

English Subject Leader Report 2023-2024

Merstone School English – Intent and Implementation	
Intent	<p>Our intent is simple, to provide pupils with an engaging, supportive and progressive curriculum that is suitable and adapted to meet individual needs. We aim to support pupils to achieve their maximum potential and develop skills that will support them in later life. Taking into consideration each individual pupil and his or her needs, we will provide a progressive and suitable programme of English education. At Merstone School we have developed a bespoke curriculum that aims to support learners who will develop a love for reading, literacy skills and communication skills for later life. We have established a rich, relevant and purposeful educational experience that allows us to develop the whole child and meet the needs and interests of individual pupils. Our curriculum is tailored by our approach and support to pupil's needs and this provides learning that has local, national and international dimensions. Our curriculum supports pupils to build on their learning, progressively supporting them to achieve which is celebrated however big or small. We support learners to experience, engage with and develop interests in a broad and balanced curriculum from ages 2 – 19 alongside their peers and staff who are excellent role models at all times, both as individuals and as avid readers!</p>
Implementation	<p>How English looks across our school...</p> <p>At Merstone School English is an essential part of the curriculum. It is a part of every subject and area of learning. The teaching of English enables effective communication to take place. Through the development of our pupils' confidence and communication skills we are giving them the broadest, deepest and richest experience of life they can possibly have. Merstone follows recommendations from the National Curriculum for English and has adapted this document to meet the needs of our pupils. We believe that it is important to promote a positive attitude towards English amongst all our pupils in order to develop self-confidence and a sense of achievement, celebrating success in English, and adopting a total communication and child centred approach to learning where pupils have access to their own means of communication including PECS and AAC throughout the day.</p> <p>The teaching of English, as a discreet subject, covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reading (For more information see Reading and Phonics at Merstone School)• Writing<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Composition: through organisation of ideas and events, vocabulary and sequencing skills- Planning and Drafting: developing and using strategies to aid their planning and organisation of their writing- Punctuation: Use and understanding of simple punctuation- Spelling: patterns, strings, letter sounds and sound-symbol relationship• Speaking and Listening<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Developing skills in listening to others- Helping to sustain concentration

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- Asking questions
- Taking into account their listeners needs

In particular, English offers pupils with learning difficulties opportunities to:

- develop the ability to respond, to listen and to understand
interact and communicate effectively with others in a range of social situations
- make choices, obtain information, question and be actively involved in decision making
- develop creativity and imagination
- have access to a wide range of literature to enrich and broaden their experience.

Language and communication skills are essential for *all* our pupils and we recognise that the skills developed in English promote learning across the curriculum. We aim for our pupils to be able to express themselves creatively and imaginatively, and to communicate effectively both verbally and non-verbally with others in a range of social situations, appropriate to their levels and needs. In addition to this, a pupils' individual pupil Educational Health care plans (EHCs) may result in a dedicated programme of work used to address identified targets which are also reinforced where possible across the school day. Staff are trained in the use of a range of strategies including PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System), Makaton, Colourful Semantics, intensive interaction, shared attention strategies and the use of various electronic communication aids including switches and iPads. Throughout the day a range of alternative communication methods are used to support and encourage speech and language development. These are not used in isolation and a pupil may use several of these methods. These include PECS symbols, communication aids, Makaton, signing, communication books, objects or reference, AAC devices and on-body signing.

Merstone's English curriculum follows the National Curriculum requirements differentiated to the needs of our pupils and includes Communication (Speaking, Listening), Reading and Writing. Communication skills are key and pervade our curriculum through non-verbal methods (intensive interaction, objects of reference, photographs, pictures, symbols, Makaton signing) in addition to verbal speaking and listening skills. Visual clues support pupils' understanding. Individual and small group sessions are planned to suit individual pupils.

