

Literacy Strategy

Effective Learning and Teaching Approaches

Improving the literacy/English skills of all children and young people is a national priority with the aim of raising attainment, reducing inequality, improving life chances and employment prospects.

‘Language and literacy are of personal, social and economic importance... Literacy is fundamental to all areas of learning, as it unlocks access to the wider curriculum. Being literate increases opportunities for the individual in all aspects of life, lays the foundations for lifelong learning and work, and contributes strongly to the development of all four capacities of *Curriculum for Excellence*’. Principles and Practice Paper, P1

In broad terms, within East Dunbartonshire, effective learning and teaching in Literacy and English will involve a skilful mix of appropriate approaches including:

- the use of relevant, real-life and enjoyable contexts which build upon children and young people’s own experiences;
- effective direct and interactive teaching;
- a balance of spontaneous play and planned activities;
- harnessing the motivational benefits of following children and young people’s interests through responsive planning;
- collaborative working and independent thinking and learning;
- making meaningful links for learners across different curriculum areas;
- building on the principles of Assessment is for Learning;
- frequent opportunities to communicate in a wide range of contexts, for relevant purposes and for real audiences within and beyond places of learning;
- the development of problem-solving skills and approaches;
- the appropriate and effective use of ICT.

In addition to the above, Literacy learning should develop metacognition so that learners from the earliest stages are aware of what and how they are learning; develop higher order thinking skills and the ability to think critically; use a wide range of texts including spoken, written, Scots Language and digital texts to promote literacy development; be well planned and demonstrate progression, breadth and depth in learning across all stages; provide opportunities for literacy learning to take place across the four contexts; promote creative approaches and the imagination; ensure that children are actively engaged in their own learning; make connections between listening, talking, reading and writing explicit to learners; provide opportunities for children to apply the knowledge and skills they have learned in literacy to other curriculum areas; ensure that appropriate support and challenge is provided for learners in order to meet their needs and ensure equity for all learners.

Effective Learning and Teaching Approaches in the Early Years

The Vocabulary Gap

As stated previously, a child’s vocabulary at 2 years is an accurate predictor of their reading ability at 7 and 11 years and thereafter their educational attainments and outcomes at 26 years (Feinstein 2003)

Letter naming and phonological awareness, at early level, are highly predictive of children’s subsequent performance in literacy. Word recognition/identification, language comprehension, rapid naming skills and phonemic decoding are less predictive but are still of value as are a child’s levels of motivation and persistence (POLARR; Topping 2014).

What happens to children in their early years is key to improving literacy outcomes. Children who attend high quality early years provision are likely to be more successful, both academically and socially, in primary school, secondary school and into adulthood.

Much has been written regarding the vocabulary gap in the early years and the long lasting effects this can have on children's achievement and attainment over time.

'Children from lower socio-economic backgrounds go to school having heard 32 million fewer words on average than their middle class peers. As a result, their comprehension and language development is likely to be more limited.' 'Read On – Get On'. – P15

Play is a crucial part of early years learning and the role of the EY practitioner is of huge importance in supporting young children to develop skills, scaffold learning, extend and consolidate thinking and learning in play. We also know that the first five years of life is the optimum time for children to acquire their language skills. 'Building the Ambition' – P29

The Vocabulary Gap

Some ideas to promote vocabulary development and communication in the early years:-

