

English at West SILC

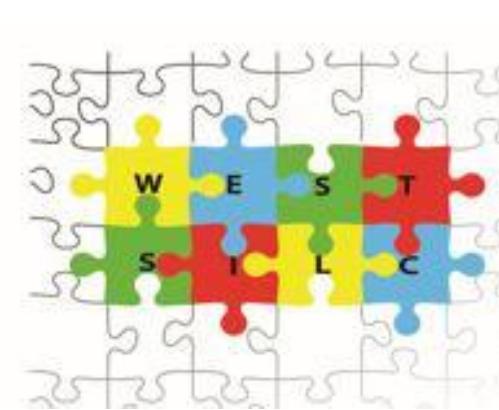
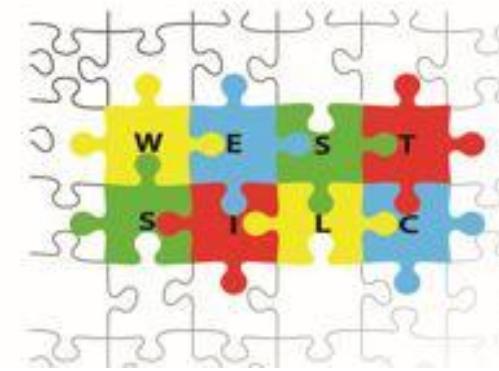


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Overview

Most learning takes place through the development and use of communication and language. English is delivered as a dedicated subject in some pathways, but is also an integral part of every lesson which is taught in school. The teaching of English embraces all aspects of language development, giving equal considerations to reading, spoken and written language.

The development of language skills is of the utmost importance across the whole curriculum and therefore the teaching of English is given high priority.

To ensure our learners have opportunities to access all areas of the English curriculum and in order for these opportunities to be effective, input is required from parents/carers, speech and language therapists and advisory services for learners with sensory impairments.

Learners for whom English is a second language, bi-lingual support and acknowledgement of the importance of their mother tongue is paramount, which develops their love of reading, writing and discussion.

The core three elements of English as delivered across the school are:

- Reading
- Writing
- Spoken language, communication and listening

Communication is core to the English curriculum and is outlined further in the Communication Policy. We promote a holistic approach to language learning by applying the principles of current research into the most effective teaching methods.





Subject Intent

Reading

Learners:

- Have regular access to a wide variety of books which are appropriate to their developmental levels and age
- Interest is fostered in books, sensory stories and reading for pleasure
- Develop reading skills through the use of sign and symbols, ICT, objects, pictures and words
- Are supported to apply their reading skills to enable them to access the wider world
- Value reading as a key life skill to become confident and competent lifelong readers
- Have a thirst for reading a range of genres including poetry
- Participate in discussions about books, including evaluating an author's use of language and the impact this can have on the reader



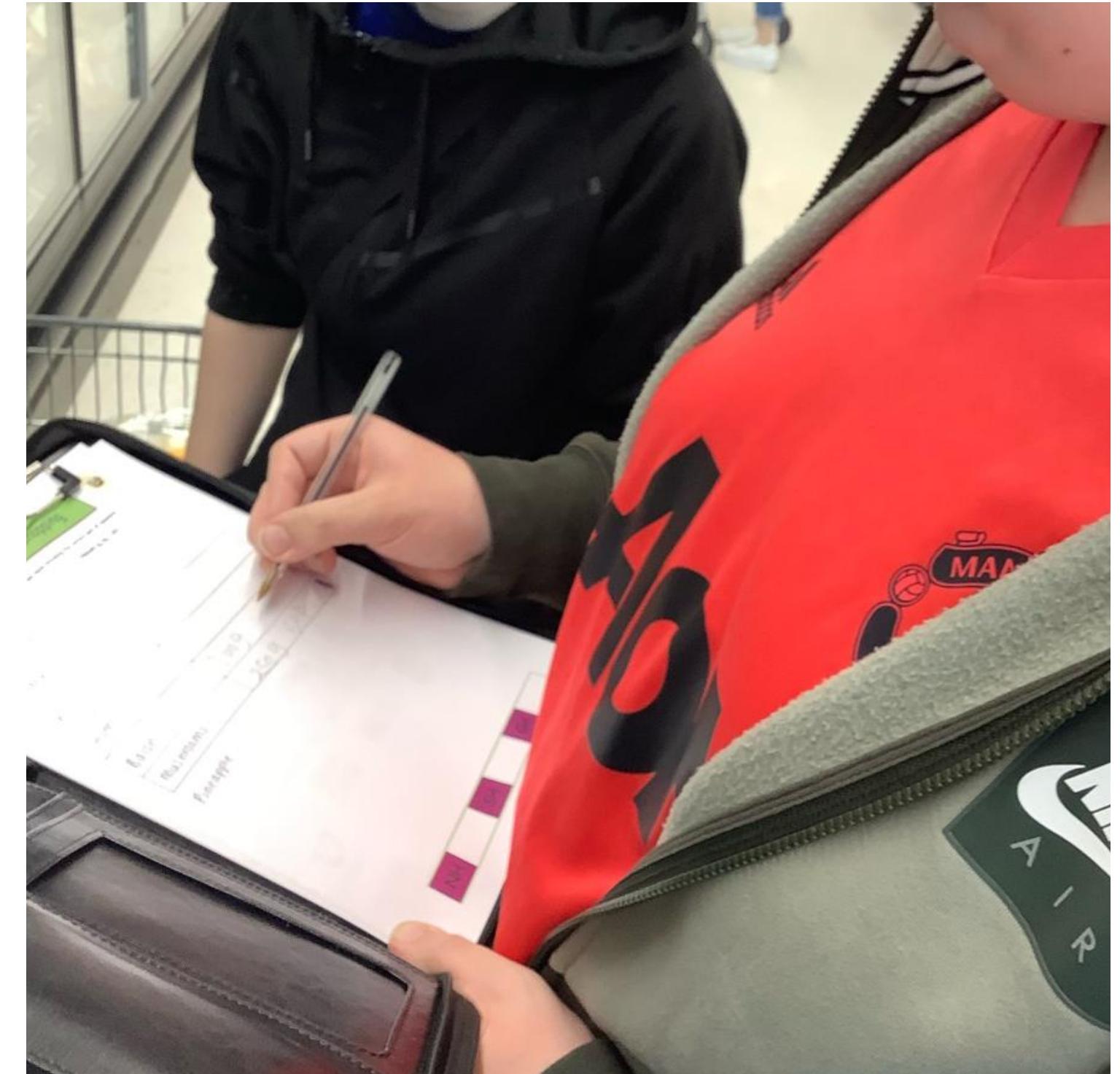


Subject Intent

Writing

Learners:

- Develop writing skills through the use of sign and symbols, ICT, objects, pictures and words
- Access an extensive, age appropriate range of literary materials and experiences through writing for a variety of purposes
- Are supported to plan, draft, proof read, evaluate and edit their writing
- Leave school having developed their best handwriting in terms of fluency and legibility
- Develop the ability to work out and clarify the meanings of unknown words and words with more than one meaning- not sure whether this is reading or writing.
- Develop awareness of the audience, purpose and text type for a piece of writing as well as an increasingly wide knowledge of vocabulary and grammar