Our Early Years team are dedicated to inspiring our young people and encouraging our pupils to have a love for books and to be competent communicators from an early age. We focus on developing communication

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skills throughout our learning, supporting pupils through a TOTAL communication approach to develop their ability to engage and respond to the world around them. Fun, enjoyment and learning through play creates an environment where books are used to as a gateway to a world of imagination where experiences lead our learning and knowledge. Our Early Years provision is skilfully structured, allowing students to access daily social, academic and communication intervention which targets the needs of each individual. Close links are made with the other classes, particularly our Moonstones class, allowing pupils to prepare for transition into a new learning environment.

In the Ruby and Topaz departments pupils experience multi-sensory storytelling at a greater depth, encouraging their engagement in literature in a way that is accessible to their needs. English and reading is delivered in small groups or on an individual basis, focusing on early communication skills, interaction and engagement. Lessons are delivered as part of a wider thematic approach. Pupils participate in lessons including sensory stories, communication, intensive interaction to develop their communication and early literacy skills.

In our Emerald and Sapphire departments, pupils have a more formal approach to English and reading, with lessons planned and delivered focusing on the development of particular English skills. In our primary classes these will also present with a multi-sensory dynamic as pupils begin their educational journeys in a more structured way than previously in the EYFS department. Pupils will engage in individual or small group reading activities as well as whole class activities using a focal text for the term.

When pupils enter our Diamonds department we place a lot of emphasis on preparing our young people for adulthood. Pupils will continue to take part in focused English lessons each week. Much of our English lessons in our Diamonds department will encourage pupils to use their English skills to develop their independence skills at an academic level which is appropriate for each individual pupil. Pupils will also take part in a range of external maths qualifications such as ASDAN life skills challenges, ASDAN Towards Independence modules and pupils working between pre entry and entry level 3 will also work towards their Ascentis examinations. When pupils reach key stage 5 they are no longer subject to the expectations of the National Curriculum but they continue to focus on a broad range of subjects including maths. This is to ensure that our students leave school at 19 years of age being as independent as possible in order to move on to the next stage of their life. Activities in the Diamonds department therefore reflect the age and changing needs of our students. This means that the curriculum is based on the teaching of functional skills with the aim of students being able to generalise and apply these in as many everyday contexts and in as many practical ways within the community as possible.

Reading and Phonics at Merstone School Reading is a complex skill with many components. At Merstone School we focus on the importance of laying firm

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foundations in this crucial area of the curriculum and apply a consistent, whole school approach to the teaching of reading, encouraging children to use a variety of strategies in their pursuit of meaning and taking into account individual skills and needs. Our aim is for all children to enjoy reading experiences at whatever level they are working at. For some children this will be to experience objects related to texts, stories and poems, others will develop the skills needed to be learners who read confidently and independently.

Phonics

Throughout lower school the Jolly Phonics scheme is used to support pupils working at a formal reading level, delivered through songs and actions this teaching strategy provides pupils with high levels of engaging multisensory systems. Cued articulation (which is a set of hand cues for teaching the individual sounds in a word) may also be used alongside this to support those who are not yet able to verbally create sounds, supporting the tangible “feel” of a sound, encouraging and supporting pupils’ production of phonetic sounds. Jolly Phonics continues to be used in smaller more tailored groups to support the reading skills of particular pupils in the Secondary Phase of the school who may need further support in reading, decoding and understanding written words.

As the students’ progress further through their school careers so will their progress with their Phonics (if suitable) will also be supported to develop the necessary skills to access the environment and local community, this will be through practical / real life activities but also modules such as community skills. The staff team are aware of students’ individual learning and social needs and aim to provide their entitlement in an accessible and personalised way.

Reading

Our aim is for all children to enjoy reading experiences at whatever level they are working at. For some children this will be to experience objects related to texts, stories and poems, others will develop the skills needed to be learners who read confidently and independently.

