Castle School

Together We Learn

English Curriculum

A guide for parents and carers, staff and visitors.

Be Confident | Be Kind | Be Creative

English

At Castle, we aim for all our students to develop a love of reading, so they can share stories together. Our beautiful Castle-themed library is a place where students can come together and experience a variety of books and texts, independently or in groups.

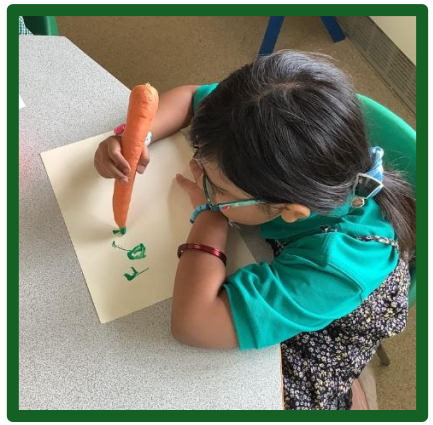
All our students begin their exploration of letters and sounds at phase 1 of phonics, developing their awareness and enjoyment of rhythm and rhyme. For those who can progress to phases 2-6 we use the Twinkl phonics scheme to ensure coherent progression. For our oldest students, we develop functional literacy to prepare for adulthood.

We lay the foundations for writing with a focus on gross and fine motor skills, self-expression and mark-making, phonics and use Colourful Semantics to support early sentence composition. Many of our learners will then progress to formal writing, where pupils will learn about sentence composition and will learn to write a range of sentence types. Some pupils will learn about text-structure and learn how to write for different purposes and audiences.

Communication is also an integral part of our approach to English, whether using speech or a student's alternative communication method. Our biggest aim is to ensure our students can communicate their wants, express their needs, be able to socialise to their full potential, and be part of a community where their voice is heard.

Further links (internal only): Teams area	
Taught curriculum (schemes of work)	Thematic learning through themes and texts
Cross-curricular learning	Extended opportunities Phonics in the curriculum
Resources	Policy





Our Pathways p1

Pre-Formal
(Reactive and Pro-Active)

Aims:

- Explore the pre-requisites of reading and writing.
- Develop phonemic awareness at phase 1.
- Promote a love of enjoying stories together.
- Develop communication and cognition skills via a story topic, with sensory exploration, play and creativity.

Delivery:

- Embedded holistically throughout the day.
- Focused sessions within the daily timetable.

Semi-Formal

Aims:

- Establish the building blocks of reading and writing.
- Learn GPCs in phases 2-6.
- Practice segmenting and blending.
- Promote a love of reading and enjoyment of stories together.
- Develop literacy skills via a story topic, with sensory exploration, role-play and creativity.

Delivery:

- Focused sessions within the daily timetable, including phonic sessions or reading interventions.
- Planning around a sequence of learning, delivered by class teachers.
- Vocabulary teaching.

Formal

Aims:

- Enhance reading and writing proficiency to obtain functional literacy.
- Develop reading fluency and comprehension to understand a range of texts.
- Promote a love of reading and independent reading.
- Cultivate speaking and listening skills via class discussions.

Delivery:

- Focused sessions on the daily timetable, including daily phonics to KS4.
- Planned and delivered by class teachers.

Curriculum

Pre-Formal Reactive

The pre-formal reactive literacy curriculum is centred around a termly theme and a termly story book exploration. Stories are planned in a thematic cycle to expose learners to a rich variety of sensory experiences and concepts. This allows the children to generalise skills to apply them in real-life situations. The termly story is the vehicle for all learning across pupils EHCP targets.

Pupils are emersed in the story through a blend of sensory story telling (props, acting, role-play or engagement of their senses), massage, touch and groove, intervenor work and on-body signing. Pupils in the pre-formal pathway develop their attention, listening and communication skills through sensory stories, massage stories, intensive interaction, parallel play and Identiplay, attention building, intervenor work and on-body signing, resonance boards and TACPAC all linked to the story topic.

Most pre-formal learners are working at Phase 1 of phonics, meaning they are developing their knowledge of environmental sounds, instrumental sounds, body percussion, rhythm and rhyme, alliteration, voice sounds and oral segmenting and blending through a multisensory approach.



