‘Achieving the best for Newtown children by getting the basics right’



How we teach Reading, Writing, Maths and Speaking and Listening at Newtown

Getting the basics right matters a lot at Newtown. We believe that ensuring all children make the best progress in Reading, Writing, Maths and Speaking and Listening allows them to make the most of all the opportunities that our curriculum and life in our school has on offer.

This information explains how we approach teaching children these basics. We hope it helps you understand the key ways in which we work as a school, and how you as parent can best support your child’s learning within these essential areas.

We also hope that by reading this information you will understand how ambitious we are for your child, how we want to see them achieve in all areas during their time at Newtown, and how we want them to fully enjoy all of their learning.

Achieving in Reading at Newtown









How we teach Reading

Reading is central to the curriculum at Newtown. If a child cannot read fluently and with understanding, they will not achieve as well as they should in other subjects. They will also miss out on a crucial life skill that is one of the most enjoyable past times both adults and children can have. For these reasons we place great emphasis on how we teach reading at Newtown. When it comes to successfully learning how to read, we have clear expectations for staff and children, and for how parents can support their child developing as a reader.

In the Early Years and Key Stage 1

We focus carefully on teaching the children the basic skills of reading fluently, by helping them develop ways of breaking words down into parts and then blending these parts together. This is often known as 'Phonics'.

We use a well-known and very successful scheme called **Read Write Inc**, to teach the children reading daily.

The children also have a story session each day, where they begin to develop a deeper understanding of what they read. This is when they develop important comprehension skills.

We were the first school in Wiltshire gain the prestigious Read Write Inc. badge. This is in recognition of the improvements we have made with young children's reading.

The children's attainment by the end of Year 1 when their phonic knowledge is assessed is significantly above the national average. This has been the case at Newtown for many years.

In Key Stage 2

We build on the children's early reading success through daily guided reading lessons for every child.

Daily, children are taught comprehension skills that help them understand what they are reading at a deeper level.

Through thoughtful teacher questioning, the children also learn how to verbally explain their understanding of what they are reading.

The skills we focus on teaching are:

- retrieving information from texts,
- inferring meaning – we can think of this as reading between the lines!
- developing the range of vocabulary that children use,
- finding similarities and contrasts within and between texts,
- being able to summarise what they have read.

How we make Reading exciting and motivating for the children

We use exciting and engaging texts to help bring all areas of the curriculum to life. Our topic learning is always linked to well-known and well-loved books by the best current and the best classic authors.

Every classroom is stocked with high quality books by classic and contemporary authors. We use these books to motivate, engage and challenge all children. These books are part of the home reading programme; **The 100 Club**

We use key events such as World Book Day to celebrate a love of reading.

Stories are frequently used within our assemblies programme to help bring meaning to personal development. For examples stories such as The Storm Whale being used to introduce children to concept of being a displaced person; Giraffe's Can't Dance to look at the impact of bullying; or Monkey Puzzle to help children understand how family structures are similar and different.

How we assess phonics and reading

Phonics is assessed by the teacher each day and children move through the scheme each short term in response to the progress they are making.

From Year 2 onward, we assess children's reading skills daily in guided sessions, through well thought out questioning. Each term children complete a short assessment task.

This assessment information is used to help teachers plan learning that will meet the needs of all children, helping them make the best possible progress.

How we help children who find reading difficult

We use phonics intervention groups for children who have gaps in their reading knowledge.

When we identify a child who has significant gaps in their reading knowledge, they will receive 1:1 or small group reading intervention. Where this is the case, it is carefully planned, so that children still experience a broad, rich and engaging curriculum.

Teachers plan reading comprehension questions that are appropriate for the ability of all the children in their class.

How parents can help their children with Reading

At school we teach the children the skills they need to read fluently and to understand what they are reading. Reading at home gives the children the vital practice they need to become confident with these skills.

Reading with your child and practicing their phonics, at home each day, will make a huge difference to their progress.