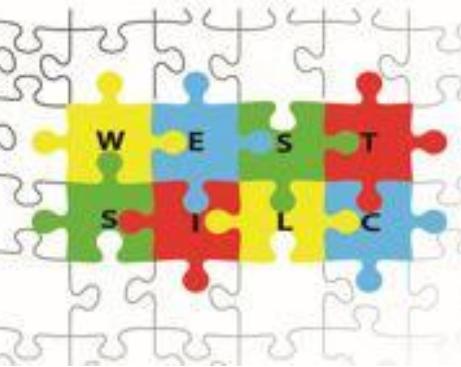
Subject Intent

Spoken language, communication and listening

Learners:

- Where appropriate, will be able to speak clearly, fluently and coherently.
- Will be able to listen attentively with understanding, pleasure and empathy and contribute to group discussions effectively
- Will be able to confidently express themselves through the use of language (verbal and non-verbal)
- Will develop communication skills so that they are able to access the wider world at a level appropriate to their needs
- Will be able to communicate effectively with others in a range of social situations and interact with their peers and adults





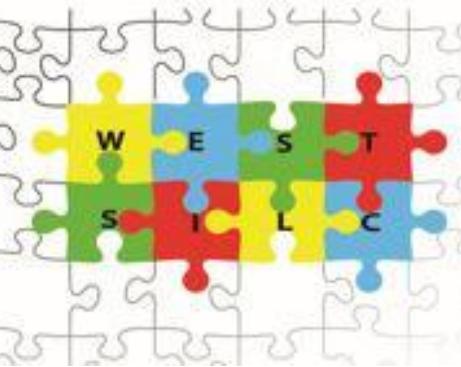
Subject Implementation

Reading

Learners:

- Have access to sensory stories; reading for pleasure; a wide range of books to promote reading for pleasure. Access to - 'Starbooks' Café and the Reading Den
- Have regular access to book resources related to topic-based learning and daily story time
- Access (where appropriate) Read Write Inc synthetic phonics programme (4 times a week)
- Access appropriate books in Read Write Inc which are closely matched to their increasing knowledge of phonics and 'tricky' words
- Access colourful semantics to develop reading skills
- Have opportunities to practise functional reading skills in real life situations - life skills trips, cooking activities, shopping, travelling in the community
- Use ICT and on-line learning platforms in school and at home such as Kindles, I-Pads, Fast phonics, Reading Eggs, Lexia, Ed Shed, Oxford Owl etc
- Appropriate reading materials matched to age / developmental level regular reading of a wide variety of texts (recipes, instructions, signs, instructions, radio show scripts etc
- Take part in group/guided reading as part of the RWI session
- Experience text immersion as part of our Talk for Writing approach





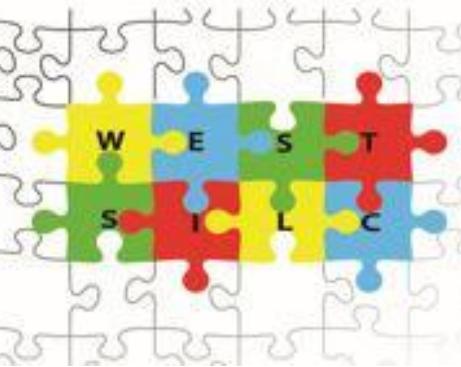
Subject Implementation

Writing

Learners:

- Have opportunities to develop their fine motor skills and mark making through messy play, and approaches such as 'Dough Disco'.
- Access English lessons taught through the Talk for Writing approach (pathway specific)
- Use the Read Write Inc Phonics programme to develop awareness of grammatical structure.
- Access regular opportunities for oral composition, allowing pupils to rehearse their ideas out loud before writing them using familiar graphemes and taught tricky words.
- Learn correct letter formation
- Learn how to join letters speedily and legibly (where appropriate)
- Use colourful semantics to develop writing skills
- Use scaffolding frames to support writing
- Use ICT - such as Clickr, Widget, AAC devices
- Draft and redraft work.
- Analyse pieces of writing (WAGOLL, presentational features of functional texts)
- Develop composition (ideas, vocabulary and grammar) by drawing on their own experiences and talking about the stories they read
- Explore functional writing (formal / informal, emails, letters, application forms)
- Practise (where appropriate) spelling, vocabulary, grammar, punctuation; as part of daily writing activities





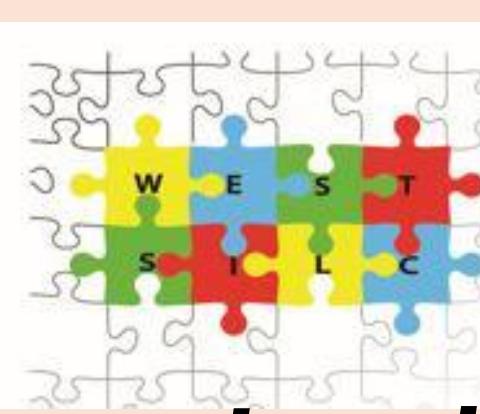
Subject Implementation

Spoken language, communication and listening

Learners are given the opportunity to develop their spoken language, communication and listening through:

- Developing confidence in themselves as speakers and listeners by showing them that we value their conversations and opinions
- Encouraging a respect for the views of others
- Total communication approaches - Intensive Interaction (promote spontaneous communication), Objects of Reference, Eye Gaze, Makaton, symbols attention time
- SCERTS sentence structures
- Circle time
- Specialist programmes assessed and developed by SALTs, delivered by teachers and LSAs
- Time, space and opportunities for spontaneous social interaction
- Speaking in front of groups - assemblies, talent show, church services etc
- Structured social times, student council
- Restorative principles - everyone has a voice
- Presenting radio shows and giving formal presentations
- Work related learning contexts - mock job interviews, visiting speakers
- Being supported to listen with attention and understanding in all areas of the curriculum and where necessary, asking and responding to questions appropriately





Implementation by pathway

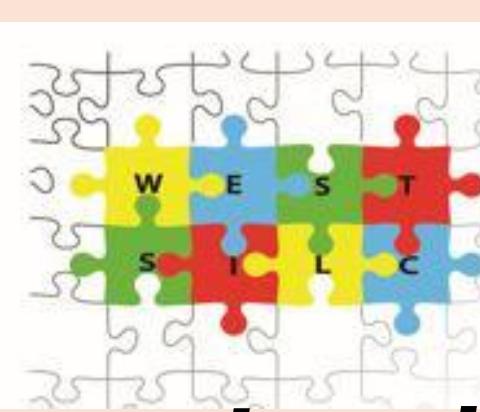
Method	Description
Spoken Language	Using verbal speech to express and receive messages.
Makaton	A system combining speech, signs, and symbols to aid understanding and
Lip Reading	Interpreting spoken words by visually reading lip movements.
Gestures	Using natural hand and body movements to communicate.
Facial Expressions	Conveying emotion, emphasis, or intent through facial cues.
Body Language	Using physical posture or movement to reinforce or replace speech.
Symbols and Visual Aids	Visual tools (excluding PECS) like Widgit symbols to support communication.
Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC)	Tools and strategies like communication devices and apps.
Touch Cues	Tactile signals used to indicate meaning, often with multi-sensory learners.
Object Symbols	Using tangible objects to represent choices, activities, or messages.

Engage, Aspire and Explore pathway

Our early development pathways do not teach English as a discrete subject. Learners within these pathways are either pre-subject specific or non-subject specific, working at a pre-key stage level, with the majority assessed through the Engagement Model.

Pupils access learning through sensory exploration, play and real-life experiences. Learning is play-based, with adults following the child's lead and using topic themes as a vehicle for capturing interests and personalising learning.