The school aims to:

- To develop happy, healthy and curious learners who read confidently and independently
- To begin to develop lifelong enjoyment and pleasure in reading
- To enable children to access all areas of the curriculum
- To enable children to access, understand and begin to manage information
- To begin to understand the meaning of what is read to them and what they read
- To begin to respond to what they read; to say whether they like or don’t like it and why
- To begin to understand and respond to the feelings that words can arouse in us like happiness, sadness, anger
- To link on object to an experience or familiar place
- To experience objects related to texts, stories and poems

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Where appropriate every day each child will be engaged in

- Planned speaking, listening, reading and writing activities which allow them to explore and practice their pre reading skills, phonic knowledge, blending and segmenting skills
- Opportunities within continuous provision to develop pre reading and reading skills independently
- An interactive multi-sensory phonics session (Letters and Sounds)
- Shared reading and/or writing led by the teacher to demonstrate reading and writing strategies (including phonics) in a meaningful way

Through our differentiated provision all children have opportunities to enjoy reading at their own level. For some this will be through sensory stories with objects and experiences which help develop their awareness and understanding. For others it will be through a structured approach following the levels in Jolly Phonics to help them develop knowledge of phonics, segmenting and decoding sounds to understand the written word. For pupils that are unlikely to become confident readers of words there will be a greater emphasis on functional reading. This includes teaching pupils to recognise social sight vocabulary and symbols (name, days, and places of importance) as well as 'reading' using symbols.

Synthetic phonics:

We support the children's application of phonics through their reading by using the Jolly Phonics. Reading scheme. Synthetic phonics reading is taught initially by pupils learning all of the sounds from the 7 groups alongside a whole word approach is used to teach 'tricky words' which are not phonetically plausible or where a phonic approach is not best suited to an individual pupil. The levelled Jolly Phonics reading scheme is used for pupils once all sounds have been established, which allows pupils to read books using skills with phonics, pictures, patterned language, whole words and their own experiences.

Extension Reading Scheme (Dandelion Readers):

We have an extension reading scheme available for pupils who may remain working within a particular level of the synthetic scheme for a significant amount of time, or as an alternative for pupils who have learned to sight read words rather than to decode using synthetic phonics. There is a wider range of books within this scheme therefore it also provides opportunities for consolidating reading skills and texts which are more age appropriate for some of our older pupils.

Merstone Symbol Reading Scheme:

Merstone school have created our own symbolised reading scheme for our pupils who require the support of symbols to aid their reading.

The books in this scheme are organised according to word level, the first 45 high frequency words and use resources from the Symbols

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Making sense symbolised reading books, Footlights 45 and Zed 45 words and Zed phase 2 and 3 words symbolised books created by Widgit.

The Merstone symbol reading scheme includes Makaton signing and comprehension sheets to ensure pupils' have a secure knowledge of not only being able to "read" a symbol, but to also understand the content of the book and therefore be able to read for meaning and purpose.

The scheme is used as an alternative for the school Jolly Phonics synthetic phonics based scheme, and accessed by pupils who are not yet able to develop their reading through text alone. Extension symbolised texts are available for pupils who complete the scheme but are unable to move onto text only stories.

At Merstone, we believe that all pupils should have access to and develop "reading for pleasure". All classrooms have a designated reading area within their classroom or in an alternative daily accessible location such as the school library bus. We have a fantastic library bus, which is situated in our Secondary Playground. Pupils are able to select books to read for pleasure including Sensory stories and Books Beyond Words to ensure that pupils have a variety of ways to access stories and are able to develop a love for reading and sharing stories.

Fine motor skills/ Writing

Throughout the school we thrive ourselves on supporting students in the developments of fine motor skills and the coordination of small muscle movements in such areas as the fingers and hands. These movements often operate in coordination with the eyes. Our staff team encourage and develop these skills through sensory experiences as well as supporting students to use scissors, write, fasten clothing, hold utensils, and to complete activities that require left to right task orientation. The task we provide will be built into the day to day routines as well as lessons as we believe practice is so important for developing proficiency with these tasks.

Additional...

All pupils are given the opportunity to take part in class and whole school productions such as Shakespeare, The Merstone Christmas Production and more.

English is a focus for celebrations throughout the school year with pupils taking part in different events such as whole school Poetry day and World Book day.

