



**BALLYORAN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

# **Language & Literacy Policy**

**Reviewed June 2017**

## CONTEXT:

The stated vision of the Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI) is 'To ensure that every learner fulfils his or her potential at each stage of his or her development.' (DENI 2010)

The overall aim of the Northern Ireland Curriculum (DE 2008) states, '*The Northern Ireland Curriculum aims to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives.*'

The School 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

## INTRODUCTION:

At Ballyoran Primary School, we believe that pupils' literacy skills, ie. their ability to talk, listen, read and write effectively, for purpose and audience, is the key to educational progress, to social integration and to personal development and happiness.

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 continuity and progression in our language planning will be underpinned by the learning intentions outlined in the Primary Language Framework.

At Ballyoran Primary School, we intend that, by the end of Key Stage 2, a child will be able to:

- *Speak confidently to a range of audiences with an awareness of purpose.*
- *Read and write with confidence, fluency and understanding, orchestrating a range of independent strategies to self-monitor and correct.*
- *Have an interest in books and read for enjoyment.*
- *Have an interest in words, their meanings, developing a growing vocabulary in spoken and written forms.*

- *Understand a range of text types and genres and be able to write in a variety of styles and forms appropriate to the situation.*
- *Develop the powers of imagination, inventiveness and critical awareness.*
- *Use a suitable technical vocabulary to articulate their responses.*

## STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Statutory requirements for the teaching and learning of English are laid out in the Northern Ireland Curriculum for English (CCEA, 2007) and include:

In Foundation Stage children should be given opportunities to:

- talk, listen and represent ideas in their activities;
- use communication, language and literacy in every part of the curriculum;
- become immersed in an environment rich in print and possibilities for communication.

At Key Stage One children should be given opportunities to:

- learn to speak confidently and listen to what others have to say;
- begin to read and write independently and with enthusiasm;
- use language to explore their own experiences and imaginary worlds.

At Key Stage Two children should be given opportunities to:

- learn to change the way they talk and write to suit different situations, purposes and audiences;
- read a range of texts and respond to different layers of meaning in them;
- explore the use of language in literary and non-literary texts and learn how the structure of language works.

## CHILD CENTRED PROVISION:

The following indicators from 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.
- A commitment to involve young people in discussions and decisions on school life that directly affect them and to listen to their views.

We aim to provide for all children so that they reach their full potential in English according to their individual abilities. We will identify pupils who maybe under-achieving and those with special educational needs in order to take steps to improve their attainment. Gifted children will be identified and suitable learning challenges provided.

Following the guidance in "Count, Read, Succeed" teachers will use a variety of teaching strategies, including whole class teaching, group work and individual work, differentiated where appropriate. This recognises that no single approach to teaching will suit all pupils.

All children are provided with equal access to the English curriculum. We aim to provide suitable learning opportunities regardless of gender, ethnicity or home background.

In summary, we aim to raise standards in Literacy by:

- Providing high quality teaching for all pupils.
- Addressing underachievement as soon as it occurs.

- Using in-school support to address continuing underachievement, moving when necessary to support from outside agencies.
- Meeting the needs of identified pupils through the SEN framework.

## Intervention Programmes

### Intensive Support

Year 2 and Year 3 pupils are given priority to ensure early intervention. Where possible, Intensive Support is offered to Year 4 pupils. Intervention is based on the Reading Recovery method which has been adapted to small groups. Reading Recovery aims to teach the basic skills of reading and writing and support pupils in their own self-monitoring and self-evaluation. Daily observations are recorded by the teacher and individual Running Records are kept. Progress in reading and writing words is also recorded in the form of tables and graphs. The maximum group size is four pupils. Individual pupils are given a series of reading and writing tests as a baseline. Groups are formed using these test results and teacher judgement. At the end of the teaching block (usually 10-12 weeks) individual testing is repeated and compared with baseline results. Recommendations for progress are made to staff and parents. One teacher is employed for Literacy Intervention four mornings per week.

### Reading Partnership

This programme is designed to give pupils a boost with their reading by working with a trained Classroom Assistant known as a Reading Partner. Class teachers select potential pupils to be tested by Mrs McGuire, Reading Partnership Coordinator. Mrs McGuire will use the New Salford Sentence Reading Test which will give a standardised reading accuracy score and a standardised score for Comprehension. This test will be repeated at the end of the programme and progress will be recorded. Most often it is the child who is reading six months to one year below their chronological age that is chosen. Parental consent must be given. Each pupil in the Reading Partnership Programme receives 3 x 15 minutes per week for ten weeks. This programme is parallel to classwork and the selected pupils will still read as part of a reading group with their class teacher, as appropriate.