West SILC is a Total Communication school, and this underpins the English curriculum in our Engage, Aspire and Explore pathways. Total Communication is an educational approach that supports learners by using all available forms of communication to maximise language development and communicative effectiveness. A key element of this approach is Intensive Interaction, where the learner leads the interaction and the adult tunes in, responds sensitively and builds communication in a way that is meaningful for them.



Implementation by pathway



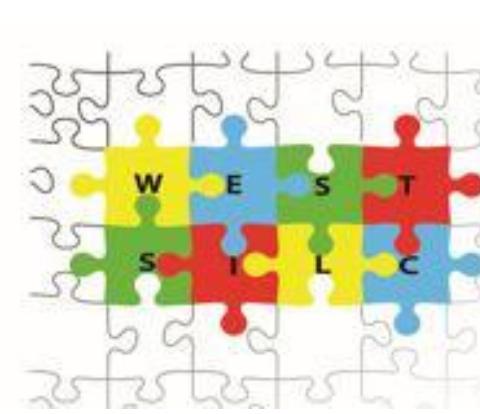
Connect and Climb Pathway

Improving our pupils' communication and literacy skills so they are literate communicators is essential to them leading as independent lives as possible. Using a range of resources, strategies and intervention techniques, we support our pupils to develop their ability to engage in social communication, express their emotions and make progress with their communication skills.

Communication covers the ability and motivation to communicate in a widening range of situations, interacting, co-operating and working with other people. Speaking and listening/ signing and watching covers the development of receptive and expressive language through speech and/or sign/or symbols.

English combines the skills of reading and writing, including, exploring, enjoying and learning about sounds, words and text and experiencing a rich variety of books. We use a variety of appropriate packages including the Read, Write Inc synthetic phonics scheme and Lexia to support pupils' progress in reading. We use the Talk for Writing approach to plan and deliver engaging and meaningful English lessons, with a high focus on text immersion.

We have a private Speech and Language Therapist from Chatterbug who supports our pupils and staff to create communication targets, resources and strategies to help our pupils' communication skills. These include Attention Autism sessions, task plans, using colourful semantics, Makaton, symbols, sequencing, communication books, ACC, communication aids, aided language displays, word maps, sentence strips. We also refer pupils for NHS speech and language therapy input. Circle time occurs at least on a daily basis which further develops relationships between adults-peers and peers-peers. In addition, it develops pupil confidence to communicate in a wider context, giving opportunities to share news and achievements/concerns.



Implementation of Reading Connect and Climb Pathway

The Reading Framework (DFE 2022) states for SEND learners that:

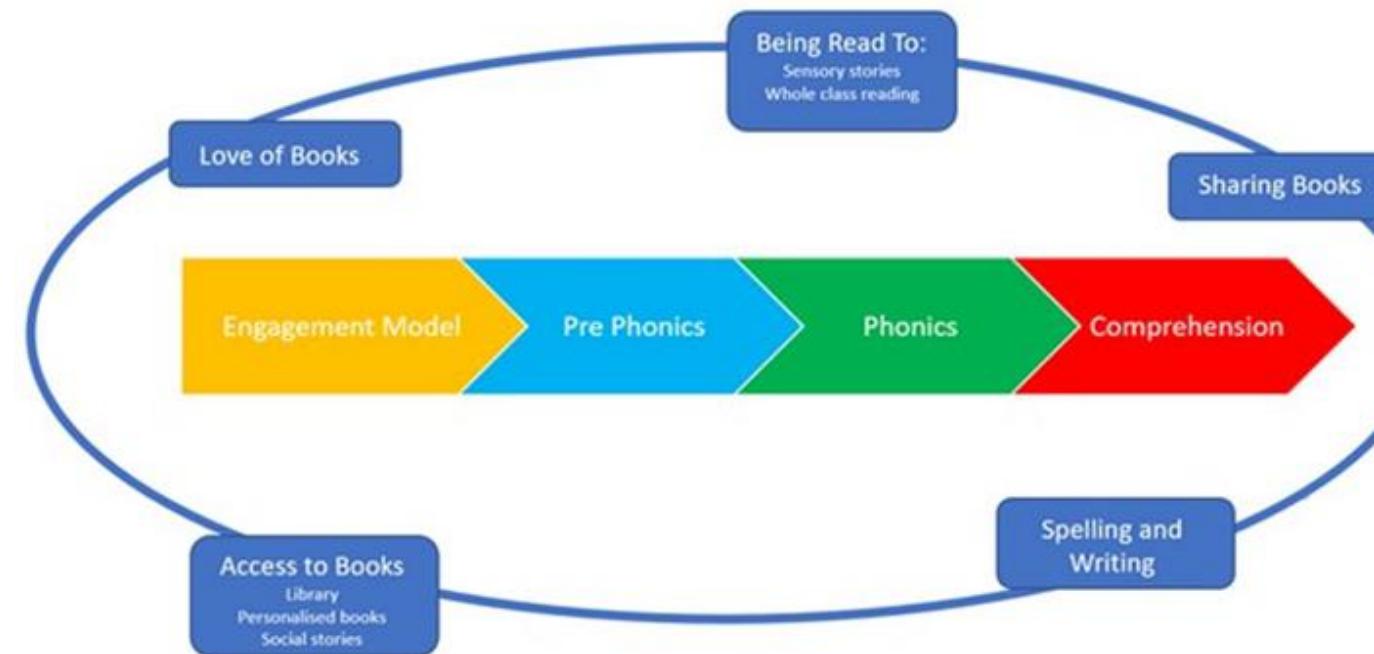
"Literacy is as important for these children as for their peers and teachers should be ambitious about teaching them to read and write. These children have to navigate the same written language, unlock the same alphabetic code... it is a critical skill in helping them prepare for adulthood."

The Framework states that teaching should:

- Be at a suitable pace for the child because progression through a program will be much slower than for their typically developing peers
- Be daily, with well-paced, well-planned lessons that are engaging and motivating
- Take full account of the child's individual strengths, weaknesses, knowledge and understanding, and profile of needs.

At West SILC, reading is core in all teaching and learning groups (TLGs). Although this may look different depending on the needs and interests of the learners, the principle remains the same.

This diagram outlines the reading models applied throughout the school to develop learners reading skills. This is embedded through a rich reading environment accessible at school and home, spelling and writing opportunities and access to stories, including personalised, sensory and social



West SILC Reading Pathway

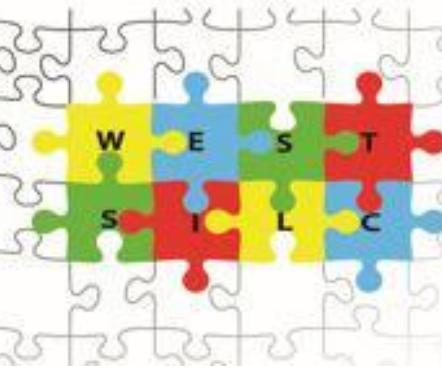
Pre-phonics, the stage prior to phonics is essential as it develops children's listening, vocabulary and speaking skills. In order for children to be ready for phonics they need to have early communication skills, developed through daily speaking and listening with those around them.

Pre-phonics consists of 6 aspects:

1. To develop children's listening skills and awareness of sounds in the environment
2. To develop awareness of sounds and rhythms
3. To experience and appreciate rhythm and rhyme to develop awareness of rhythm and rhyme in speech
4. To develop an awareness of alliteration/experience alliteration
5. To distinguish between the differences in vocal sounds, including oral blending and segmenting
6. To develop oral segmenting and blending skills of sounds in words

Only when learners demonstrate phonological awareness as indicated in the 6 aspects are they ready to access phonics.

