

Aided language boards, communication books, GRID app and Makaton are common communication aids in all classes. Our pupils with more complex communication difficulties may take part in Intensive Interaction. This aims to enhance a child's pre-verbal communication skills and ability to form relationships through an acceptance and understanding of a child's individual communication techniques. Pupils that are confident communicators will be enhancing their conversation, problem solving and active listening skills.

Narrative therapy is also used to enhance the children's speaking and listening skills. It is delivered in a small group and is structured to help to support children's comprehension of stories and develop expressive language skills.

Writing

We recognise that some pupils are not yet able to engage with the transcriptional elements of writing due to their developmental stage. These pupils use technology, symbols, and other supportive systems to construct sentences and express meaning.

Alongside this, they continue to explore the physical enjoyment of mark-making and tool use, while being immersed in a writing-rich environment that promotes language, storytelling, and early composition skills.

Physical development is a crucial part of early writing and is incorporated as a daily part of Springwell lessons.

Once pupils are ready to progress, they then follow the Read Write Inc writing and handwriting progression, which is closely linked to their phonics work. Pupils who have completed, or nearing the end of RWI will take part in daily writing – this may be discrete lessons to focus on key areas of SPAG or it may be a sequence of sessions to scaffold and develop ideas to create a more sustained piece of writing.

Write Dance

Write Dance is designed to teach children to write, it builds on their own emotions and natural movements, starting with children developing smooth and flowing movements in readiness to write beautifully shaped letters and numbers later.

At Springwell this provides an opportunity for our pupils to take part in a shared experience irrespective of the level they are working at – some children may use shaving foam, some may use chalks and blackboards, some may use pencils on paper. No mark made is wrong, no torn paper is bad, it is all about expression and feeling emotions and movement.

Stories, music and movement are all incorporated to build up a bank of movements in children's brains so that they become effortless. The steps move through:

- Story introduction
- Movement in your space
- Movements on a surface

Each step should be repeated so that children begin to feel confident and memorise what they are doing, allowing for more effortless and flowing movements.

Learning to Learn and Shared Attention

At Springwell, we use an approach to teaching and learning called Shared Attention. This approach promotes the principle that for children to listen and understand they need to build up their attention skills. During Shared Attention sessions, the lead adult delivers learning in a fun and engaging way using child friendly vocabulary and only key words and sentences. The other adults model listening to the lead adult within a distraction free environment. They only communicate to copy key words the lead adult has uttered or to show excitement about the activity taking place.

This approach has been so successful that we continue to use these basic principles in many lessons to promote the best possible atmosphere for communication. We call this a 'Learning to Learn Approach.' Other interventions, which promote communication through a Learning to Learn approach, are Intensive Interaction, TAC PAC and Waldon. All of these interventions use communication in a sensitive manner to enhance pupil's speaking listening, sensory and basic pre-maths skills.

English Across the Curriculum

We recognise how important it is for our pupils to experience their literacy skills repeatedly, not just in their English lessons. We encourage all teachers to ensure that they include opportunities to reinforce essential speaking and listening, communication, reading and writing skills in all their lessons.

Teaching approaches to encourage Literacy within all subjects include the following.

- The use of topic related words clearly explained and presented visually where needed.
- Opportunities to develop different writing styles.
- Cross curricular texts.
- The use of questioning, discussion and role play as appropriate to subject and ability.
- Literacy aids used within all subjects.

Assessment, Recording and Reporting

Assessment in English is in line with the school's assessment policy. All students have IEPs, EHCPs, Annual Reviews and an annual report to parents. Targets are regularly reviewed and updated. Phonic and reading records for all pupils are standardised and handwriting and compositional writing programmes are used according to individual need. All records are passed onto new class teachers to ensure consistency and continuation of skills.

Monitoring and Evaluation

All teachers meet termly with their Phase AHT to discuss pupil progress and IEP target. , The Curriculum and Assessment AHT then reviews the data and feeds back to Curriculum leads. Any concerns regarding English progress are discussed and the English leader may offer or implement, with the support of the Reading Leaders, individual pupil support or support for a particular group of pupils i.e. challenging behaviour.

Additional monitoring is undertaken by the English leader. This consists of half termly planning checks and a review of phonic and reading progress. We have a team of reading leaders across the school who can coach and model Spring into phonics and RWI programmes as well as providing whole school phonics training.

The Communication Lead is responsible for the speaking and listening aspects of literacy and works closely with the speech therapist.

English results are evaluated by the English leader and communication outcomes by the Communication leader, then reported to governors as part of the School Improvement Committee.

English work is moderated as part of an ongoing work scrutiny conducted by the middle leaders and supported by the curriculum and assessment AHT. Results are then shared with the English leader to provide further English actions. English lesson observations are an additional method of monitoring the quality of English around the school. This takes place through formal and informal observations conducted by the senior leadership team and the English leader. The focus of these observations often links to the School Improvement Plan.