

Language and Literacy Policy



St Mary's Primary School
Banbridge

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INTRODUCTION

We, in St Mary's Primary School, believe that children's language and literacy skills are central to living and learning. Every teacher promotes and supports the development of children's talking, listening, reading, writing and thinking skills in a variety of meaningful contexts in all curricular areas.

This policy document will outline the strategies and approaches we will support and develop in order to ensure that each child becomes equipped with the necessary language knowledge, understanding and skills.

The overall curriculum planning reflects the Northern Ireland Curriculum (CCEA, 2007), the aims of the school and the priorities outlined in the school development plan. Continuity and progression in our language planning is underpinned by the learning intentions outlined in the SELB Primary Language Framework (Revised 2007).

At St Mary's Primary School, we intend that, by the end of Key Stage 2, children will be able to understand and use language, both spoken and written, as an integral part of learning in all areas. The development of these skills enables children to interact effectively in the world around them, to express themselves creatively and to communicate confidently, using the four modes of communication (talking and listening, reading and writing) and a variety of skills and media.

The Schools Improvement policy document, 'Every School a Good School,' (DENI 2009) has outlined indicators of what will be recognised as effective performance under four headings:

- Child centred provision
- High quality teaching and learning
- Effective leadership
- A school connected to its local community.

The strategy to Improve Outcomes in Literacy and Numeracy: Count Read: Succeed (DENI 2011) aims to:

- support teachers and school leaders in their work to raise overall levels of attainment in literacy among young people
- narrow the current gaps in educational outcomes.

Count, Read: Succeed paragraph 1.7 defines literacy as:

'the ability to read and use written information and to write appropriately and legibly, taking account of different purposes, contexts, conventions and audiences. It involves the development of:

- a. an integrated approach to the acquisition of talking, listening, reading and writing skills across the curriculum;
- b. knowledge that allows a speaker, writer and reader to use language appropriate to different social situations;
- c. formal and informal language across all areas of social interaction; and

- d. the ability to read, understand and use information in multiple formats and platforms, including traditional print and on-screen material.

CHILD CENTRED PROVISION

The following indicators from Every School A Good School (ESaGS) will be reflected in the school's approaches:

- decisions on planning, resources, curriculum and pastoral care reflect at all times the needs and aspirations of the pupils within the school
- a clear commitment exists to promoting equality of opportunity, high quality learning, a concern for individual pupils and a respect for diversity
- a school culture of achievement, improvement and ambition exists with clear expectations that all pupils can and will achieve to the very best of their ability
- effective interventions and support are in place to meet the additional education and other needs of pupils and to help them overcome barriers to learning
- there is a commitment to involve young people in discussions and decisions on school life that directly affect them and to listen to their views

Inclusion

We aim to provide a sufficiently broad, balanced and flexible curriculum which is tailored to meet the needs of all children in St Mary's Primary School. We will identify children who are under-achieving, those with special educational needs, talented and gifted children and take the necessary steps to improve their attainment in Language and Literacy.

In Count Read: Succeed (DENI 2011) The strategy to Improve Outcomes in Literacy and Numeracy the following five steps that teachers will do to raise literacy standards have been identified.

1. provide high quality teaching for all pupils through:

- a variety of teaching strategies, e.g. modelled, shared and guided
- a range of learning experiences which appeal to all different types of learning styles
- different grouping strategies, e.g. pairs, small ability/mixed ability groups, snowballing, jig-sawing, etc.
- clearly defined differentiation
- providing opportunities for independent and extended learning experiences

2. address underachievement as soon as it emerges by:

Count, Read: Succeed, paragraph 1:13 defines underachievement as 'a situation where performance is below what is expected based on ability. It can apply at the level of an individual pupil or describe a class or school, or indeed a system.'