West SILC employs a synthetic phonic approach using the scheme Read Write Inc (RWI). Synthetic phonics is simply the ability to convert a letter or letter group into sounds that are then blended together into a word. Blending is essential to become a fluent reader which is a fundamental aspect of RWI. Pupils accessing RWI are taught regularly. This is either in small groups four times a week or regularly in one to one intervention sessions. Pupils are assessed 3 times a year using the RWI online assessment tool to identify progress and areas for development. This data is used to inform practice, assessment milestones and identify pupils requiring tuition.



Implementation of Writing

Connect and Climb Pathway

In our Connect and Climb pathways, we teach writing through adapted Talk for Writing. This is a creative and structured approach to teaching writing, with a core focus on communication strategies. It works especially well for our learners because it starts with spoken language and supports all learners through repetition, visuals, and sensory experiences.

Talk for Writing supports our learners at West SICL because it begins with speaking and listening and total immersion, the foundations of writing. It uses multisensory and visual tools to help children understand and remember language. The approach supports a wide range of communication needs, including non-verbal learners, and encourages confidence, enjoyment, and storytelling in a structured but flexible way. It can be adapted to suit each child's level, interests, and preferred way of learning.

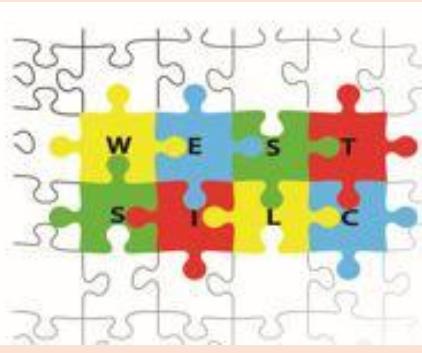
Our Talk for Writing approach is structured in the following way:

Imitation/ Immersion – Learning and Exploring the Story

Pupils learn a well-chosen story by listening, repeating, and acting it out. They use actions, story maps, props, symbols, and sometimes music to help remember and understand the story. This stage is fun, interactive, and accessible for a wide range of abilities. The story is explored in depth using drama, role play, drawing, and sensory play. Pupils are encouraged to express ideas in their own way—whether through speech, signing, AAC devices, or gesture. The goal is for children to connect with the story and grow in confidence.

Innovation/ Invention – Supported Storytelling

With adult guidance, some children may begin to change small parts of the story, such as the character or setting. This might be done through shared storytelling, group work, or using symbols and sentence starters. Writing is not the focus—communication, creativity, and participation are key. Where appropriate, some learners may move on to write their own text.



Implementation by pathway

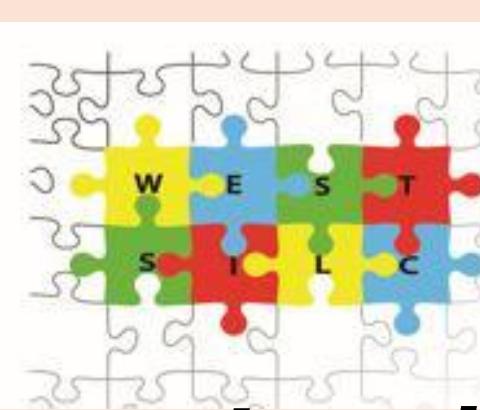
Elevate Pathway

Supporting the development of literacy and communication is recognised as a collective responsibility across all curriculum areas at Priesthorpe. Literacy and communication are taught on a personalised basis through 1:1 and small group intervention as well as through structured whole-class teaching. At KS3, pupils have 10 timetabled English lessons per fortnight, while KS4 students have 9 timetabled lessons (to allow for options choices). Partnership English lessons broadly follow the mainstream curriculum; however, this is highly differentiated in line with the needs of the class and is supplemented with additional 'skills lessons' where necessary. Within skills lessons, the class is divided into groups and specific interventions take place with a focus on phonics, comprehension, spelling, technical accuracy and the development of vocabulary. We use a variety of appropriate packages including Read, Write Inc. and Lexia Power Up to support pupils' progress in reading.

We principally adhere to the mainstream curriculum. Long-term plans are thematic in nature which allows staff to select texts appropriate to the profile of the class. Students have the opportunity to study prose, poetry and drama as well as non-fiction. Importance is placed on selecting high-quality texts to develop knowledge, cultural capital and a lifelong love of literature. We endeavor to develop confident writers, both in creative and transactional contexts. The teaching of writing is as personalised as possible. For some students, this involves using colourful semantics to construct sentences and phonics to support with spelling, whilst for others, learning may centre on using an extensive vocabulary, language techniques and a range of punctuation. Pupils are encouraged to adapt their writing for different purposes and audiences. We aim to develop an enjoyment of writing and support students to cultivate their own voice to express their attitudes and opinions.

Speaking and listening is an important part of the curriculum. Students' skills are developed in discussion, presentation and role-play. Speech and language interventions are part of our bespoke curriculum and a number of students are supported by Chatterbug and the NHS Speech and Language service.

Pupils work towards Entry Level Certificates and GCSEs as they advance to KS4. All staff share the firm belief that literacy is essential in the development of independence. Students take part in work experience and life skills trips into the community, which further reinforce the skills they learn in a classroom-based setting.



Implementation by pathway



Post 16 Pathway (PLC)

Literacy and Functional Skills Development

Within our PLC Pathway, we embed the development of functional reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills into our curriculum, working towards BTEC pre entry 1/ Functional Skills accreditation and where appropriate a specific employment accreditation. These qualifications serve to celebrate and validate our pupils' progress, but they are not the final objective. Instead, they act as a foundation to support the broader goals of independence and employability that our curriculum promotes.

Reading for Real-World Contexts

During classroom-based learning, pupils are supported in developing reading skills through authentic, everyday materials such as job advertisements, application forms, menus, leaflets, newspapers, posters, recipes, and instructions. These resources replicate real-world scenarios, helping pupils practise finding, extracting, and interpreting information. They are taught to infer meaning, compare content, and grasp the fundamentals of language. The learning environment is purposefully designed to mirror tasks pupils are likely to encounter outside of school, reinforcing the development of transferrable life skills.

Our curriculum supports reading with purpose, recognising symbols, logos, and a variety of signage that pupils may encounter in their communities. These skills are applied and reinforced during weekly life skills trips, providing meaningful opportunities to generalise learning.

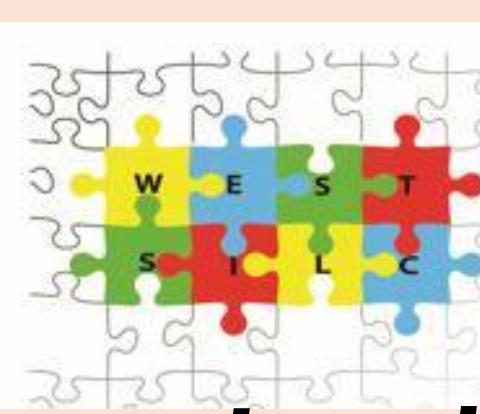
We utilise a range of evidence-based programmes including Read Write Inc, Sumdog and other age- and developmentally-appropriate reading schemes. Our overarching goal is to develop reading automaticity. Research indicates that Lexia significantly narrows the reading attainment gap for over 50% of learners. We combine phonics instruction with engagement in 'real books', adapting our approach based on each pupil's ability and interest. While these methods are often viewed as mutually exclusive, evidence suggests their integration can significantly improve outcomes in reading, writing, and spelling.