Curriculum

Pre-Formal Proactive

The pre-formal proactive literacy curriculum is centred around a termly theme and a half-termly story. The stories are planned in a thematic cycle to expose learners to a rich variety of sensory experiences and concepts. The half termly story is the vehicle for all learning across pupil's EHCP targets. Pupils are emersed in the story through a blend of sensory story telling (props, acting, role-play or engagement of their senses), massage, touch and groove, intervenor work and on-body signing. Pupils in the pre-formal pathway develop their attention, listening and communication skills through sensory stories, massage stories, intensive interaction, parallel play and Identiplay, attention building, intervenor work and on-body signing, resonance boards and TACPAC all linked to the story topic.

Most pre-formal learners are working at Phase 1 of phonics, meaning they are developing their knowledge of environmental sounds, instrumental sounds, body percussion, rhythm and rhyme, alliteration, voice sounds and oral segmenting and blending through a multisensory approach. Some pupils in pre-formal pathway will be working within Phase 2 of phonics, where they will be developing their phonological and phonemic awareness, awareness of sounds and grapheme-phoneme correspondences through a multi-sensory approach.



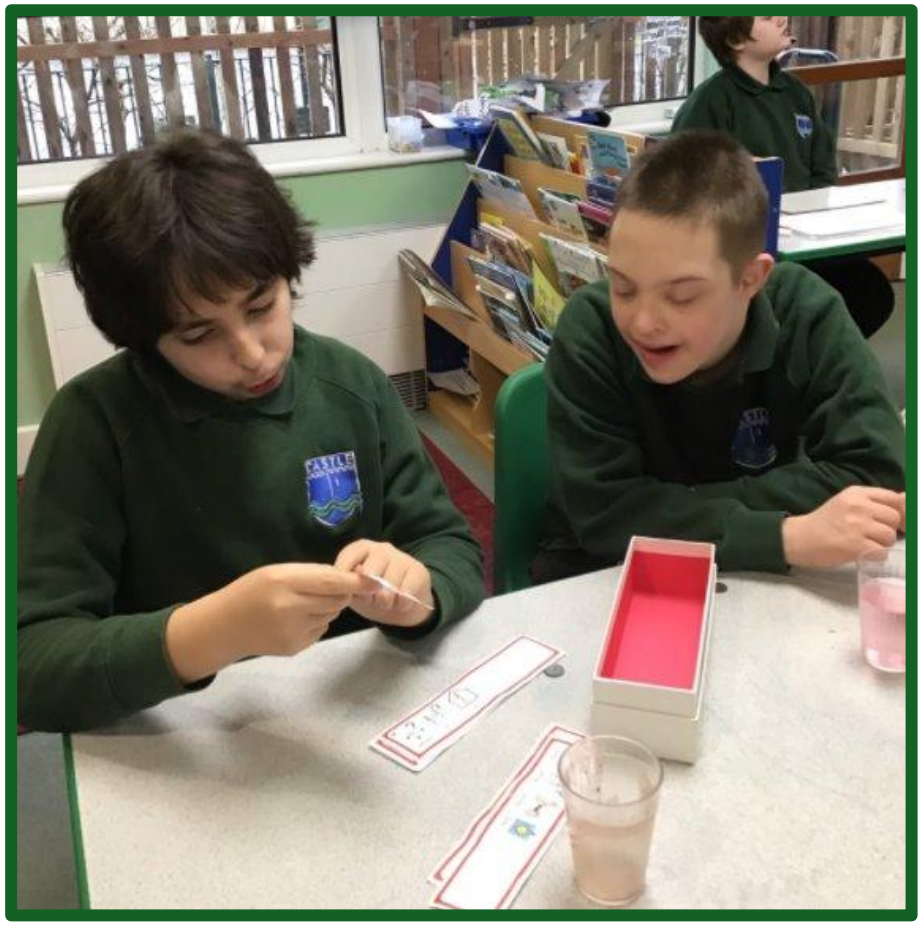
Curriculum

Semi-Formal

Semi-formal literacy sessions are delivered by class teachers. The curriculum is planned around half-termly texts and class teachers use a set proforma to plan a sequence of learning that includes the teaching of vocabulary and specific reading and writing skills in relation to set texts.

Pupils are emersed in the story through a blend of sensory story telling experiences (props, acting, role-play or engagement of their senses). Literacy in semi-formal classrooms is delivered through a series of specialist interventions to provide a strong foundation of early writing skills, such as clever fingers and dough disco to improve fine-motor skills, squiggle whilst you wiggle to develop mark making, Colourful Semantics to support the development of spoken language and sentence composition, Lego therapy and Identiplay to support the development of communication and interaction. Some students progress to more formal reading and writing skills.

