

Curriculum Overview

English: Reading

Our approach

‘Books are the quietest and most constant of friends; they are the most accessible and wisest of counsellors, and the most patient of teachers’. -Charles W. Eliot-

At La Fontaine Academy, we believe that reading is the foundation of successful learning and knowledge. As such, we are committed to developing our children as readers, fostering a lifelong love of books and preparing them for reading throughout their primary school life and beyond. Building the key skills of decoding, spelling, grammar, comprehension and fluency are the foci of our reading curriculum, alongside encouraging children to develop a personal relationship with literature from an early age.

We know that the right match of reading ability and text complexity facilitates a greater desire to read and a greater degree of comprehension. Thus, our reading curriculum is driven by a canon of culturally, historically and contextually diverse books, curated by the school, to suit the needs of our children. We have ensured that these texts are both challenging and accessible for children at La Fontaine. Our hope is that through exploring this vast range of literature, they will develop a love and appreciation of reading which will stay with them for life.

The four ideas of our close reading approach are taken from Doug Lemov and Coleen Drigg’s ‘Reading Reconsidered’. These are:

1. Read challenging texts.
2. Close read, rigorously and intentionally.
3. Read more non-fiction effectively.
4. Write more effectively in direct response to texts.

Reading begins in the Foundation Stage through sharing well-known books, traditional tales and culturally rich stories. Children are encouraged to ‘learn’ stories orally, preparing them for their journey as readers throughout the school and later on in life. Children take part in daily phonics lessons in EYFS and KS1 to ensure a smooth progression towards fluency. As they make their way through KS1 and KS2, they also take part in daily whole-class close reading lessons, which focus on reading fluency, prosody and understanding the text.

At La Fontaine, we build the bridge between children’s reading and writing using nine elements of writing (inspired by Jane Considine’s approach set out in ‘The Write Stuff’). These elements provide a practical hook for pupils to discuss their reading and shape the content of their sentence-level writing – ensuring a breadth and depth of ideas.

Research shows that the difference in reading ability between a child who reads for pleasure for an average of 30 minutes a day, and those who never read, is more than a year. Therefore, we aim to consistently promote ‘Reading for Pleasure’ in our school. We do this by providing space and time

during the week for children to select their own choice of reading book from a carefully curated selection, with adult input when appropriate, and give them the chance to engage in conversations about the books they are reading.

Our systematic approach to reading enables children to become confident, fluent and independent readers who have clear understanding and the ability to use these transferable skills across the wider curriculum to access their learning.

We do this by:

- Choosing high quality texts as a strong base for whole-class reading;
- Ensuring daily phonics lessons in EYFS and KS1 using 'Sounds Write' – a systematic approach;
- Continuing 'Sounds Write' phonics lessons into KS2 three times a week;
- Providing daily whole-class reading lessons for all children from Year 1 to Year 6;
- Modelling 'Reading for Pleasure' as teachers and consistently encouraging 'Book Talk' to foster a love of reading at home.

Our reason for taking this approach

We have chosen this approach to reading, as there is compelling research that shows how vital it is that children be inspired to read for pleasure. A report from the Department for Education suggests that there is a positive relationship between reading frequency, reading enjoyment and attainment. Furthermore, OECD's 2002 report found that reading enjoyment is *even more* predictive of educational success than familial socio-economic status.

Through the selection of high-quality books, children are exposed to texts significantly beyond their independent reading ability – increasing their vocabulary and level of understanding. Rigorous and intentional close-reading sessions, including text dependent questioning, enable children to make good progress in fluency, prosody and comprehension. During these lessons teachers model effective prosody; this explicit modelling of expression, emphasis, intonation, volume, speed and movement is essential to support children in their comprehension of some of the subtleties of more challenging literature.

Daily whole-class reading also develops listening stamina. There are a growing number of stimuli vying for children's attention in the world today, and the stamina required to sit and listen attentively is something that needs to be nurtured in school in order for children to become life-long readers and prepare them for further study.

Evidence suggests that children who read for enjoyment every day not only perform better in reading tests than those who do not, but also develop a broader vocabulary, increased general knowledge and empathy and a better understanding of other cultures. A child's reading skills are essential to their success in school, as they will allow them to access the breadth of the curriculum and improve their communication and language skills. Finally, reading can be a fun and imaginative time for children, which opens doors to all kinds of new worlds.