- Effective use of non-verbal cues such as gesture and facial expressions to provide unspoken acknowledgement e.g. by smiling / nodding in approval;
- Ask questions to help extend children's play / understanding and vocabulary;
- Step in to conversations and play situations to ask a probing question, such as: 'What would happen if?'
- Model new and interesting words and phrases with just enough challenge to support children's language and communication skills;
- Describe to the child what they are thinking and doing and encourage the child to do the same;
- Provide time to talk in a supportive, unhurried way with a key adult in order to promote quality conversations;
- Make time to talk and listen to what a young child is saying and try to build on their meaning. Reply in a way that children will understand but which also models new language and descriptions;
- Encourage children to talk with each other and adults to share their thinking and ideas;
- Develop vocabulary enrichment through reading books – choose books whereby the illustrations match the meaning of the text. Discuss the meaning of new and unfamiliar words after sharing the text.
- Encourage children to play with rhyme and rhythm, songs and silly words to have fun and promote enjoyment of words and language;
- Expose children to a varied, rich and meaningful vocabulary;
- Ensure children know that both spoken and written words are important;
- Repeat new words that offer just the right amount of challenge in a range of nursery area / contexts;
- Provide interesting objects to touch / observe which stimulate questions / language and communication;
- Encourage and value conversations through play and real life contexts inside and out of doors;
- Family Learning – involve parents in developing understanding of importance of vocabulary and communication and the importance of talk / reading. Promotion of family literacy initiatives.

In addition to the above, children in the Early Years should have opportunity to experience a literacy rich environment. They should have opportunity to develop early learning skills through their interaction with both children and adults. Play, investigation, exploration and the development of curiosity and creativity are crucial.

- There should be a mix of opportunities for both child –led and adult-led activities to promote learning. There should be explicit links between play and learning;
- Effective and skilled questioning by staff is essential in promoting learners' early literacy skills;
- Children should be consulted on their learning and asked their opinion – activities should build on what learners already know;
- A range of meaningful contexts should be created within and outwith the nursery to promote literacy development so that children see that this is not something they just do at the writing table or book corner;
- Children must have opportunity to both listen and talk for a range of purposes;
- They should have opportunity to listen to and follow instructions for a range of reasons. They should be supported to listen and take turns in a conversation;
- Reading – children must have opportunity to listen to and hear a range of different texts read to them as well as having favourite and familiar texts read to them on a regular basis;

- Children should have opportunity to experience an exciting and well-resourced book area (including quality story books, fiction / non fiction texts/ poetry / rhyme), books children have made themselves, recordings of experiences and stories they want to share and tell with their peer group and adults;
- Be provided with opportunities to hear / say / identify the initial sound of their name and eventually their whole name;
- Experience of Nursery Rhymes – we know from research that knowledge of nursery rhymes can be a predictor of later reading success. Children should have opportunity to hear and recite a range of nursery rhymes and also have opportunity to play with the rhyming patterns in words e.g. nonsense rhymes;
- Draw children’s attention of words, both verbal and in print, and helps them realise print has meaning; for example, labelling their own pictures, writing during shop or home play, writing cards and letters and signs or labels on resources;
- Writing – children should have access to a range of mark making tools across the nursery and in a range of play contexts. They should have opportunities to use their drawings and mark makings to express their thoughts and ideas;
- Staff should have a clear understanding of the stages of early writing development in order that they can support children to develop such skills according to their needs and stage of development;
- Children should be provided with a range of meaningful and relevant activities to practise their writing skills e.g. self registration, making shopping lists, writing notes and plans;
- Staff should share writing for everyday purposes, explaining why and pointing out signs and symbols and what they mean;
- Encourage an interest in early writing skills and opportunities to mark make in real life contexts with clear mark-making tools, paint, pens and brushes;
- Encourages children’s own sense of self by using their names, both oral and written, and those of friends and family frequently.

English Review -3-18 – Page 7
Early Years Advice – pages 8 and 9
Building the Ambition

Effective Learning and Teaching Strategies within the Primary School

Listening and Talking

- Contribute to class and group discussions;
- Ask and answer questions and access a range of texts including written, digital and Scots Language;
- Listen and talk with confidence across a range of topics and curriculum areas;
- Have opportunities to develop Pupil Voice through Committees and assemblies;
- Talk with increasing confidence to a range of audiences;
- Respect the contributions of others;
- Have increased ability to summarise and clarify key points;
- Use appropriate tone, pace, language and register to engage the audience.