Developing Writing Skills for Purpose

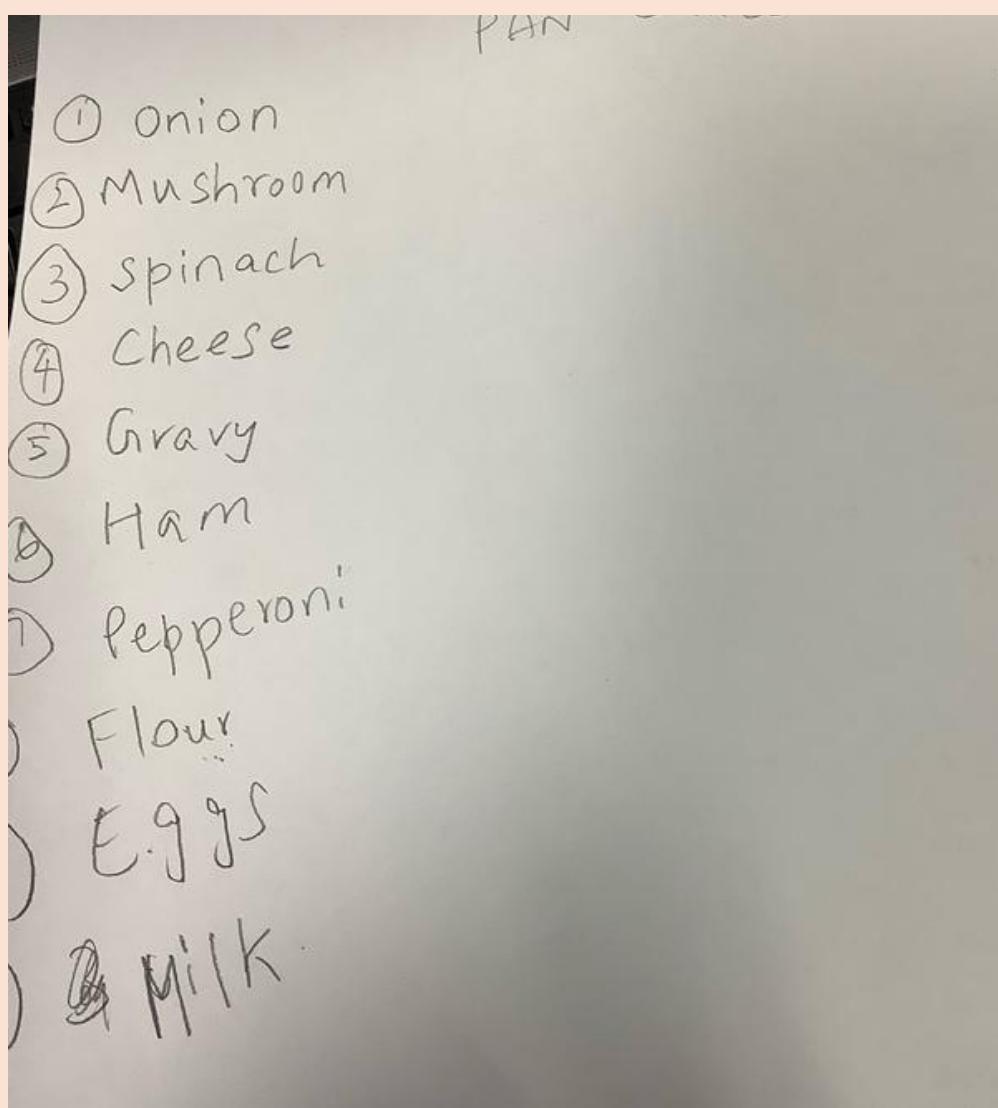
Writing instruction focuses on language comprehension, sentence construction, and functional, context-driven writing. Learners regularly practise both formal and informal writing, understanding when and where each is appropriate. This includes writing letters and emails, with conventions taught explicitly and revisited regularly during literacy lessons. Writing is further developed through real-world application. Learners apply for their Enterprise placements as well as using real world technology such as mobile phones, emails and text messages to communicate with staff in real world scenarios.

Embedding Independence Through Communication

To reinforce learning beyond the classroom, pupils engage with community learning, work placements and where appropriate supported internships. Each pupil is given a personal diary, which they are expected to bring to college daily. They use it to record key information such as events, meetings, and appointments. This practice builds responsibility and encourages pupils to plan ahead, developing essential life skills that support their journey toward independence.



Implementation by pathway

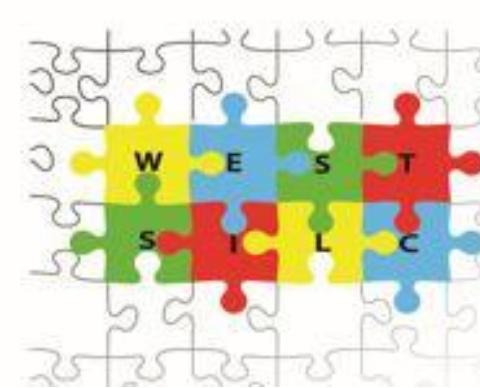


WAIP (West Area Inclusion Partnership)

At Key Stage 3, students receive five English lessons per week. Teaching follows both our partnership schools' and the national curriculum schemes of work, with adaptations made to meet the needs of individual learners. Lessons are designed to incorporate kinesthetic approaches where appropriate to support engagement and understanding. Students study a broad range of topics, including poetry, Shakespeare, novels, and non-fiction texts. All materials are carefully selected to match the ability levels of learners, and written work is differentiated to ensure access for all. A wide range of resources, such as overlays, line guides, iPads, and dyslexia-friendly texts, are provided to support learning. Where required, 1:1 interventions are implemented in areas such as reading, phonics, spelling, and grammar. These interventions are personalised to target specific areas of development and further strengthen literacy skills.

At Key Stage 4, learners have a minimum of five English lessons each week. The English Language GCSE (AQA) curriculum is delivered, with additional sessions provided for learners who require further support with phonics, spelling, and punctuation. Reading is actively promoted across the curriculum, and dedicated reading time is embedded into weekly timetables. English is taught as a core subject to provide students with a strong educational foundation, preparing them for further study or future career pathways. Course content includes the study of unseen fiction, high-quality journalism, and literary non-fiction from the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries, alongside creative writing tasks such as narrative, descriptive, and viewpoint writing (e.g., articles, letters, websites, and speeches).

Across all learning, the joy of reading is actively celebrated in a creative and safe environment, enabling learners to enhance their reading and writing skills both in English and across the wider curriculum.