We recognise that assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process, a valuable formative, diagnostic and summative tool. Progress and achievement is monitored and used to inform future planning. These include:

- criterion-referenced tests (e.g. spelling, end of topic and comprehension tests.)
- standardised tests (P.I.E Primary 2 to Primary 7. CATS 4, N.N.R.I.T., GL Assessment Dyslexia Screener, Hodder Diagnostic Reading Assessment DRA, Alloway Automated Working Memory Assessment AWMA, British Picture Vocabulary Scale 3 BPVS)
- diagnostic tests (WRAPS 3, Middle Infant Screening Test M.I.S.T., Lexia Reading Programme)
- Running Records as a standardised reading assessment procedure (PM Benchmarking Kit 1 and 2)
- statutory end of Key Stage Assessment

The class teacher decides on the appropriate form of support:

- focused guided work
- additional resources
- support from classroom assistant, where appropriate
- identifying target areas and plan appropriate support (IEP to include SMART targets)

3. address continuing underachievement with support from other staff in the school:

Children who continue to underachieve and experience difficulties with their learning receive additional support from within the school. Class teachers decide to seek additional support from within the school when, for example:

- a. after several cycles of review and support the pupil is still underachieving;
- b. the extent of the underachievement has increased; or
- c. there has been an increase in the degree of special educational or pastoral needs of the child.

They will receive additional support from within the school. Intervention programmes are used to target the specific needs of individuals/groups of children who have been identified as underachieving or low achieving.

P2	Forward Together Programme (follow up to MIST), booster support with Literacy support teacher, Lexia Reading Programme, Phonic Books Reading Programme, Harberton Reading Scheme
P3	Reading Partnership, withdrawal support (Literacy Support teacher), Lexia Reading Programme, Phonic Books Reading Programme, Project X, Comprehension Booster Class
P4	Reading Partnership, withdrawal support (Literacy Support teacher), Lexia Reading Programme, Phonic Books Reading Programme, Texthelp Fluency Tutor Comprehension Booster Class, Project X
P5	Lexia Reading Programme- Home/School Support, Phonic Books Reading Programme, Texthelp Fluency Tutor, Comprehension Booster Class, Lexia Reading Programme, Project X
P6	Lexia Reading Programme - Home/School Support, Texthelp Fluency Tutor, Lexia Reading Programme, Project X
P7	Lexia Reading Programme- Home/School Support, Lexia Reading Programme, Project X

4. address continuing underachievement with support from outside the school:

Support by the class teacher will be continued or adapted after the review process and more than one approach may be deployed. The school will seek help if the child continues to underachieve.

Teachers will access external support to meet the needs of a child if he/she:

- a. has received appropriate on-going support from within the school and
- b. is continuing to underachieve against the targets set.

The school will decide to seek external support for the teacher from a number of sources, for example, Southern Education and Library Boards or health professionals. The additional support will focus on helping the teacher meet the needs of the child.

5. meet the needs of pupils after a non-statutory assessment through the SEN framework:

The teacher is responsible for meeting the needs of the child by:

- identifying any external support and/or resources required for the child in addition to school based provision already in place
- liaising closely with peripatetic teachers, speech therapists, occupational therapists, etc.

The special educational needs of individual children are identified in accordance with the school's special needs policy (updated November 2013). The class teacher draws up clear and realistic Education Plans which are focussed on addressing the identified areas for improvement. These plans are monitored and reviewed regularly in consultation with SENCO, parents, other professionals and support agencies, where appropriate.

Teachers recognise the vital role classroom assistants play in supporting children learning (see appendix 1, The role of the classroom assistant). All classroom assistants are given opportunities for continuing professional development (both in school and out centres).

Children have access to a wide range of age and developmentally appropriate resources which meet the diverse range of children's interests and abilities. The variety of resources available includes:

- a wide range of fiction, non-fiction, play scripts and poetry books to suit children of differing abilities and interests
- Interactive whiteboards and a range of ICT/media resources (*see ICT policy*)
- a variety of appropriate games and activities which will be integrated into day-to-day teaching and learning (commercially/teacher produced)
- a range of writing tools, for example, dry-wipe boards, chalks, markers, pencils, crayons, pens.

Equal opportunities

In St Mary's Primary School, we ensure the provision is open and accessible to all children, regardless of identity and background and in a manner that takes account of their abilities.