Pupils in the Ruby department take part in weekly Open Theatre session to develop engagement and interaction skills.

The diversity bookshelf provides a monthly focus on themes and authors to encourage pupils to engage with a wider range of texts that cover PSED themes alongside literature and promote positive role models which pupils can relate to from a range of cultures, ethnicities, religions and genders.

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	<p>These books are accessible through the school day/week and can also be used by classes during their superhero reading time.</p> <p>Students in upper school are also provided with the opportunity to study ASDAN modules. This qualification links to the many key areas of our curriculum including English, and students can gain a qualification for completing modules throughout the ASDAN course.</p>
Impact	<p>EYFS- Through Communication and Language, Understanding, Speaking, writing and reading pupils develop skills that they build upon and continue to develop as they move into Key Stage 1. Establishing expressive and communications systems for all pupils are key in developing individual pupils' ability to engage with and interact in not only educational progress but also the world around them. This is reflected in end of EYFS summative data where communication is a strength.</p> <p>KS1- KS4- Through KS1 to KS4 pupils are developing their reading, writing and speaking and listening skills. They are focusing on the school's reading schemes that are relevant to them and a variety of strategies and approaches are used to personalise and support pupil's individualised needs. Weekly 4 English lessons take place as a minimum and may be labelled, literacy, reading, writing, PECS, intensive interaction, Makaton, Drama, speaking and listening or communication. Each class teacher ensures that their approaches are tailored specifically to the needs of the pupils in their class and most require various approaches to ensure all pupils needs are met</p> <p>KS5- Literacy is covered through functional literacy making each lesson bespoke and tailored to life skills that are needed for when pupils leave school. Reading, writing, Intensive interaction and communication are focused on depending on needs and levels of attainment. Pupils continue in this key stage to work towards their ASDAN qualification which supports pupils to develop their literacy and communication skills</p>

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English Data

See additional information sheet

Analysis of Data

Sensory

Six classes had four or more students following the sensory curriculum (Ps1 to Ps3) and all classes met or exceeded the targets set. Two classes – C1g (Joanne Coulter) and C3b (Sam Wright) – had exceptional results with these students. Sensory curriculum delivery is a real strength of the school and teachers that have excelled have been given the opportunity to apply those skills in sensory specific classes – Joanne leading our nursery provision and Sam working with our PMLD students.

English

All but one strands were strong with the strongest being the writing composition strand, followed by the reading comprehension strand. The strength of the reading strand is in part due the emphasis on daily guided and independent reading throughout the year. There was also a more focused approach to developing writing skills. Whilst continuing to develop all areas of English, The focus for development this year is Speaking (Communication) as the lowest scoring strand. The school is renewing its commitment to total communication and devices such as eye gaze and communication methods such as Makaton will have an enhanced status and use in school. For Listening skills, targets were generally met, but did not excel as other strands had, except in class C3g taught by Michelle Witherspoon. The classes with exceptional overall performance in English was class 2b, taught by Keeley Elkin who had no weaker strands, followed by class C4 taught by Lisa McCuskey.

If you walk into English lessons at Merstone School, you will see:

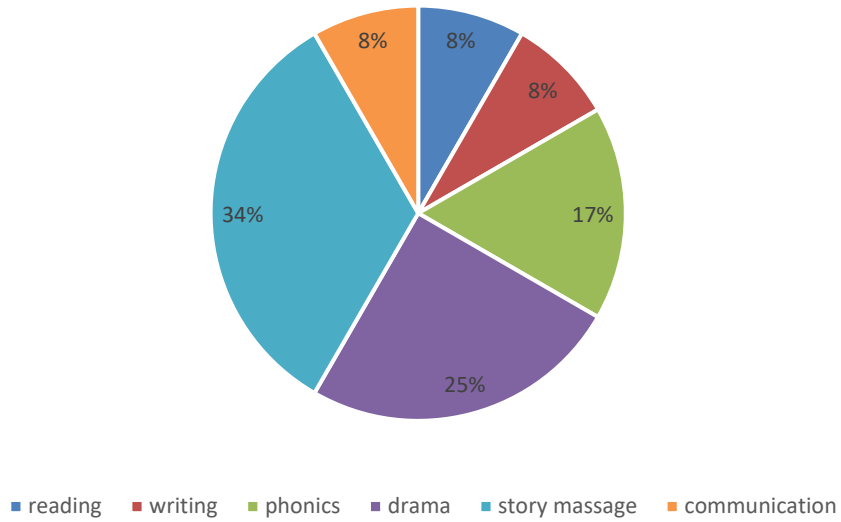
- ✓ Pupils engaged, participating and offered to join in with a variety of English activities
- ✓ Pupils developing their individual communication skills
- ✓ Tailored and differentiated English activities to pupil's needs and levels of understanding
- ✓ Literacy rich environments where pupils develop a love for stories and reading.