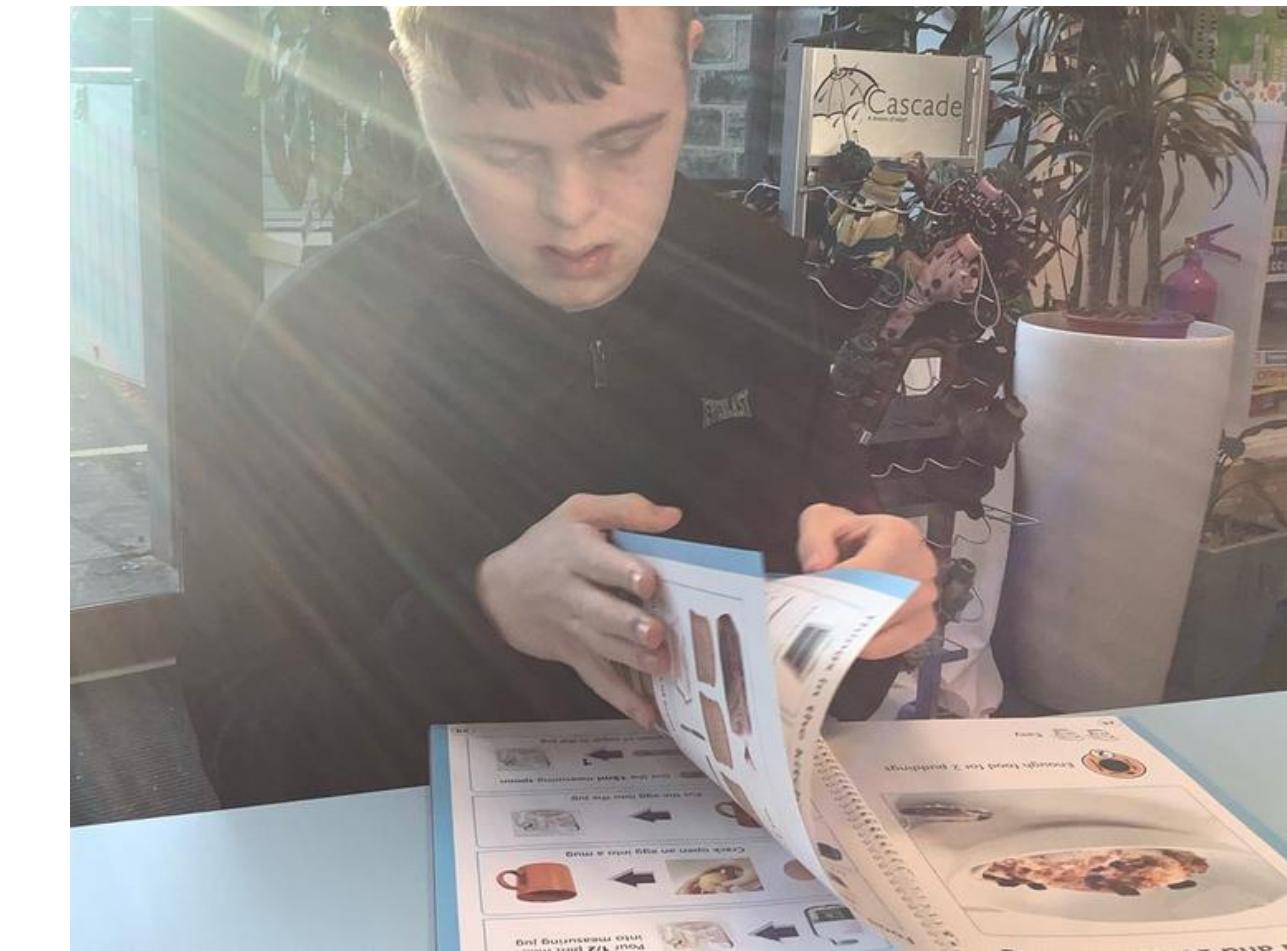


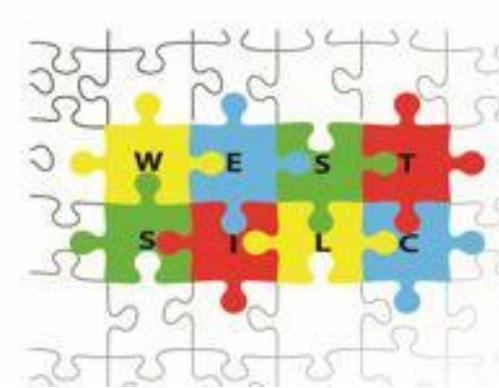
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Reading

Learners:

- Experience success from the very beginning
- Learn the English alphabetic code
- Learn one way to read the 40+ sounds and blend these sounds into words
- Learn to read the same sounds with alternative graphemes
- Develop fluency, through re reading texts
- Enjoy books and reading and have a good understand text on different levels
- Develop the resilience to attempt to read a wide variety of texts read with a deeper understanding from a wide range of different text types including fiction and non-fiction publications, as well as real life texts such as sign posts, labels, captions and lists
- Can decode, blend and encode
- Are enriched by cultural opportunities to broaden understanding of the wider world



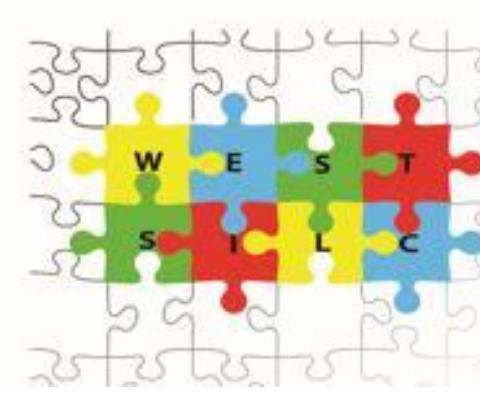


Impact

Writing

Learners:

- Develop their writing firstly through play, talk and mark making
- Develop their writing skills, producing structured legible script using correct letter formation
- Writing shows the correct use of spelling, punctuation and grammar
- Will develop the structure of their writing
- The meaning of their writing will be clear to the reader
- Develop the resilience to attempt to use the written word



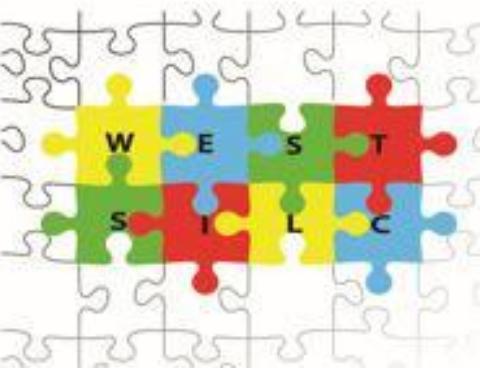
Impact



'Spoken language, communication and listening'

Learners:

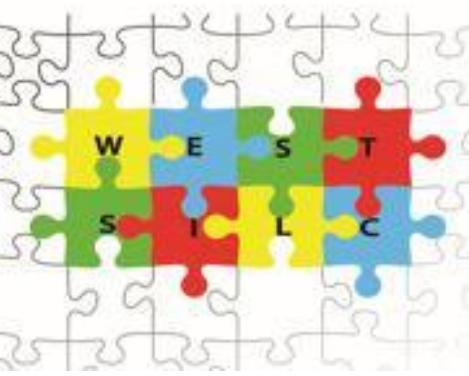
- Can initiate an interaction
- Successfully communicate their basic needs and wants
- Speak clearly and confidently to familiar and less familiar people in a range of situations
- Listen attentively and value the contribution of others



Explore Assessment

Explore use the Leeds SENIT Developmental Journal to assess English using the following areas of the EYFS curriculum: comprehension, word reading, writing, listening and attention, understanding and speaking.





Engage and Aspire Assessment

Engage and Aspire assessment is carried out through EHCP communication and interaction outcomes which are highly personalised for learners. Staff write small steps which often relate to making choices, expression and interactions with others. They also use the Engagement Model to show how a learner is communicating e.g. exploring using eye pointing, or being persistent touching a symbol displaying what they want.