HIGH QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING

The following indicators from Every School a Good School (ESaGS) will be reflected in the school's approaches:

- a broad and relevant curriculum is provided for the pupils,
- an emphasis on literacy and numeracy exists across the curriculum
- teachers are committed and enthusiastic, enjoying a positive relationship with their pupils and with other school-based staff and dedicated to improving learning
- teachers use adaptable, flexible teaching strategies that respond to the diversity within the classroom
- assessment and other data is used to effectively inform teaching and learning across the school and in the classroom and to promote improvement
- rigorous self-evaluation is carried out by teachers and the whole school, using objective data and leading to sustained self-improvement
- teachers reflect on their own work and the outcomes of individual pupils
- education outcomes reflect positively on the school and compare well, when benchmarked measurement is undertaken, against the performance of similar schools

Teaching and Learning

Language and Literacy reflects the statutory curricular requirements (Northern Ireland Curriculum Primary CCEA 2007) (www.ccea.org.uk) and is supported by SELB Language Framework (2007) (www.clounagh.org)

Classroom organisation will vary to suit the purpose, context and children involved. The following range of organisational strategies will be employed:

- whole class teaching
- small group teaching (size, flexibility and composition of the groups will be given consideration – e.g. peer, ability, mixed ability, friendship groups, etc.)
- paired work – similar ability, less experienced pupil working with more experienced pupil
- individual – one-to-one tuition by teacher or classroom assistant
- independent work

Attention is given to classroom layout, wall displays, access to a diverse range of resources (fiction, non-fiction, ICT, media texts, resources from other cultures) and the provision of library areas, writing areas and listening areas with appropriate equipment.

We are aware that progress is enhanced when teachers are sensitive to differences in learning styles. Since children learn in different ways and at different rates, a flexible approach which encourages children's active engagement in their learning through problem solving will extend the pupils' use of thinking and language and promote independence. Teachers will have realistically high expectations and will ensure that all children understand what is expected of them by sharing the learning intention and success criteria with them (WALT and WILF).

Planning

Effective planning for purposeful learning and teaching activities provides opportunities to develop children's thinking and communication skills.

The long term planning (Northern Ireland Curriculum document and SELB Language Framework) ensures that the programme of learning for each child is broad and balanced, and promotes continuity and progression in children's learning. The short/medium term planning identifies learning intentions, assessment opportunities, differentiation, resources, integration of ICT to enhance and support children's learning and provides teachers with opportunities to reflect on classroom practice. Teachers evaluate plans and children's learning to inform future planning. Children have opportunities to contribute to the planning process and to peer and self assess.

Teaching Approaches

An appropriate range of learning and teaching strategies, which are active and practical in their nature, motivate the pupils and engage them purposefully in their work both collaboratively and independently.

The strands of talking, listening, group discussion and interaction, and drama permeate the whole curriculum. We recognise oral language as the primary mode of language and place a central

emphasis and focus in all areas of the curriculum and in the life of the school. Children are encouraged to listen attentively and to speak clearly, confidently, fluently and appropriately for a variety of different audiences and purposes.

Story boxes, thinking boxes, story sacks, 'show and tell' sessions, role play, hot seating, conscience alley, freeze frames, gallery sessions, performance readings at assemblies, speech and drama festivals, school productions, puppet shows, circle time, plan-do-review cycle, KWL grids, 'talking sticks', phonological awareness activities, music, listening games, rhymes, use of visualisers, as well as effective use of 'thinking time' help promote thinking skills and oracy. There is an emphasis on providing opportunities for the children to interact with teachers, other adults and with peers through the use number of grouping strategies such as think-pair-share, rainbowing, snowballing and jigsawing.

Children are encouraged to develop a love of books and the disposition to read. They have opportunities to listen to a range of interesting and exciting genre and share a range of books with adults and other children. The ability to read is fundamental to pupils' development as independent learners. In order to read across the curriculum with fluency, accuracy, understanding and enjoyment pupils need to orchestrate the range of strategies:

- phonic knowledge and skills
- contextual knowledge
- grammatical understanding
- word decoding and recognition
- language comprehension

Children throughout all Key Stages will engage in modelled, shared, guided and independent reading. In Key Stages 1 and 2 children will have opportunities to engage in silent reading and paired reading with either an adult or another child. All children have access to a wide variety of guided reading texts which are book banded. The class teacher/classroom assistant uses running records as an assessment tool to judge the suitability of the colour band. The Literacy Co-ordinator monitors to ensure that children are progressing through the colour bands at an appropriate rate.

A consistent approach to the teaching of phonics is implemented throughout the school. Through the Linguistic Phonics approach children gain the knowledge and skills necessary to become competent readers and spellers.