Reading

- Develop awareness of rhyme and patterns in language;
- Aware of common features of books and are beginning to ask questions to help understand what they have read;
- Share their ideas and opinions regarding texts they have read;
- Locate information from a range of sources and select / sort information to support their views.
- Can use a range of reading tools and become metacognitively aware of what would be the most appropriate strategy to use when;
- Have real life opportunities to skim to ascertain the gist of a text or to scan for a specific piece of information;
- Are able to read texts with increasing fluency, expression and accuracy;
- Have opportunities to read between and beyond the lines of text in order to comprehend texts more fully;
- Be provided with opportunities to apply their reading skills across a range of curriculum areas;
- Experience a range of texts which offer appropriate levels of challenge and increase in complexity;

- The link between reading and writing is made explicit to learners so that they can begin to use some of the techniques and effective figurative language in their own writing;

Writing

- Children should have opportunities to write effectively for a range of different purposes and audiences;
- Opportunities to write for a range of real and relevant contexts;
- Can plan, make notes and write at length with increasing confidence;
- Whole school approaches to writing are used in order to ensure children are developing skills in a coherent and consistent way;
- Children have opportunities from the early stages to experience high quality texts and encouraged to consider, at their own level, what makes a good text;
- Children should be given many opportunities to write at length for a range of purposes across the four contexts in order to improve achievement and attainment in literacy;
- Continue to give a high priority to technical accuracy, presentation and developing children's understanding and use of punctuation, sentence structure and paragraphing.
- Whole school approaches to writing are used in order to ensure children are learning skills in a planned and progressive way which builds on their prior learning;
- Opportunities are provided for learners to familiarise themselves with a range of writing styles and genres; this should be planned into blocks of time so children have adequate experience;
- A wide range of vocabulary is used and children learn how to use this and apply this appropriately to engage the reader;
- Children experience a range of figurative language, vocabulary, punctuation, effective sentence started and conjunctions and know how to use these to make their writing interesting;
- Children should be provided with quality models of writing and have opportunity to deconstruct these with the teacher so that they can begin to use such strategies in their own writing e.g. simile, metaphor.
- Children should receive timely feedback about their writing and offered next steps to help improve their writing,
- Learners must be provided with enough time to write extended pieces of writing;
- Children should be encouraged on a regular basis to read their writing to ensure it makes sense and become self – reflective on the writing process;
- Peer and self assessment approaches should be used to help children improve their writing.
- A high priority to should be given to technical accuracy, presentation, use of a variety of sentence structure and paragraphing.
- Have opportunities to embed what they have learned about the writing process in literacy across a range of curriculum areas.

Effective Learning and Teaching Strategies within the Secondary School

Listening and Talking

- Learners should have opportunity to articulate / present ideas and information well in a variety of contexts;
- Express views and opinions confidently and listen actively and attentively;
- Ask relevant and pertinent questions which relate to the topic;
- Clarify and summarise key points while listening to, and building on, the contributions of others;
- Find and organise information clearly and coherently during talks and presentations;
- Use tone and register appropriate for the purpose and audience;
- Analyse the features of spoken language and recognise the effect these have on the listener;
- Develop critical listening skills and increased understanding of pace, expression, emphasis, register and rhetorical devices such as hyperbole, repetition and rhetorical questions;
- Apply their learning about language to give effective speeches and talks e.g. within relevant and real life contexts such as enterprise pitches or persuasive talks.

Reading

- Analyse texts and recognise techniques that are used to influence the reader thus developing critical literacy skills;
- Increasingly able to identify sources independently and find information relevant to their requirements;
- Synthesise information from different reading sources and make notes;

- Develop skills in responding to and answering a range of literal, inferential and evaluative questions through the analysis of literature and the close reading of non-fiction texts;
- Develop higher order thinking skills to develop learners' ability to think critically and be more analytical and evaluative when engaging with texts;
- Ensure that learners have opportunity to experience a range of texts – e.g. printed texts, web pages and electronic texts of appropriate complexity and challenge especially when the focus is developing higher order reading skills.