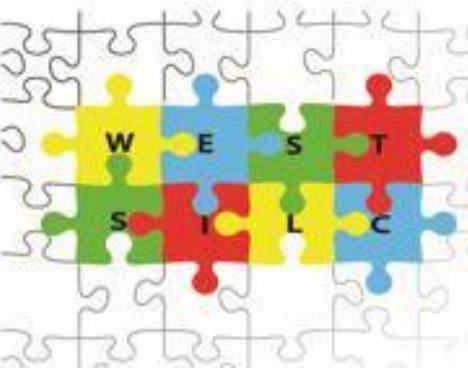
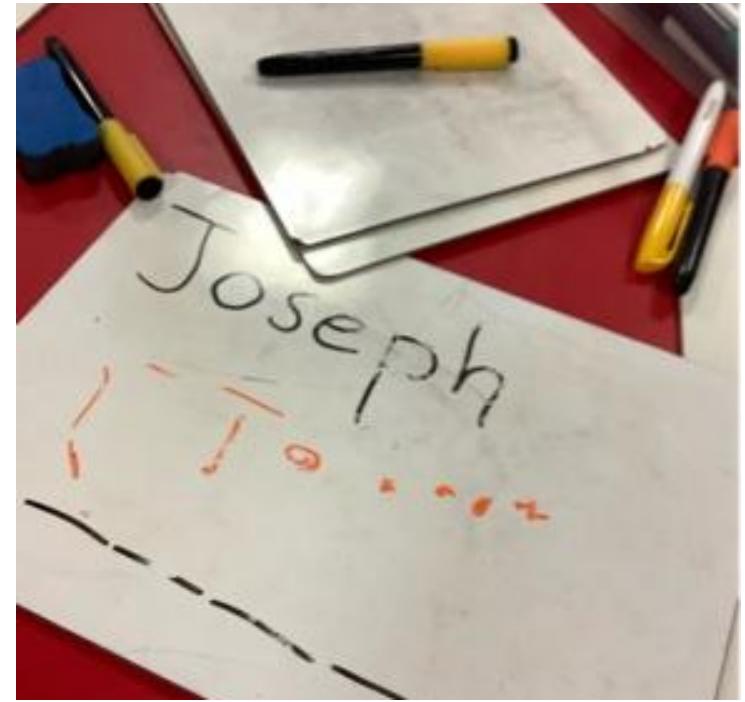
Connect Assessment

Connect

Learner's reading, writing, speaking and listening skills are assessed on Pacers and Strides Vol 1 twice per year on evidence for learning. Students are also assessed using RWI phonics assessment. Pre verbal and verbal baseline RWI assessments are used at the start of the year with -biannual assessments to check progress.

Evidence for Learning

This assessment tool measures small steps of progress in line with pre key stage standards and national curriculum expectations. At key stage 4, students are assessed in line with formal qualifications, including entry level where appropriate.



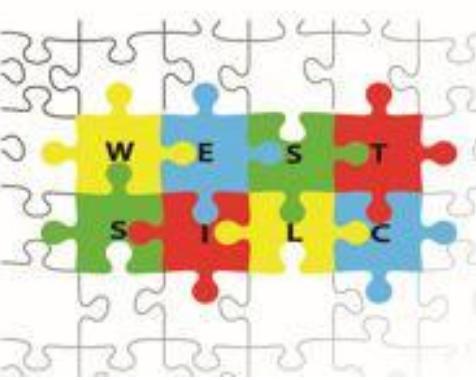
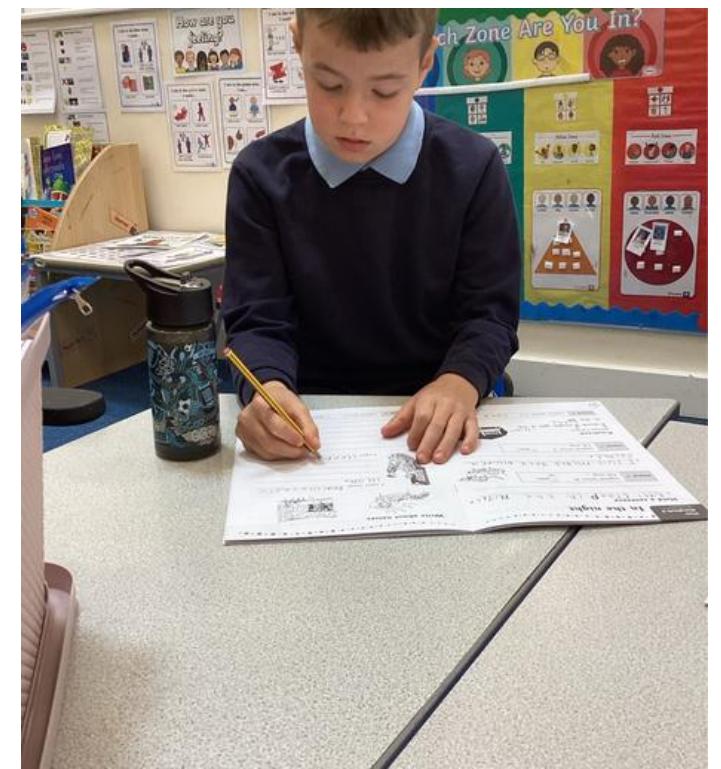
Climb Assessment

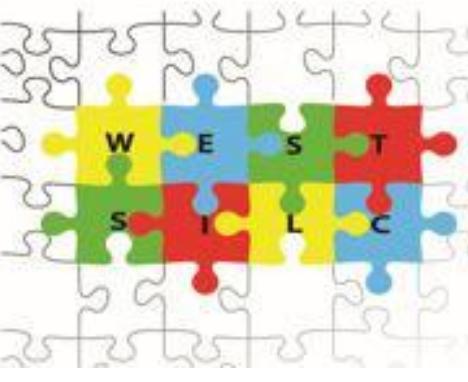
Climb

Learner's reading, writing, speaking and listening skills are assessed on Pacers and Strides Vol 1 and 2 twice per year on evidence for learning. Learners are also assessed using RWI phonics assessment. Pre verbal and verbal baseline RWI assessments are used at the start of the year with -biannual assessments to check progress.

Evidence for Learning

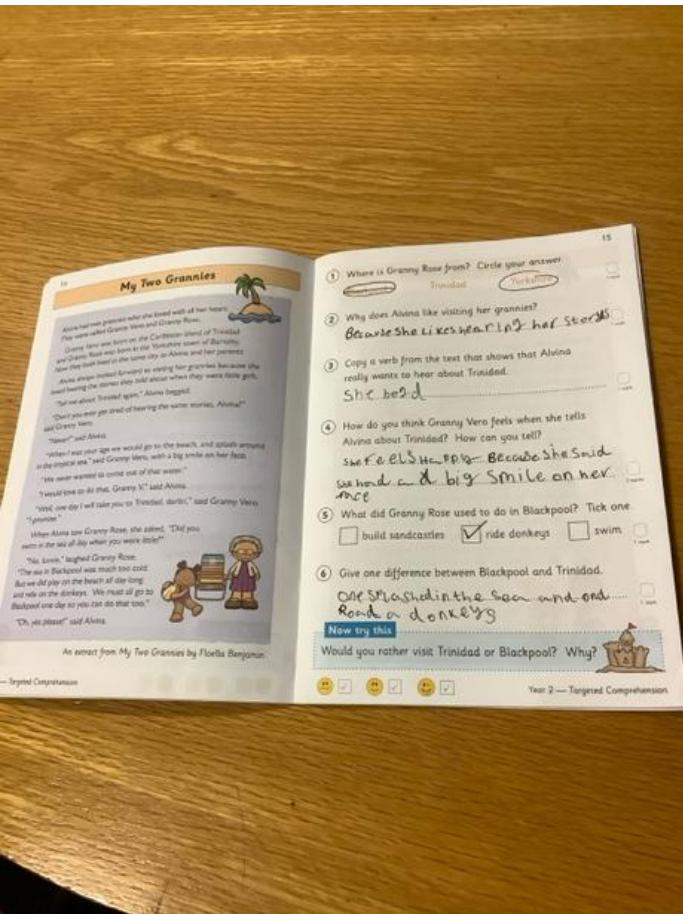
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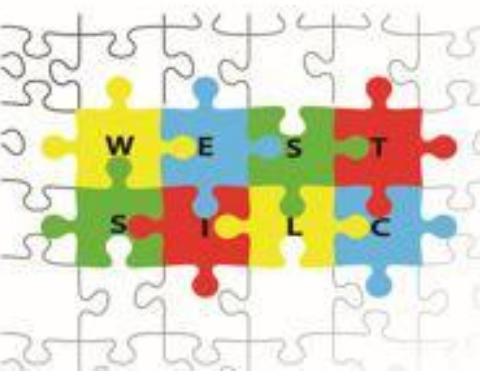