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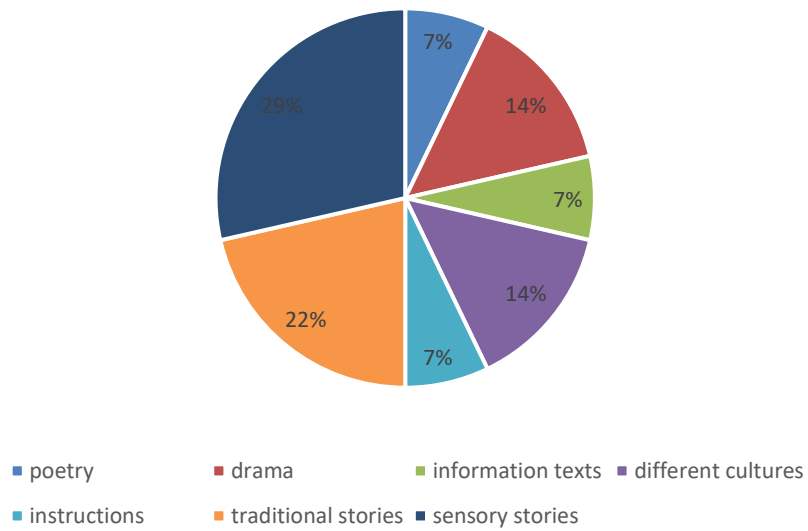
Pupil Voice

Upper School

Upper School- What do you enjoy about English?

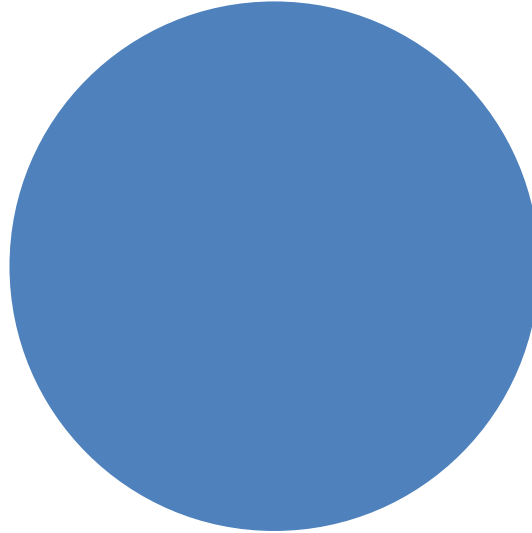


Upper School- Do you have any favourite topics?



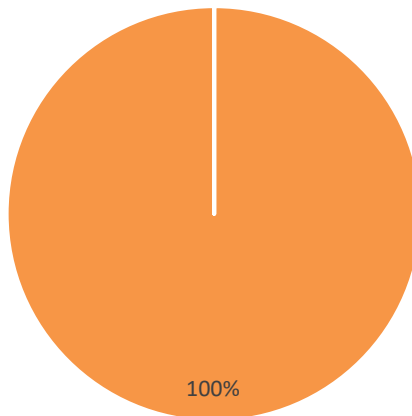
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Upper School- When do you read?



