St Thomas a Becket Reading Strategy

Our Vision

At St Thomas a Becket Primary School, we believe that reading is the key to learning, opportunity and lifelong enjoyment. We want every child to become a confident, fluent and enthusiastic reader who can access the full curriculum and participate successfully in the wider world.

Our approach is informed by the Simple View of Reading, recognising that skilled reading develops through both accurate word recognition and strong language comprehension. We teach reading through a carefully sequenced approach that develops decoding, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and reading for pleasure. Our reading curriculum is informed by the DfE Reading Framework, the Education Endowment Foundation's guidance on literacy, and the work of reading researchers and practitioners including Christopher Such.

Our aim is that all pupils leave St Thomas a Becket as fluent, knowledgeable and motivated readers who read both for purpose and pleasure.

Early Reading and Phonics

Children begin their reading journey in Nursery through the Essential Letters and Sounds Foundation Stage programme. Through daily teaching, children develop speaking and listening skills, phonological awareness, oral blending and a rich understanding of stories, rhymes and language.

In Reception and Year 1, children follow the Essential Letters and Sounds systematic synthetic phonics programme. Phonics is taught daily and pupils are provided with fully decodable books matched closely to their phonic knowledge. Re-reading is encouraged to develop accuracy, automaticity, confidence and fluency.

Children are taught to decode confidently and accurately before moving towards increasingly fluent and automatic reading.

Inclusion and Intervention

At St Thomas a Becket, we believe that every child can become a successful reader.

Pupils' progress is monitored regularly using Essential Letters and Sounds assessments alongside Phonics Tracker. These assessments are used to identify next steps in learning and to quickly identify pupils requiring additional support. This includes children who join the school throughout the year, ensuring that teaching and intervention are matched precisely to need from the point of entry.

Pupils with gaps in grapheme-phoneme correspondence knowledge or difficulties with blending receive targeted support using Essential Letters and Sounds assessment and intervention materials.

Children in the early stages of developing reading fluency may access the Essential Letters and Sounds Progress Intervention, which supports the development of accuracy, automaticity and confidence.

For pupils in Key Stage 2 who are reading slightly below age-related expectations, we use the Herts for Learning Reading Fluency Project. Through repeated reading, modelled reading and structured discussion, pupils develop fluency, prosody and comprehension, enabling them to access increasingly challenging texts successfully.

Interventions are reviewed regularly and adapted according to pupil progress. Our aim is always to provide the right support at the right time so that pupils can participate fully in high-quality whole-class reading lessons.

Reading Fluency

Reading fluency sits at the heart of our reading curriculum and acts as the bridge between decoding and comprehension.

Once children move beyond the early stages of reading, fluency continues to be explicitly taught and developed through daily reading instruction. Across the school, pupils regularly engage in:

- teacher modelled reading
- echo reading
- choral reading
- partner reading
- repeated reading
- performance reading

Pupils revisit texts over a sequence of lessons to develop accuracy, automaticity, expression, phrasing and understanding. By reducing the effort required to decode individual words, pupils are able to focus their attention on meaning, interpretation and enjoyment.

Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary is taught explicitly throughout the reading curriculum.

High-quality texts expose pupils to rich and ambitious language. Teachers carefully select vocabulary for direct instruction and provide opportunities for pupils to discuss, revisit and apply new language.

As pupils progress through the school, they learn to:

- explain the meaning of unfamiliar words
- use context to support understanding
- explore prefixes, suffixes and root words
- understand how authors' language choices create meaning and effect
- discuss figurative language and shades of meaning
- evaluate vocabulary choices across a range of texts

Vocabulary development is viewed as fundamental to reading comprehension and wider academic success.

Comprehension

Comprehension is taught explicitly through high-quality texts, discussion and teacher modelling.

Pupils are taught to:

- retrieve information
- summarise key ideas
- make and justify inferences
- predict using evidence
- analyse characters and themes
- explain authorial choices
- compare texts and viewpoints
- evaluate and justify opinions

Teachers model the thinking processes of expert readers through discussion and think-aloud strategies before gradually releasing responsibility to pupils.

Questioning is carefully planned to ensure pupils develop a secure understanding of a range of comprehension skills and are able to engage deeply with increasingly complex texts.

Whole Text Curriculum

Reading is primarily taught through high-quality whole texts.

Each class follows a carefully planned reading curriculum built around ambitious novels, poetry and non-fiction texts. These texts have been selected to provide rich vocabulary, literary quality, cultural diversity and opportunities for meaningful discussion.

Pupils revisit texts across a sequence of lessons, allowing them to build understanding of characters, themes, authorial intent and wider concepts. This approach supports reading stamina and helps pupils develop a deeper understanding than can often be achieved through isolated extracts alone.

Alongside core texts, pupils encounter carefully selected extracts, poetry and non-fiction texts that broaden their reading experience and strengthen links with the wider curriculum.

Reading for Pleasure

We believe that children become lifelong readers when they experience the enjoyment, challenge and wonder of great books.

Each class takes part in a weekly Book Club session. These sessions provide opportunities for pupils to discuss books, recommend titles, explore authors and develop their identities as readers.

Teachers regularly read aloud to pupils, exposing them to texts beyond their independent reading level and fostering a positive reading culture across the school.

Every classroom promotes reading through carefully chosen texts and opportunities for informal book talk. Pupils are encouraged to explore different genres, authors and interests as they develop their own reading preferences.

Reading at Home

Reading is a shared partnership between school and home.

Children learning to decode take home a fully decodable reading book matched to their phonic knowledge alongside a Reading for Pleasure book to share with family members.

Once pupils have moved beyond decodable books, they continue to take home an appropriate independent reading book alongside a Reading for Pleasure text chosen according to their interests and preferences.

Families are encouraged to enjoy books together, discuss stories and support the development of positive reading habits.

Reading Culture

Reading is visible and celebrated throughout the school.

All classes have dedicated reading spaces which encourage browsing, discussion and independent reading. Each class also follows a carefully designed reading spine, ensuring pupils encounter a broad range of high-quality authors, genres and voices throughout their time at St Thomas a Becket.

Children participate in community reading opportunities, reading events, book discussions and celebrations that promote reading as a shared and valued experience.

Staff actively model positive reading habits through recommendations, discussion and enthusiasm for books, helping pupils to see reading as both a source of knowledge and a source of enjoyment.

Outcomes

By the time pupils leave St Thomas a Becket Primary School, they will:

- read fluently, accurately and confidently
- possess a broad and ambitious vocabulary
- understand and evaluate increasingly complex texts
- discuss books thoughtfully and respectfully
- read widely across genres, authors and themes
- use reading to learn, explore and understand the world
- read for pleasure and see themselves as readers

Above all, we want every child to leave St Thomas a Becket as a confident, capable and lifelong reader.