Elevate Assessment

Students' reading skills are assessed on entry to the partnership initially using the reading fluency component of the Read Write Inc assessment. These results are used to establish whether students' require phonics intervention, in which case students are assessed using the Read Write Inc phonics assessment. These phonics assessments are repeated bi-annually in addition to frequent formative phonic assessments. Students who can read fluently are further assessed using the SSRCT reading assessment to determine a reading age.

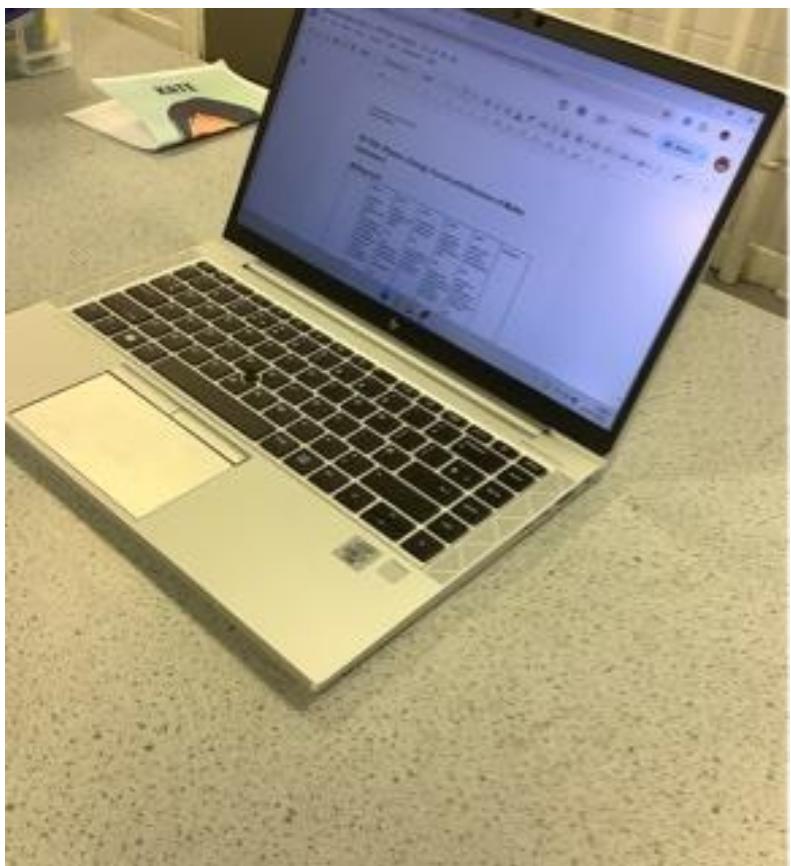


Students' reading, writing, speaking and listening is assessed using Strides 1 and 2 on Evidence for Learning. This assessment tool measures small steps of progress in line with national curriculum expectations. At key stage 4, students are assessed in line with formal qualifications, including entry level and GSCE where appropriate.



WAIP Assessment

All students are assessed on entry using standardised assessments to establish a clear baseline of their reading, comprehension, and writing skills. Students working significantly below age-related expectations are further assessed using the Read Write Inc assessment to identify whether phonics intervention is required. Students are retested each term during their placement to ensure progress is monitored closely and interventions remain well targeted.

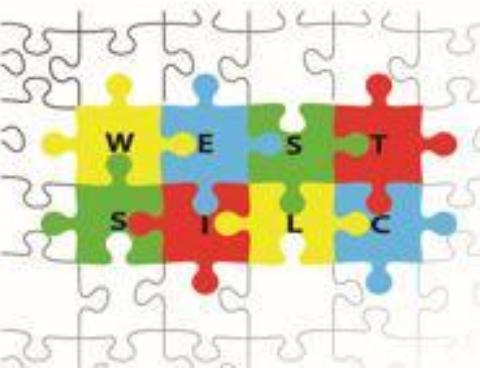
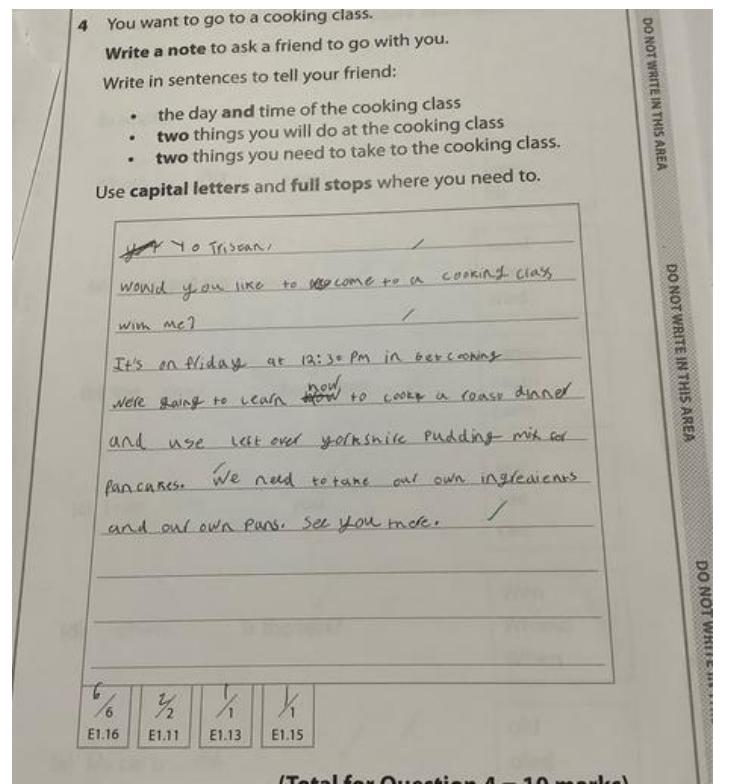


Summative assessments are carried out to inform teachers of students' progress and to support half-termly grading towards GCSE outcomes. At Key Stage 4, assessment is aligned to formal qualifications, with learners working towards either Entry Level or GCSE English, depending on their individual needs and abilities.

Powerhouse PLC Assessment

Within our PLC (Powerhouse Life Changing) Pathway, student assessment is conducted through a structured and holistic framework known as Strategies for Life. This approach is tailored to support each learner in achieving their individual education, independence, and communication goals within a real-life context. Students are assessed twice a year using the Strategies for Life framework, enabling us to monitor and respond to their progress, challenges, and achievements in a timely and meaningful way.

Where appropriate, students also receive targeted literacy support through individualized phonics and reading interventions. These students are assessed on a yearly basis to evaluate growth and inform teaching approaches. As part of this process, the SSRCT (Salford Sentence Reading Comprehension Test) is used to determine each student's reading age, ensuring that support is matched accurately to their current abilities and development goals.





**For further information, please contact
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