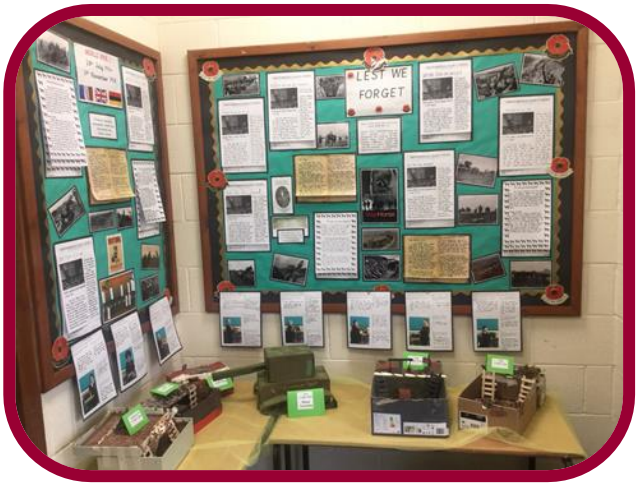
The school makes sure that every child has a high quality and suitable reading book to take home every single day.

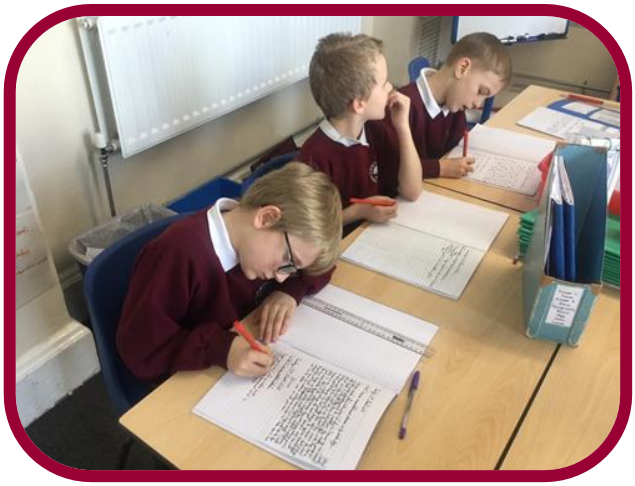
How we celebrate Reading

We have a home reading reward scheme known as 'The 100 Club'. The children are highly motivated by this and always look forward to achieving their certificates and receiving their prizes from the '100 Club' treasure tin.

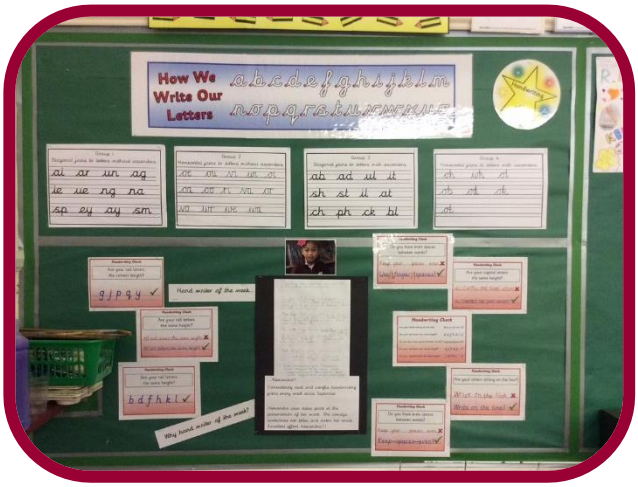
We have visiting performances of well know stories such as Treasure Island, The Railway Children and Charlotte's Web. We always celebrate 'World Book Day'. Not only do the children dress up wonderfully, so do the staff!

Achieving in Writing at Newtown









How we teach Writing

Writing is central to the curriculum at Newtown. Whether using a pencil, pen or a computer, writing is an essential skill for children to learn. It allows them to share their understanding, show off their creativity and to communicate for a purpose.

In the Early Years and Key Stage 1

From the point children enter Newtown they learn to write. In the Early Years this is through directed and independent opportunities for mark making. In well thought out role play areas such as; the café, garage and even the rocket, children have many opportunities to practice and develop their mark making into clear writing.

As they move into KS1 the children learn writing in a more structured way. They write almost daily and are given the opportunity to write at length about engaging and purposeful subjects weekly.

At KS1 children are encouraged to apply their phonic reading knowledge to help them spell and write successfully.

The children have regular opportunities to produce beautiful final pieces. We call this publishing. The displays in our school tell the story of how proud our children are of their written work.

Handwriting is an important skill because it helps children with spelling and writing fluency. From an early age we place a great emphasis on developing correct letter formation. This then leads children to developing a joined style by the time they move through Year 2.

In Key Stage 2

By the time children enter KS2, most will have become secure writers. The teaching now focuses on the different purposes for writing. We teach children how to analyse different types of writing, how to plan, draft

and edit their writing and how to use self-assessment to publish high quality final pieces, that they can be extremely proud of.

Understanding spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPAG) becomes an increasingly important part of child's writing development in KS2. We have short daily SPAG lessons that support these areas, alongside daily Writing lessons.

