WOODMANSEY CE
PRIMARY SCHOOL

Building Strong Foundations · Unlocking Potential · Inspiring a Generation

Vocabulary Policy

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1. Relationship Between Charter, Policy and Planning

Vocabulary unlocks access to the curriculum, social participation and precise self-expression. It contributes to Woodmansey's vision by building language foundations and widening the ideas pupils can encounter, understand and communicate.

This whole-school policy sits alongside the Reading, Writing and Oracy Charters and every subject policy. Subject charters establish disciplinary language; long-term plans secure cumulative encounters; unit plans identify essential words, concepts and contexts; daily teaching introduces, revisits and expects pupils to use them.

2. Subject Overview

Vocabulary knowledge includes pronunciation, meaning, grammatical behaviour, morphology, relationships with other words and the contexts in which a word is appropriately used. Knowing a word is therefore more than recalling a definition.

Woodmansey develops vocabulary through rich talk, reading aloud, independent reading, explicit instruction, subject teaching and writing. Teachers distinguish everyday language, high-utility academic language and technical subject vocabulary, while selecting only words important enough to teach deeply.

3. Intent

Our intent is that pupils acquire a broad, deep and usable vocabulary that supports comprehension, reasoning, writing and participation across the curriculum.

Pupils should:

- extend oral language from EYFS onwards through sustained interaction
- teach important words explicitly in meaningful contexts
- develop word consciousness and curiosity about language
- connect words through categories, synonyms, antonyms, morphology and semantic networks
- use roots, prefixes, suffixes and etymology to unlock word families
- revisit words across time, texts, subjects and modes
- support pupils to move words from recognition into confident speech and writing
- remove vocabulary barriers without simplifying the curriculum.

4. Implementation

i. Vocabulary in the Curriculum Hierarchy

Unit plans identify a small set of words essential to understanding the unit, alongside recurring disciplinary language. Teachers check prior knowledge and plan repeated encounters in explanation, reading, talk, practical work and outcomes. Word lists without conceptual teaching are insufficient.

ii. Selecting Words

Words are selected because they unlock a concept, recur across contexts, support precise reasoning or are likely to remain unfamiliar without teaching. Teachers avoid overloading displays and lessons with too many targets.

iii. Explicit Teaching

Effective teaching includes pronunciation, a pupil-friendly explanation, examples and non-examples, morphology where useful, links to known words and immediate use in talk. Pupils encounter the word in the original text or phenomenon and then in varied contexts.

iv. Revisiting and Retrieval

Words are revisited after increasing intervals through low-stakes retrieval, classification, oral explanation, sentence construction, reading and writing. Teachers prompt precise use and return to words when later units deepen or alter understanding.

v. Reading, Storytime and Book Talk

Reading aloud and Story Masters expose pupils to language beyond everyday speech. Adults prepare a limited number of high-value words, clarify them without destroying narrative flow and return to them through discussion and later contexts.

vi. Morphology and Word Families

Pupils learn how roots, bases and affixes carry meaning across word families. Teachers connect vocabulary and spelling so knowledge of words supports both comprehension and accurate transcription.

vii. Inclusion, EAL and Communication Needs

Support may include objects, images, gesture, bilingual knowledge, additional repetition, pre-teaching, sentence frames and opportunities for meaningful use. Pupils learning English are encouraged to connect languages and participate in ambitious content. Staff distinguish limited word knowledge from limited conceptual understanding.

viii. EYFS Foundations and Word Consciousness

EYFS adults create extended back-and-forth interaction, comment, recast, explain and revisit words through play, stories, songs and routines. Across school, curiosity about word choice, origin, shades of meaning and figurative use is celebrated without turning every encounter into a formal lesson.

5. Impact

Pupils should understand and use an increasingly broad range of words, learn new vocabulary more efficiently and recognise that precise word choice strengthens thinking as well as communication.

Pupils will be able to:

- pronounce and explain important curriculum words
- use words appropriately in speech and writing
- connect words through meaning, morphology and subject concepts
- infer or investigate unfamiliar words using several strategies
- distinguish everyday and disciplinary meanings
- retain vocabulary across units and apply it in new contexts
- show curiosity and confidence when encountering ambitious language.

6. Assessment

Assessment occurs through listening, questioning, retrieval, reading comprehension and authentic use in explanation and writing. Teachers consider depth: a pupil may recognise a word before being able to explain or use it independently.

Assessment information identifies which words or concepts need revisiting and whether the barrier is pronunciation, meaning, syntax, background knowledge or confidence.

This allows teachers to ensure that pupils are developing:

- accurate pronunciation and recognition
- depth and precision of explanation
- connections with examples, non-examples and related words
- independent use in talk and writing
- retention and transfer across contexts
- strategies for investigating unfamiliar vocabulary.

7. Leadership, Monitoring and Review

The English subject leader supports staff in understanding the curriculum, maintaining consistency and securing strong outcomes for all pupils. Leadership is developmental: monitoring identifies strengths, tests whether the intended curriculum is being learned and leads to precise support, coaching or curriculum refinement.

The subject leader will:

- reviewing vocabulary selection in subject and unit planning
- observing explanation, talk and retrieval across classrooms
- talking with pupils about words and concepts they have learned
- checking that displays are purposeful, current and used

- supporting staff with morphology, explicit explanation and language-sensitive teaching
- evaluating access for pupils with EAL or speech, language and communication needs.

This policy is reviewed every three years, or sooner when statutory expectations, the adopted programme, school priorities or evaluated pupil need require a change. Any revision must remain aligned with the relevant charter, long-term planning and unit-plan hierarchy.

8. Subject Specific Pedagogy and Non-Negotiables

The following expectations preserve the distinctive quality of vocabulary at Woodmansey. They should be read alongside the relevant charter, long-term plan, unit or medium-term planning and agreed teaching resources.

Teach Fewer Words More Deeply

Teachers select the words with the greatest conceptual or transferable value and plan multiple meaningful encounters.

Words Live in Context

Definitions are connected to texts, phenomena, images, examples and use. Pupils are not expected to learn decontextualised lists.

Pronounce, Explain, Connect, Use

Every explicitly taught word is said accurately, explained clearly, connected to known language and used by pupils.

Revisit Deliberately

A word is not considered learned after one display or lesson. Retrieval and application are planned across time.

Vocabulary Does Not Lower the Ceiling

Pupils who need language support continue to encounter ambitious concepts, with additional pathways into the vocabulary.