Daily, 100%

Upper School- Do you enjoy superhero reading time?

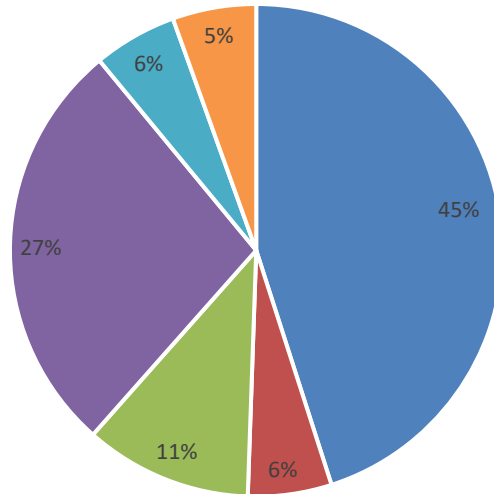


100%

■ Yes

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Upper school- What would you like to do in superhero reading?



■ read own book ■ look at magazines ■ read with friends ■ listen to story ■ reading games ■ role play

When would you like to do a reading club?



Is there anything else you would like to do in English?

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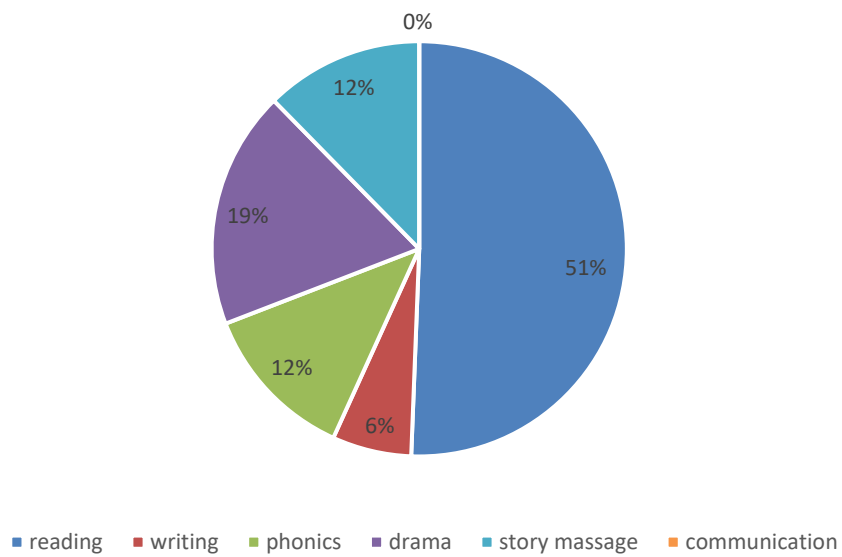
More poetry

More songs

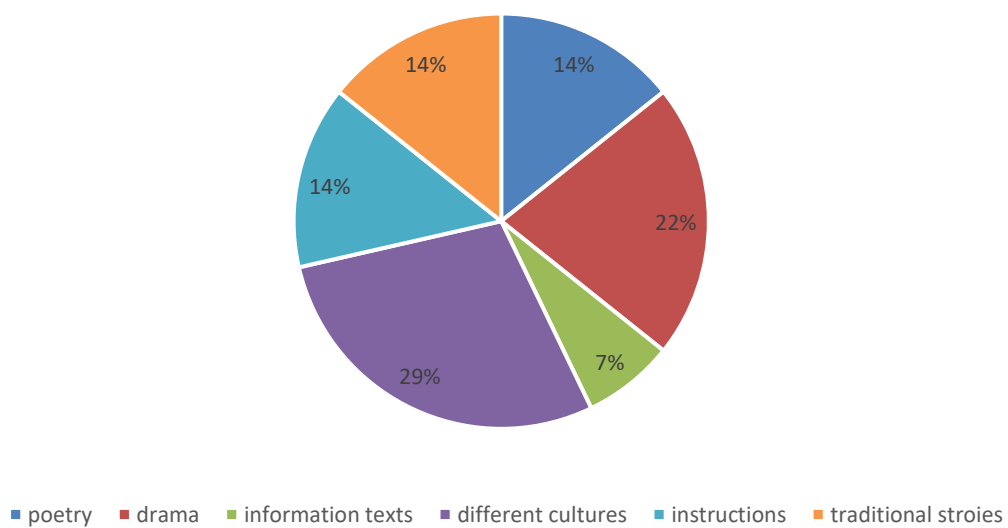
More reading

More using English out in the community to help us as we prepare for adulthood.