Book fairs, story sacks, library visits to the local library, visits from storytellers and authors in addition to a wide range of non-fiction and fiction texts, including ICT, are used to foster a love of reading as well as promote and support learning and teaching.

Writing should be seen as an enjoyable, purposeful and creative experience. It is taught within the wide context of literacy which underpins the whole curriculum. Children have opportunities, throughout the school day, to write for a range of purposes and audiences. They have regular opportunities, as a whole class, in small groups or individually to see modelled writing and to participate in shared writing. As they progress they have opportunities to write individually, with a

partner or in small groups with teacher/classroom assistant's guidance, where appropriate. Teachers promote the strategy 'Think it, Say it, Like it? Write it, Read it.'

Teachers also encourage on-going improvement in the children's learning through self-reflection and monitoring / evaluation of progress. Children's work will be marked positively and constructively in relation to the learning intention and the success criteria (WALT and WILF). The use of '**highlights and prompts**' will be used from P2-P7 (see *Marking for Improvement and Feedback Policy for further details*). Pupils will have opportunities to develop their writing skills in their Have a Go/ Creative Writing Book.

Children have opportunities to use a wide range of resources, for example, individual white boards, scaffolded writing frames, story boxes, a range of media and texts which help build confidence and a positive disposition to writing.

Teachers will seek to take advantage of opportunities to develop Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities and to make cross-curricular links. They will plan for pupils to practise and apply the skills, knowledge and understanding acquired through language lessons to other areas of the curriculum.

Handwriting is a skill which, like reading and spelling, affects written communication across the curriculum. Children must be able to write with ease, speed and legibility. Cursive handwriting teaches pupils to join letters and words as a series of flowing movements and patterns. Handwriting skills should be taught regularly and systematically.

At St Mary's Primary School our aims in teaching handwriting are that pupils will:

- Achieve a neat, legible style with correctly formed letters in accordance with the cursive font.
- Develop flow and speed.
- Eventually produce the letters automatically and in their independent writing.

To achieve coherence and continuity in learning and teaching across the school St Mary's follows the Cambridge University Press, Penpals for Handwriting scheme throughout the school. This allows for a consistent building block approach.

Penpals for Handwriting is a complete handwriting scheme for 3–11 year olds that offers clear progression through five developmental stages: physical preparation for handwriting; securing correct letter formation; beginning to join along, securing the joins and practicing speed, fluency and developing a personal style. Penpals is focused on whole-class teaching using digital resources to enable modelling and interactive learning, along with Practice Books and Workbooks to support independent work. The Foundation content is in line with the EYFS Framework and the Year 1–7 content supports frequent, discrete and direct teaching of handwriting for 5–11 year olds, as required by NI Curriculum.

Teachers are aware of the fact that it is very difficult for left-handed pupils to follow handwriting movements when a right-handed teacher models them. Teachers demonstrate to left-handers on an individual or group basis, even if the resulting writing is not neat.

Capital letters

Capital letters stand alone and are not joined to the next letter. Children must practice starting sentences and writing names using a capital letter and not joining the subsequent letter. This should be modelled by the teacher during Literacy and Phonics sessions.

The Learning Environment

In all classes, pencil pots with suitable materials are available for pupils to work at their own tables. Classrooms are equipped with a range of writing implements, line guides, word lists and dictionaries.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

The following indicators from Every School a Good School (ESaGS) will be reflected in the school's approaches:

- an effective school development plan is in place, providing clear and realistic targets for improvement based on a sound vision for the school
- governors understand their responsibilities and provide clear strategic direction as well as support and challenge to the Principal in carrying forward the process of improvement
- school leaders demonstrate a commitment to providing professional development opportunities for staff, particularly teachers, and promote a readiness to share and learn from best practice
- teachers are given the opportunity to share in the leadership of the school
- the resources at the disposal of the school are managed properly and effectively, with appropriate arrangements in place for financial management, attendance management, and working relationships
- school leaders monitor and evaluate effectively school outcomes, policies, practices and procedures and the School Development Plan itself

All teachers in St Mary's Primary School accept shared responsibility for promoting Literacy throughout the school. However, the literacy co-ordinator has responsibility for co-ordinating the development of language and literacy. There is a school development plan in place which has been contributed to and agreed and is supported by appropriate action planning for language and literacy. The literacy team, which was established in September 2010, analyses data, decides on a school/class focus, contributes to the School Development Plan, disseminates new initiatives and supports with classroom practice.