Some semi-formal learners will be working at Phase 1 phonics, exploring early phonemic awareness through interventions such as Rhyme Time. Some will be beginning to develop their awareness of letters and sounds, progressing through phases 2 – 6 of the Twinkl Phonics programme. Some students read the Rhino Reader books, and some older students read the Oxford Reading Tree series and have individualised reading interventions.



Curriculum

Formal

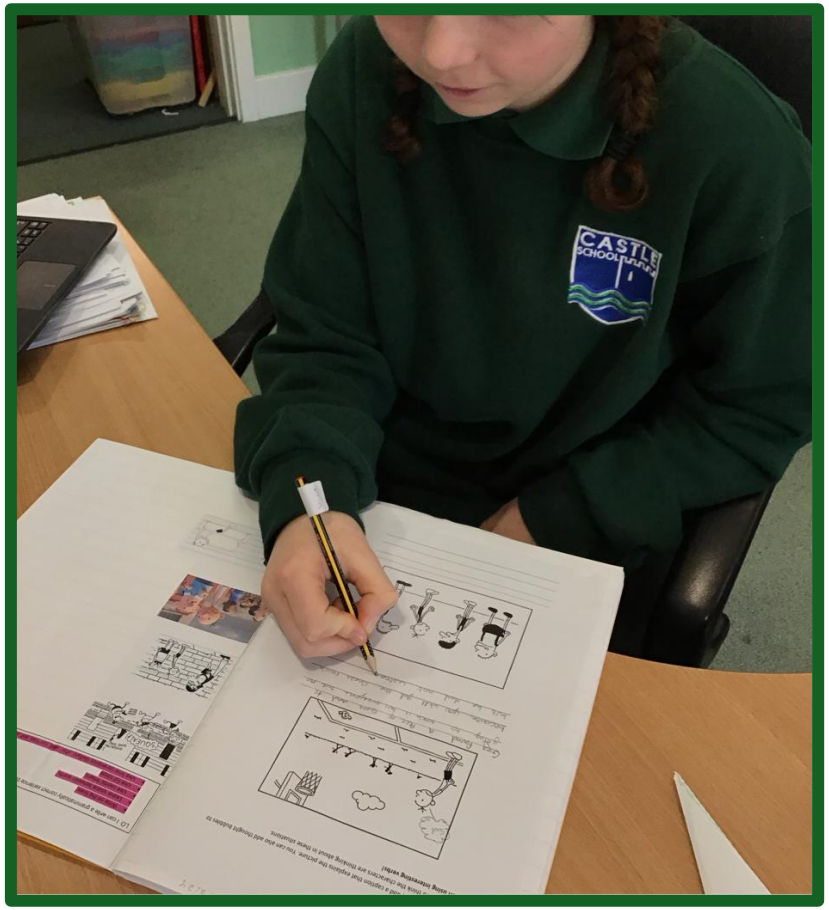
Formal English sessions are delivered by class teachers, following planning designed by a subject specialist in collaboration with class teachers. In Key Stage 4 and 5, specialist teachers support the delivery of sessions.

The formal curriculum is centred around a text that is studied for half a term and focuses on developing students' reading and writing skills towards accreditation.

Students in KS3 are assessed via the Castle Gemstone levels. Students in KS4 work towards the OCR Entry Level in English. Students in KS5 work on the Functional Skills qualification or a GCSE in English Language.

Students have a daily reading slot where they develop their fluency and comprehension. Students are taught different strands of reading comprehension each half term.

As students' progress through the school, there is an increased focus on functional literacy skills needed for work and independent living.



Curriculum Information

The English curriculum at Castle School is based on the National Curriculum but has been adapted to better suit our pupils needs. We aim to ensure that that there is a clear progression through the school, starting from Early Years Foundation Stage, progressing through the Castle Levels (Rainbow and Gemstones) and into accreditation and exams.

We have created our own assessment framework based on Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework, Birth to Five Matters (SEND), the AET Framework, and the National Curriculum expectations for phonics, reading and writing. These levels are called the Castle Rainbows, which outline the EYFS goals and the Castle Gemstones, which outline the National Curriculum expectations.

The Rainbows and Gemstones frameworks feed into our accreditation pathways. Pupils in the Key Stage 5 Formal Pathway undertake a Pearson Functional Skills English qualification encompassing speaking and listening, reading and writing. Pupils in the Key Stage 4 Semi-Formal Pathway begin to undertake a five-year qualification of 'Life and Living Skills' with OCR encompassing speaking and listening, reading and writing.