The children have daily spelling tasks, which they complete when they arrive at school in the morning.

How we make Writing exciting and motivating for the children

From an early age, children at Newtown use their writing skills in many different areas of the curriculum. This gives real purpose to their writing. We also ensure through our book and topic choices that children write about subjects that are engaging, of interest to them and fit in with other areas of learning.

How we assess Writing

Teachers use their daily marking to understand how well children are developing as writers. This marking lets children know what they have done well and also gives them points to improve in their work. This is a very important part of learning and helps children become successful independent learners.

Teachers also keep records of how well the children progressing. This means they can plan learning that will meet the needs of all children, so they can make the best possible progress.

How we help children who find Writing difficult

Teachers use the environment and resources to support children. They might do this through having sentence starters and important words displayed on the working walls, as well as giving children access to key word mats on their desks.

We use writing resources specifically designed to develop children's basic writing skills. These are part of our Read Write Inc. approach.

The teacher's marking supports children understanding clearly how to develop their writing.

How parents can help their children with Writing

Children bring home daily spelling tasks. Helping your child complete these will make a big difference to how well can use their spelling skills in their writing.

Being able to read well is one of the most important parts of being able to write well. Reading with your child and practicing their phonics, at home each day, will make a huge difference to their writing progress.

How we celebrate Writing

Brilliant displays and the children's celebraion books showcase their excellent writing skills.

Through our celebration assemblies we regularly focus on writing.

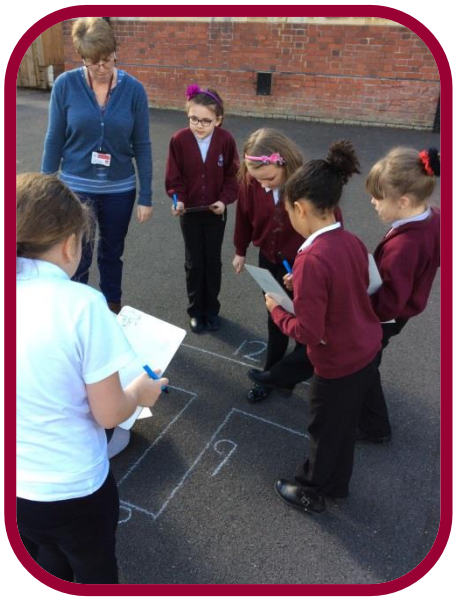
Handwriter of the week displays in each class celebrate children who have shown effort and improvement with their handwriting.

We have class Showcases where parents and families are asked to come and share in the children's learning.

Achieving in Maths at Newtown









How we teach Maths

Maths is central to the curriculum at Newtown. This is because most of us, children and adults, will use some type of Maths every single day. Using money in a shop, measuring materials when you are doing DIY, working out how far you may need to travel using a map, working out the time of a train using a timetable and the 24-hour clock or even measuring ingredients, so you can make your teacher their favourite cake! The need for maths is everywhere.

In the Early Years and Key Stage 1

Maths is taught daily as soon as children start in Reception. They learn maths skills through play and through direct teaching. Children are given opportunities to explore maths ideas and problem solving through role play and teacher directed activities using resources such as Numicon. The children are well prepared for their move into Key Stage 1, where there is a strong focus on securing the basic number understanding that is the foundation for their future Maths learning. Problem solving runs throughout all year groups helping children see the purpose of their maths learning and use it in real life situations.

In Key Stage 2

Children in Key Stage 2 continue to develop their Maths skills. They are challenged to understand concepts and ideas at a greater depth. Alongside learning basic ideas, they apply their learning in more complex situations. Children regularly start lessons with a problem they cannot solve, using this as a platform to learn the skills that will see them succeed.

Each day the children have a session separate from the Maths lesson to consolidate and extend basic maths ideas linked to times tables, place value and number bonds. This helps keep these basic but essential ideas at the front of children's minds. Without this routine practice, many of the other Maths ideas would be hard to achieve for the children.

How we make Maths exciting and motivating for the children

Wherever possible, we incorporate Maths skills into other areas of learning within the curriculum. This might be through ideas such as symmetry in Art, measuring in cooking or using graphs to understand science learning.

This is an important part of how we organise our curriculum. Children seeing the purpose of Maths throughout the curriculum is one of the best ways to motivate and excite them.