### Newcomer Support for all Pupils

Newcomers with limited English receive Literacy Support from Mrs Fusco, Newcomer Classroom Assistant. Targets derive from the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) and resources from the Toolkit for Diversity are used. Mrs Fusco works closely with Miss McGibbon (Newcomer Co-ordinator) who in turn has close links with the Inclusion and Diversity Service.

### Speech and Language

Depending on funding available within our school budget, a Speech and Language Therapist may be employed by the school to work directly with pupils in the Foundation Stage who are presenting with significant difficulties in Language and Communication skills.

### Hi Five

Hi Five is a reading and writing programme for pupils in Key Stage 2. The aims of Hi Five are to enhance self-esteem by enabling pupils to succeed in reading and writing, develop language skills through discussion and motivate pupils to enjoy books. Pupils are selected by class teachers making reference to available data and teacher judgement. Most often pupils who are working slightly below class average are chosen. Mrs McGuire, Hi Five Co-ordinator administers the New Salford Sentence Reading Test and records the pupil's standardised score for reading accuracy and comprehension. Hi Five consists of 3 x 45 minutes lessons for a ten week block with a trained Classroom Assistant using the Hi Five resource file and texts. Mrs McGuire repeats the Salford Word Test at the end of the programme and records progress made.

## HIGH QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING:

The following indicators from 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 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.
- High quality teaching, with high expectations of success and effective use of data, will enable the majority of young people to achieve good standards of Literacy and fulfil his or her individual potential, from the highest achieving to the lowest.

### Subject organisation

The English Curriculum is delivered using the requirements in the Northern Ireland Curriculum for Language and Literacy as follows:

- Pupils are taught in single year groups.
- Each class teacher organises the pupils into ability groupings: above average, average, below average. Work is differentiated in each class, including the use of guided language groups.

- Classroom Assistants are used with individual children and small groups, under the direction of the teacher.
- Teachers use the language model of text, sentence and word level as outlined in the Primary Language Framework (SELB) for long, medium and short term planning.
- Teachers evaluate their Literacy plans fortnightly to inform the next planning.
- Literacy Co-ordinator monitors planners to ensure a range of genre and progression is in place and there is a broad and balanced approach at text, sentence and word level.
- Literacy Co-ordinator carries out two Book Scoops per academic year and provides verbal and written feedback to each teacher. Each Book Scoop entails three books from each ability group and the Co-ordinator matches books to planners, for consistency, progression, AFL and differentiation.

### Approaches to Talking and Listening

*'Children's language is central to their ability to communicate in relationships and learning, to understand ideas and to order, explore and refine their thoughts.'*

*(Northern Ireland Curriculum, 2007, Page 50)*

The strands of talking, listening, group discussion and interaction and drama pervade the whole curriculum. Oral language is recognised as the *primary mode of language* and receives a central emphasis and focus in all areas of the curriculum and in the life of our school. Pupils are encouraged to listen attentively and to speak clearly, confidently, fluently and appropriately for a variety of different audiences and purposes.

Reading, writing, talking and listening are developed holistically. Children's awareness of the connections between oral and written language is continually developed, i.e. that what they say can be written down and read by themselves or others. Talking and listening underpins all literacy learning. Teachers provide

opportunities to develop active listening and purposeful talking. Explicit links are made between talking, listening, reading and writing.

Group discussion and interaction opportunities are provided for children's thinking to be challenged and are encouraged to consider other points of view. Participation in group discussion enables children to experience different roles and responsibilities and develop co-operative attitudes and behaviours.

Teachers model the conventions of conversation, prompting and scaffolding responses, summarising thoughts and ideas. They provide ample opportunities for children to initiate and engage in conversations, both incidental and planned.

Teachers provide opportunities for children to engage in role-play and drama activities and;

- Express their thoughts and feelings.
- Talk and behave in a manner appropriate to the context.
- Adopt the behaviours and characteristics of another person.
- Discuss issues raised in role-play scenarios.

## Approaches to Reading

*'Children should be helped to develop confidence in reading using a range of methods. They should be given opportunities to develop their confidence and independence through enjoyable reading experiences that will help them develop individual tastes and preferences and make sense of what they read.'*

(Northern Ireland Primary Curriculum, 2007, page 50)

Teachers use a range of teaching approaches, selecting the most appropriate at any given time. The pleasure and enjoyment of reading is always fostered in language lessons, across the curriculum and beyond the classroom.

## Modelled Reading

Modelled Reading is a strategy which allows the teacher to explicitly demonstrate the process of reading by 'thinking aloud' about the strategies that are being used to comprehend meaning, read with fluency, expression and

decode unfamiliar words. Children participate by listening and observing the expert at work, rather than by contributing suggestions and pursuing points through discussion. The teacher shares specific learning intentions with the children, then demonstrates the use of the identified strategies and verbalises her/his thinking as she reads, e.g. making connections, confirming or changing predictions, visualising, inferring, clarifying meaning, responding to punctuation or using specific strategies to work out a difficult word. These form the basis of success criteria during shared, guided and independent sessions.