Lower school- What do you enjoy about English?

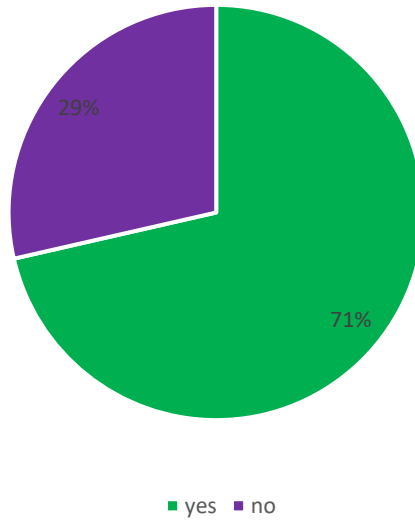


Lower School- Do you have any favourite topics?

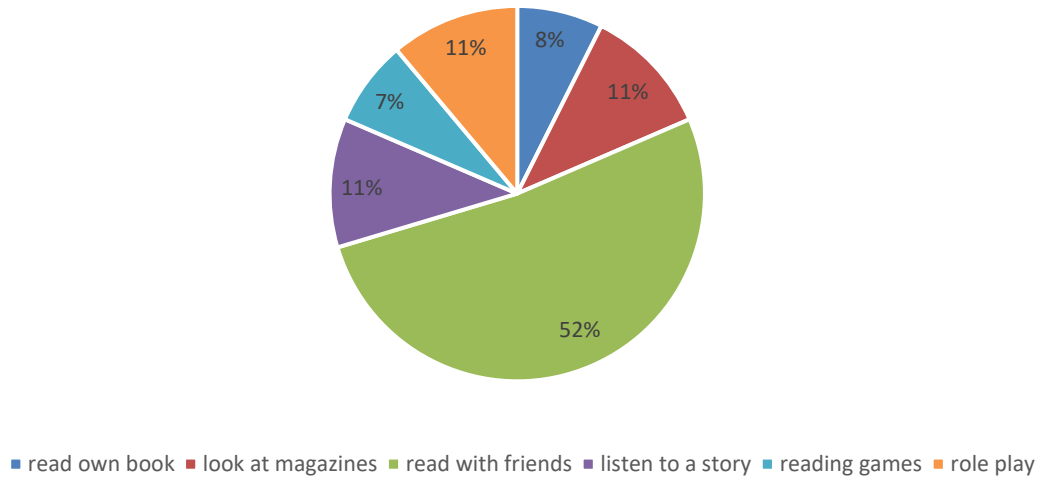


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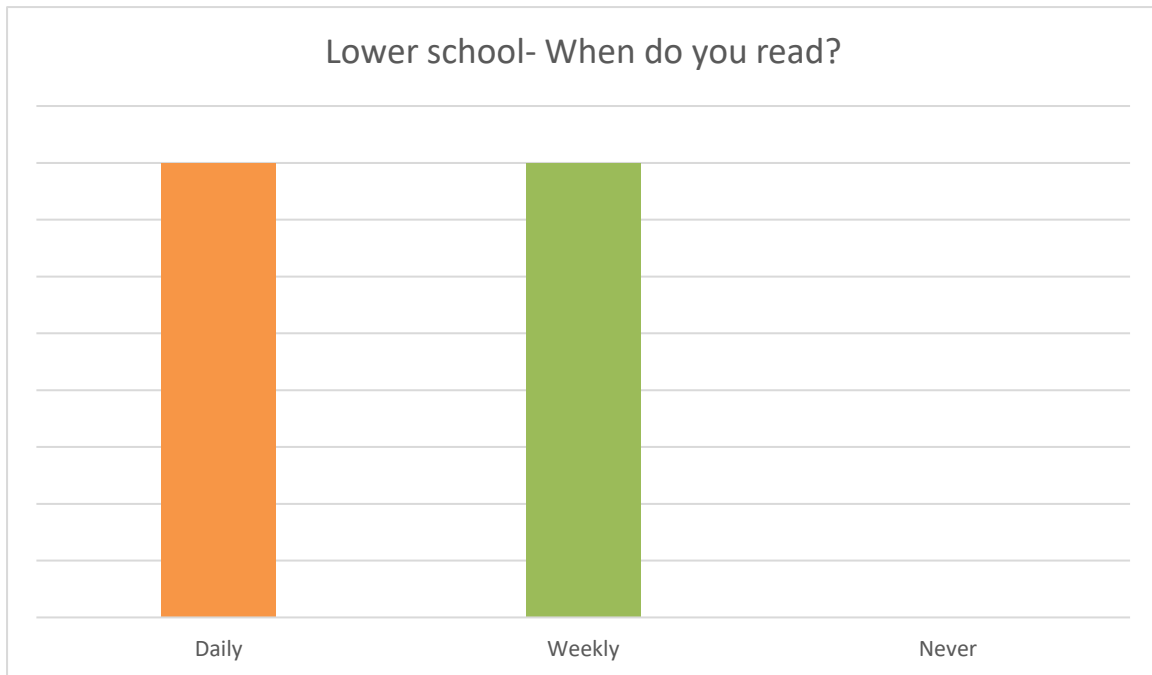
Lower School- Do you enjoy superhero reading?



Lower school- What would you like to do in superhero reading?



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Is there anything else you would like to do in English?

More fine motor activities

Outstanding examples of learning outcomes in English at Merstone School

See attached examples in Subject Leader folder

English successes in 2022-2023

Visiting theatre and dance company (Chinese New Year)

Pupils from across the school took part in acting out the story of Chinese new year alongside visiting professionals from the Imagine Theatre company. Pupils were able to use their drama skills to pretend to be dragons, leading the dragon dance to welcome in the Chinese New Year.

Shakespeare - quote from Paula. 15 pupils from across the Upper school departments took part in a performance at Birmingham MAC. Parents and stakeholders were able to purchase tickets to watch this amazing piece fo theatre! Photos of the Shakespeare display can be found in the foyer.

All teachers (up to end of 2022/2023 academic year) are PECS trained to level 1 and support staff have completed an online PECS training (<https://autisminternetmodules.org/m/485>) providing them with introductory information on how to use PECS with pupils in school.

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All classes are participating in Superhero (help everyone, read on) reading time daily either by independent reading or listening to stories read by adults. Children all have opportunities to access a wide range of reading materials and to experience positive examples of reading not related to the curriculum.

Classes have been using story massage within English lessons and throughout the curriculum to engage sensory learners. Each class has a copy of a story massage folder which contains various stories to be used and that can be added to.

The library bus has been opened and is used regularly by pupils. A library club is run once a week by a member of staff enabling pupils to access the bus at lunchtime.

World book day raised some fantastic money, got lots of students/classes more involved in reading- Students loved taking part in our interactive video's online at home via class dojo with families.

Priorities for 2023-2024

Developing the use of In print 3 and using it to make and support the new symbol reading scheme for symbol readers - aim is to work collaboratively with our local secondary school art department to illustrate a wider range of books that represent diversity of character appearance for our pupils.

Implementation of whole school Jolly Phonics and the new and improved Merstone Symbol reading schemes across the whole school. Run parent groups for parents/carers regarding the reading schemes and how they can support their children at home.

Cross department whole English activities to support social interaction and communication.

Work experience on the library bus for Diamond pupils - having identified librarians, stock managers and domestic assistants (cleaners)