Role of the Literacy Co-ordinator

- provision of leadership and direction in promoting Literacy
- encouragement of high standards of teaching and learning, with particular responsibility for language and literacy across the curriculum
- development and review of a school Language and Literacy Policy in consultation with all staff
- support and motivation for colleagues
- setting of priorities and targets, in liaison with staff, to improve provision for all children
- identification of needs in the area of language and literacy in relation to the needs of the school, in consultation with the literacy team
- contribution to evaluation and monitoring procedures
- auditing and supporting colleagues in their continuing professional development (CPD)
- commitment to on-going professional development, and subsequent dissemination of key messages
- establish clear and open channels of communication between principal, senior management team, teachers, classroom assistants, parents and children
- ensuring channels of communication are open and active with all relevant outside agencies, including DENI, SELB, RTU, CCEA, etc.

Monitoring

The quality of children's learning is carefully monitored throughout the school. Evidence used to inform the evaluation of language and literacy includes:

- monitoring teachers' plans and share good practice at phase/ whole school level
- Book Sampling to disseminate and share practice
- displays and photographs
- discussions with teachers, children and parents
- phase meetings /staff meetings
- observations by principal, senior management team, PRSD observations where applicable

The outcomes of the monitoring process are used to inform future planning and evaluation.

Effective Performance Data Management

Data generated from standardised tests; PTE, BPVS3, NNIRIT, CATS4 and statutory assessment is analysed for a range of purposes:

- to track pupil progress
- to track complete classes
- to identify individual children's cognitive strengths and weaknesses

- to inform planning for teaching and learning
- to identify underachieving pupils for further support
- to set targets for individuals, groups or entire class
- to compare progress between groups / schools
- to make meaningful comparisons between scores from more than one test

The Board of Governors

The Board of Governors have access to the school development plan, and through the literacy action plans are aware of the contribution made by the literacy co-ordinator and literacy team to this plan. Regular reports are made to the governors on the progress of language and literacy provision and the standards being achieved.

A SCHOOL CONNECTED TO ITS LOCAL COMMUNITY:

The following indicators from Every School a Good School (ESaGS) will be reflected in the school's approaches:

- good relationships that facilitate engagement and communication between the school and its parents and the wider community that it serve
- the school and its teachers are held in respect by parents and the local community who in turn actively support the work of the school
- the school uses its involvement in particular programmes (for example Extended Schools or Specialist Schools) effectively in meeting the needs of the community and nearby schools
- good relationships and clear channels of communication are in place between the school and the education agencies that support it
- the school works closely with other relevant statutory and voluntary agencies whose work impacts on education, especially Health, Social Services, the Public Library Service and, where appropriate, local Neighbourhood Renewal groups

Parental involvement

In St Mary's Primary School parents are encouraged to become actively involved in promoting their child's learning. Parents receive clear information about policies, the curriculum and ways in which to support their children:

- 8 weekly topic planners are made available to parents
- curriculum evenings at the beginning of each academic year
- Forward Together Home- School Programme Workshop (P2 and P3)
- parent/teacher meeting
- verbal and written reports on children's progress
- liaison through the reading record book

We aim to harness the support of the home and to stimulate greater support in order to enhance the children's language and literacy development. Homework is seen as an integral and co-ordinated element of the school's assessment policy and practice (*see Homework Policy for details*).

Parents have regular opportunities to visit the school and celebrate the work of the children through:

- open night
- induction meetings
- school performances, for example, Christmas show, assemblies, other religious events

Contacts with the local community, including other schools, are established to help foster positive attitudes and values among the children. For example:

- annual school book fairs
- visitors to the school, for example, storytellers, visiting theatre groups, writers, school nurse, dentist, fire service, PSNI.
- visits to local library
- school trips,
- visits to local places of interest
- cross community links with other schools
- events with other schools (Credit Union quiz, sporting events, Spelling Bee)

Effective links are maintained with statutory agencies including educational support services: psychology, behaviour management team, CASS, ASD team, speech and language therapists, etc.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years or in the light of changes to statutory requirements.