### Shared Reading

During Shared Reading children participate in reading focusing on specific learning intentions and practising skills collaboratively. Children are given the opportunity to apply a range of strategies and comprehension skills using a variety of texts with teacher support.

### Guided Reading

This is an approach which enables the teacher to support a small group of children in talking, reading and thinking their way purposefully through an unfamiliar text. During Guided Reading, children consolidate the learning from previous modelled and shared sessions to process new texts at increasingly levels of difficulty. Each session has a planned focus and the learning intention is shared with the children. Children work in ability groups (4-6 children) for approximately twenty minutes. Texts are at instructional level (90-95% accuracy which is approximately 5 – 10 errors per 100 words). Children contribute to group discussions, talk about the strategies and comprehension skills they use, actively problem solve challenges in the text and reflect on success criteria for the session.

### Independent Reading

At Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 emphasis is placed on developing pupils' interest and pleasure as they learn to read independently and with confidence. Throughout the school, children take responsibility for selecting and reading a variety of texts including fiction, poetry, non-fiction, 'familiar reads', books from class and books from school library. Children should be able to read these texts readily and comprehend them with little or no teacher or adult support.

The focus for the reading is to provide practice and to develop personal response to text.

We have high quality reading material, which is up to date, relevant and balanced in its presentation of ethnicity, culture and gender. Pupils have access to the class and school library and have access to a good quality range of texts during lessons. In Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 Guided Reading texts are banded and PM Benchmarking Kit is used to monitor individual pupils.

Two Book Fairs are held annually. The fair is open before and after school for parents to attend and during school time for classes to use. Pupils also celebrate World Book Day by dressing up as their favourite book character and participate in a variety of book related activities in the classroom. Also, story tellers, librarians and dramatists are often invited into school on World Book Day to enhance the celebration of books.

### Linguistic Phonics

Linguistic Phonics helps children understand how the print code in English works. It is an integrated approach, providing children with strategies to help them problem-solve words for both reading and writing.

There are five principles that underpin Linguistic Phonics:

- sounds are represented by letters
- longer words are made up of syllables
- a sound may be presented by one or more letter
- the same sound can be represented in more than one way
- the same spelling may represent more than one sound

### Approaches to Writing

*'Children need to see the value of writing. They should learn to communicate meaning through enjoyable writing activities.'*

*(Northern Ireland Primary Curriculum, 2007, page 51)*

Teachers use a range of teaching approaches, selecting the most appropriate at any given time. The pleasure and enjoyment of writing is always fostered in language lessons, across the curriculum and beyond the classroom.

Pupils are reminded in all year groups to: *think it, say it, write it and read it aloud* when developing their writing. The links between talking and writing should be recognised and developed, e.g. reading as a writer and writing as a reader.

Pupils are given opportunities to engage in the following types of writing:

### Modelled Writing

This is an approach used throughout the school which enables the teacher, as an expert, to demonstrate the writing process.

### Shared Writing

This interactive approach is appropriate for teaching all forms and genres and used throughout the school. The pupils observe the teacher modelling the writing process and subsequently are involved in planning, composition, redrafting, editing and publishing through the medium of the teacher.

### Guided Writing

In Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils are grouped by writing ability. The teacher works with each group on a task carefully selected to offer an appropriate level of challenge to the group. Challenge may be in terms of spelling, letter formation, simple punctuation, language and vocabulary or sophisticated aspects of generic structure, planning, editing and use of imagery.

Throughout the school;

- Pupils are provided with relevant and differentiated resources to support them in the different types of writing.
- Writing frames and scaffolded texts are used to assist as necessary.
- Pupils are encouraged to be aware of purpose and audience and to link genre and form.
- Classes participate in writing competitions e.g. Young Writers.
- Visits from authors from time to time funded by Writers' Project.
- Each class focuses on being a 'writing-rich' environment.

- Each class displays a piece of writing each month on the Writers' Board on the main corridor.

### TS and PCs/Cross Curricular Opportunities for Literacy Development

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.

All class teachers consider the following:

- Different styles of learning within the classroom and the need to encourage pupils to use their visual, auditory and kinaesthetic channels for better learning.
- Use of a range of active learning strategies in the classroom, including drama and AFL strategies.
- Effective range of questioning by the teachers and pupils.
- Encouragement of children to select and use appropriate reading and writing strategies across the curriculum.
- Use of self and peer assessment.
- Development of study and research skills and presentation of work across the curriculum.

### The use of ICT

Opportunities to use ICT to support teaching and learning in Literacy will be planned for and used as follows.