Writing

- Develop skills in writing appropriately for the purpose and audience;
- Select and organise ideas well and convey information clearly;
- Describe events or personal experiences in detail;
- Links between reading and writing are made explicit and learners have opportunity to apply their learning about language and literacy techniques in their own writing;
- Continue to focus on technical accuracy, presentation and children's and young people's understanding and use of punctuation, sentence structure and paragraphing.
- Develop and apply writing skills effectively across other areas of the curriculum;
- Provide opportunities across learning within a range of relevant, rich contexts;
- Progressive skills in the teaching of English to help learners use more engaging vocabulary, a more sophisticated range of language and improve the content, structure and organisation of their ideas.

Literacy across Learning within Secondary Schools

'Competence and confidence in literacy, including competence in grammar, spelling and the spoken word, are essential for progress in all areas of the curriculum. Because of this, all teachers have responsibility for promoting language and literacy development. Every teacher in each area of the curriculum needs to find opportunities to encourage young people to explain their thinking, debate their ideas and read and write at a level which will help them to develop their language skills further'.

Literacy across Learning - Principles and Practice, Page 1.

All staff should have a clear understanding of the role they play in raising standards in literacy for all. Each school should have a clear, agreed set of learning and teaching approaches that are being used to raise attainment in literacy with staff having opportunity to participate in professional development to enable them to support learners' literacy skills effectively

Some reflective questions to consider:-

- Do staff have a shared understanding of skills young people should be developing to improve the quality of their talks and discussion?
- How can staff in all subject areas make talking and listening skills more explicit to young people?
- Are staff in all subject areas giving feedback to young people to support them to develop and extend their talking and listening skills?
- How does the school use the four contexts of the curriculum to ensure young people have relevant, real life opportunities to develop and extend their listening and talking skills?
- Does the school have a coherent and consistent approach to developing listening and talking skills across the four contexts for learning?
- Do staff have shared standards and expectations and do they apply these consistently whenever listening and talking is taking place?
- To what extent are young people provided with relevant and challenging contexts to present their learning to others? What approaches do staff use to support learners to extend and develop their presentation skills?
- How are staff developing their understanding of the standards to enable them to confidently give formative feedback to young people?

Reading / Writing

- How do staff in each subject area introduce more challenging vocabulary? Are learners offered opportunities to explore new vocabulary across all subject areas?

- How can a whole school approach help to support learners in developing and consolidating vocabulary in all subject areas?
- Are learners expected to read a wide range of appropriately challenging texts across all curricular areas?
- How can you build up a bank of relevant and varied texts of different levels of challenge to enhance the subject content (e.g. newspaper articles, reference books, web pages)?
- Is staff confident in their use of questioning and ensuring that they offer a variety of question types?
- Are learners given regular opportunities to develop their own questions and supported in the creation of different types of questions?
- Do staff ensure that they are offering the opportunity for learners to discuss the texts that they are using?
- Do learners have opportunities to choose texts for themselves and to justify their choices?
- What opportunities are there across subject areas to develop learners' skills in evaluating relevance, reliability and credibility of non-digital and digital texts?
- How do staff plan for consistent teaching and consolidation of research skills across subject areas?
- How do staff support learners to locate information from digital and non-digital sources?
- How do staff support learners to assess the relevance, reliability and credibility of texts?
- How do staff support learners to apply reading strategies to texts that they have selected for themselves?
- How do staff support learners to make meaningful notes that will help them to create their own text at the end of the research process?

Literacy across Learning – Professional Learning Materials – Education Scotland Website

What should be included within a school's literacy policy?

- Literacy Planning - clear progression pathways referencing the Literacy and English Experiences and Outcomes and Benchmarks;
- Literacy Curriculum organisation;
- Learning and Teaching approaches;
- Ways in which Literacy across Learning is developed;
- Family and home learning approaches;
- Assessment, Achievement and Attainment in Literacy Learning;
- Equity – how this is addressed with regard to Literacy Learning;
- Universal and targeted support;
- Moderation;
- Monitoring and Tracking;
- Staff responsibilities.