Year 1 Autumn 1	English	PSHE	Maths	Our World
Key Stage 3	Book: **Alice in Wonderland** **Focus:** Punctuation **Writing Genre Focus:** Portal Story Reading focus: Fluency. Vocabulary (tier1,2,3). Comprehension - **retrieval**	**Focus:** Healthy Lifestyles • Healthy Eating • Elements of a healthy lifestyle	**Focus:** Number Place value Addition and subtraction	Humanities : Britain 1066-1509 Battle of Hastings, Castles, medieval life. Tudor period Science: Living things Cooking - Healthy Meals and Packed Lunches ICT: Power point Digital footprint
Key Stage 4	OCR qualification Book: **Iron Man** **Focus:** Punctuation & Descriptive Writing **Writing Genre Focus:** Writing from the point of view of a character (Diary) Reading focus: Fluency. Vocabulary (tier1,2,3). Comprehension - **retrieval**	**Focus:** Healthy Lifestyles • Body image Including pressure from the media • Healthy eating	OCR qualification Number - Place value Addition and subtraction Problem solving **Financial education:** Looking after my money Saving money	OCR qualification • Work related learning • Geography entry level Science: Science and human body
Key Stage 5	Functional skills qualification Book: **Non-Fiction: Animal and Human Rights** **Writing Genre:** Letters	**Focus:** Healthy Lifestyles • Drugs, alcohol & tobacco	Functional skills qualification • **Financial education:** foreign currency **Maths for life** (Contextualized learning through real-life projects) - **Phones**	**Stem projects:** Renewable energy, Knex kits Minecraft - Sustainability city Work related learning, Duke of Edinburgh, College links, Careers, Travel Training, Enterprise

Planning for Progression and Sequencing of Learning

At the early stages of development, pupils explore English skills through stories and themes, experiencing learning through play, rhymes and games. The sequence of learning begins with a creative hook to provide an immersive experience to build on pupils' cultural capital. Teachers then provide a bespoke sequence of learning, based on individual or class developmental needs.

In the semi-formal and formal pathways, a core text is studied half-termly with a focus on specific reading and writing outcomes, so that over the course of a planning cycle, students build on skills previously learned. Each half-term is linked with a specific writing outcome, which provides the writing outcome for the half-term.



Strands of Learning

Reading

Our aim is to foster a love of reading and equip our learners with the reading skills needed for life. For some, this means accessing longer written texts, and for others, this means functional literacy and the enjoyment of stories. We teach reading by providing a range of highly motivating, engaging and individualised activities and environments. Targeted 1:1 reading interventions are offered to specific students identified through assessment.

Curriculum

- **Pre-Formal**: Exposure to a range of stories and story-telling activities through multi-sensory experiences, developing communication and listening skills with phase 1 of phonics.
- **Semi-Formal**: Primary semi-formal learners require a blended approach, which incorporates engaging sensory experiences and environments alongside explicit phonics teaching through phases 2-6 depending on individual pupil assessment. Secondary semi-formal learners learn high-level comprehension skills through a blend of sensory activities and concrete experiences, which are adapted to meet their individual needs.
- **Formal**: Supported by the Castle 'Reading Comprehension guidance' which focuses on developing pupils' reading fluency and comprehension, so that they can access and understand a range of text types. This approach blends reading for pleasure as well as purpose to broaden pupils' range of understanding of different reading material.



Strands of Learning

Writing

Our aim is to develop pupils' gross and fine motor skills, self-expression, intentional and purposeful mark-making, independent thought, letter formation and metacognitive skills to support their writing. Some of our learners then progress to formal writing, where we aim for our learners to independently think, construct and write a range of sentence types and study a range of text genres to write for different purposes and audiences. We also aim to develop pupils' proficiency with digital technologies to assist them to express their thoughts and ideas for different purposes and audiences.

Curriculum

- **Pre-formal**: A focus on posture and the building of fine and gross-motor skills, so pupils can manipulate a range of different tools and purposefully make marks through bespoke interventions, sensory activities and curated learning opportunities.
- **Semi-formal**: A focus on letter formation and pencil grip, alongside an understanding of sentence composition through Colourful Semantics and fine motor interventions. A focus on spelling taught through explicit and discreet phonics lessons through the Twinkl phonics programme and through indivudual spelling feedback to students.
- **Formal**: A focus on the conventions of sentence and paragraph structure, by writing from experience and for different purposes and audiences.