How we assess Maths

Teachers use formative assessment before teaching children news maths concepts or building on ones they know already. Formative assessment means using a small number of questions each week to find out what children already know. We do this so teachers can plan carefully and adapt teaching to take into account what children are already confident with and any gaps in children's knowledge.

The teachers use their marking to assess children's progress whilst also setting them next steps in learning. They also use a small number of assessment questions each week to help understand what skills children are already confident with and which skills will need more practice and development.

We also track children's progress termly. This helps us make decisions about children's learning e.g. whether an intervention may be necessary.

How we help children who find Maths difficult

Teachers make sure that weekly planning provides for all ability levels within their classes. The environment and access to resources such as learning walls, number squares and number lines, provide children who may find maths difficult with ways to develop and work independently. Teachers also provide precise feedback to support children throughout a lesson.

Children sometimes have gaps in their learning. This can make progress difficult for them. We provide daily maths interventions for children for whom this may be the case. These interventions are for a short period of time, generally about 6 weeks. They are tightly focussed and have clear outcomes for what children should achieve by the end of the intervention.

How parents can help their children with Maths

Knowing their times tables and number facts is crucial to children being able to make good progress in Maths. The children have regular work linked to both these that they bring home as part of our homework policy.

Parental support with this type of homework can make a huge difference to a child's progress.

How we celebrate Maths

Children's work is of a very good standard and through our celebration assemblies we regularly focus on Maths.

Class Showcases where parents and families are asked to come and share in the children's learning.

We also use visitors to come in and inspire children about Maths, such as through our Maths Day, where a maths expert came in and ran fun problem-solving workshops with the children.

Achieving in Speaking and Listening at Newtown









How we teach Speaking and Listening

Speaking and Listening are central to the curriculum at Newtown. Being able to speak clearly and listen carefully are important life skills to learn. We encourage children to think as much about how they speak and listen, as we do about how they use their Reading, Writing and Maths skills.

To be able to speak and listen well in school and at home plays a crucial part in children developing as independent learners. Children are expected to speak using full sentences, to be able to listen carefully to each other's' responses and to use words and phrases that are appropriate to the purpose for which they are talking and the subject which they are learning within.

Across the whole school we use a spoken language progression. We call this our **Top Talkers, Top Writers** approach. This is an extensive collection of sentence structures which help children develop their spoken language, allowing them to speak clearly and confidently for a range of purposes. These sentence structures are referred to during lessons by teachers and children are expected to use them when responding to questions and talking to each other.

At Newtown almost half of the children speak another language besides English. This is one of the reasons we focus carefully on helping children develop spoken language. When children speak clearly and in full sentences, it makes a huge difference to other areas of their learning, in particular Writing.

How we make Speaking and Listening exciting and motivating for the children

To develop speaking and listening skills, children need opportunity, purpose and confidence. Here are some examples of how we do this in school.

Through key subjects such as reading, children are given opportunity to read aloud, answer questions and discuss books with their class mates.

Teachers also use important classroom strategies such as partner talk and focussed group work so children have the chance to use their language skills when thinking and talking about learning.

Singing is one of the most important ways to develop speaking and listening, as well developing musical skills. Children in our school have weekly singing lessons from a professional singing coach.

We organise playtimes so that children have a wide range of opportunities to use and develop their speaking and listening skills.

Opportunities to join in with assemblies and performances give purpose and develop confidence.

How we help children who find Speaking and Listening difficult

Some children find speaking and listening tricky. To support with this we have specialist foreign language teaching assistants, who speak some of the languages that many of the children at Newtown speak. This helps these children develop their knowledge of English, so they can learn successfully.

We have intervention groups to help build the confidence and skills children need to communicate successfully with other children and adults. This includes our super 'Foodies' cooking group.

When a child has complex speech and language needs we work closely with Wiltshire speech and language service to ensure we effectively meet these needs.

How parents can help their children with Speaking and Listening

One of the best ways to develop your child's speaking and listening is to talk with them often and ask them questions.

You can do this by:

- Asking your child to explain their homework to you.
- Sitting around a dining table for your evening meal chatting.
- Reading with your child every night.

If you read with your child as often as possible and take the time to ask questions, your child's language and the words they know and use will develop very well. It is also a very enjoyable thing to do.

How we celebrate Speaking and Listening

Having a termly focuses on different sentence structures and celebrating the children for using them successfully, not only improves and shares the children's thinking, but also reminds the children how important these skills are.

We have weekly achievement assemblies where we often focus on children's spoken language.

In reception **Top Talker** awards are used to celebrate the children's spoken language.