Strands of Learning

Speaking and Listening

Our aim is to provide opportunities for children to communicate effectively, through their preferred mode of communication (vocalisation of sounds and words; the use of symbols and Makaton) so they can express their wants, needs, feelings, thoughts and participate in conversation. To actively teach listening skills so pupils can respond and follow requests and instructions.



Curriculum

- **Pre-Formal**: An introduction to 'bucket sessions' in line with the Attention Autism approach, with a focus on modelling and encouraging simple language, followed by the introduction of symbols.
- **Semi-Formal**: A focus on developing symbol use and exposure to longer sentence structure in communication. Students begin to ask and answer simple questions in class discussions, using their voice, Makaton or symbols. Students practice turn-taking in speaking and listening activities.
- **Formal**: A focus on developing a range of speaking and listening skills, including conversation, discussion, role-play, debating, and speech-making.

Cross Curricular Phonics

Phonics is taught explicitly three times a week in semi-formal classes and taught discreetly twice a week. Phonics is taught explicitly four times a week in emerging formal classes and taught discreetly once a week.

The outcomes from the Twinkl phonics programme across phases 1 to 6 have been carefully sequenced. Teachers will plan phonics sessions according to the Twinkl phonics programme when teaching their explicit phonics lessons.

We have mapped and linked phonics learning outcomes from phases 1 – 6 across different curriculum areas (cooking, forest school, swimming, PE, community visits, soft play room, explore room and the library), so that teachers can consolidate pupils' phonemic awareness in different curriculum subjects.



Core Vocabulary

Pre-formal core vocabulary is linked to life and living skills, and it is modelled by adults, alongside symbol use and Makaton signing. Vocabulary is organised around specific events in a students' day, e.g. asking for 'more' at lunchtime to empower pupils with practical daily vocabulary to express their wants and needs.

In all pathways, further core vocabulary is generated from texts and half-termly themes. In the semi-formal pathways, teachers select and teach vocabulary for pupils to use practically as a life-skill. Teachers use colourful semantics, communication aids and Makaton signing to teach essential vocabulary. The focus is not on isolated vocabulary but rather to teach vocabulary in context.

In the formal and emerging formal pathways, teachers select and teach Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary from their class texts according to the Castle ' Reading guidance.' Alongside this, the formal pathway teaches vocabulary through the 'word of the day' to encourage pupils to make links between words.



Preparing for Adulthood

Preparing every pupil for their next steps.

Our focus on Preparation for Adulthood starts in Early Years and progresses through the school. Students need communication and literacy skills to help grow their personal independence, their ability to access the community and, for some, the world of work.



Employment

- Accreditation
- A focus on getting readers to age 8 and above in ability.
- Building confident communicators.

Independent Living

- Developing life skills e.g. ability to provide and receive information and communicate effectively with others.

Community Inclusion

- Projects involving communication at all levels (e.g. Makaton, symbol use, reading and writing, speaking and listening).

Health

- Taught through our formal curriculum
- Developing communication skills around personal health and well-being.

Celebrations and Events

- World Book Day.
- World Book Night.
- National Storytelling Week.
- Poetry writing, playwriting, role-play and performance for events in the hall and library.
- English and Drama based activities as part of 'Creativity Week' in school.
- School productions.



Extended Opportunities and Partners

Links with local theatre companies and venues to visit performances and gain opportunities to work with professionals at school and in professional performance spaces.

Visiting professionals, including poets and authors.





Assessment and Accreditation

Assessment is an integral part of our teaching and learning process. Each child has assessment books in phonics, reading and writing which are based on our bespoke assessment frameworks and the Twinkl phonics programme.

Pupils are baselined in phonics at the start of the academic year, and teachers contribute to ongoing judgements according to the Twinkl phonics programme. Pupils reading and comprehension age is assessed through Salford Reading Test.

Pre-formal learners follow Birth to Five matters and the AET frameworks to assess pupils PLG or EHCP targets.
Semi-formal learners use the Rainbow Framework, which is adapted from the Birth to 5 Matters and the EYFS statutory framework.
Semi-formal and formal learners use the Gemstone framework, which is adapted from the National curriculum.

Accreditation: The Gemstones frameworks feed into our accreditation pathways. Formal KS5 pupils undertake a Pearson Functional skills qualification. Semi-formal KS4 pupils undertake the OCR Life and Living Skills or OCR Entry Level.