- The use of the interactive whiteboard and appropriate software.
- Pupils will have access to laptops, iPads and the ICT suite to develop their literacy skills.
- Microphones and webcams are used to enhance Talking and Listening skills in speaking to an audience.
- ICT is included in Literacy planners.
- Literacy based games and a list of suitable Literacy apps are on the school website

## Assessment and Target-Setting

Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. The purpose of assessment is three-fold:

1. To evaluate the children's progress and levels of attainment in Literacy.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching of Literacy.
3. To enable the teachers to plan further work.

Teachers continually assess children's performance and progress, and the effectiveness of their teaching approaches and strategies. Teacher's planning is based upon the identification of Intended Learning Outcomes for the children; assessment is therefore based upon deciding whether or not those Learning Outcomes have been achieved. Pupils are assessed by their teachers on an on-going basis. The assessment also identifies and rewards achievement, as well as highlighting concerns. It varies according to the age and ability of the pupil. Information is gathered in a variety of ways:

- Ø discussion between child and teacher
- Ø observation whilst children are participating in activities
- Ø marking written work produced by the children according to the Learning Intentions and Success Criteria for the lesson

Teachers mark class work and homework thoroughly and according to the Marking Policy. Teachers regularly move around the classroom, marking each child's work as they carry out a task or activity, so that problems can be detected early. In the Foundation Stage especially, the teacher will mark the work with the child and give feedback. This is essential so children know how they are performing in class.

A comprehensive list of Standardised Tests used is outlined in our Schedule of Testing within our Assessment Policy.

Teachers also ensure assessment activities are planned and embedded in learning and teaching. Assessment of pupil achievement in the Cross-Curricular Skills of Communication is in reference to the Levels of Progression. Teachers from all year groups meet every two months to look at and level samples of work in all areas of Communication using these levels. This process is known as

Internal Standardisation. Each teacher retains and updates a portfolio of levelled work for each child.

At the end of each Key Stage teachers are required to make a summative judgement about the level each pupil has achieved in each Cross-Curricular Skill. These summative judgements are reported to parents, submitted to CCEA and used to benchmark our school with other schools.

Teachers set high expectations and monitor actual or potential underachievement. Comparing data from Progress in English Assessment and CAT Verbal Ability Assessment, pupils who may be working below their expected ability level are identified. Targets are subsequently set and intervention begins to support the pupil in their learning. Also, class teachers work with the SENCO to set targets for individual children on the Code of Practice who have difficulties in Literacy. Children are also involved in their own target setting.

#### EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP:

The following indicators from 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 through curriculum teams.
- 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 through classroom observations, book scoops and on-going planning reviews.

## The Board of Governors

Regular reports are made to the Governors on the progress of Literacy provision and on the standards being achieved by the school. The Literacy Action Plan is submitted to the Governors early October and a written evaluation outlining progress made is submitted at the end of May annually.

## Role of the Literacy Co-Ordinator

The Literacy Co-ordinator is responsible, in consultation with the Principal, teachers and parents, for improving the standards of teaching and learning in Literacy in accordance with the School Development Plan.

The main role of the Literacy Coordinator is to:

- Have a clear knowledge and understanding of the main modes of language – reading, writing and talking and listening.
- Promote and encourage high standards of teaching and learning and in particular language skills across the curriculum.
- Ensure continual professional development for all staff.
- Monitor pupil progress.
- Manage and analyse relevant data.
- Coordinate and monitor the provision of Literacy including Intervention and Support programmes.
- Take the lead in policy development.
- Liase with SENCO in identifying the needs of pupils, including talented and able pupils with learning needs in Literacy.
- Purchase and organise Literacy resources.
- Keep up to date with recent Literacy developments.

- Maintain contact with all concerned: Principal, Senior Leadership Team, teachers, other staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensure channels of communication are open and active with all relevant outside agencies, including DENI , SELB, RTU, CCEA, etc.

#### A SCHOOL CONNECTED TO ITS LOCAL COMMUNITY:

The following indicators from 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 serves.
- 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 (e.g. Extended Schools and Breakfast Club) 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.

We believe that the education of our pupils involves pupils, parents, teachers and classroom assistants working together collaboratively. Parents are provided with regular opportunities to discuss the progress of their child/children and to become familiar with the work of the school.

During the academic year, parental involvement is in a variety of ways:

- Parent/Teacher interviews in October and March.
- Interviews (optional) are also held in February for pupils transferring to Post Primary Schools.
- An individual formal written report outlining achievement is issued in June.
- Interviews are held for parents of pupils participating in Intensive Support with Mrs Barkley throughout the year.

- Permission letters are sent to parents of pupils participating in Hi Five and Reading Partnership.
- Attendance at School Book Fair.
- Supporting homework.
- Reading library and reading books.
- Showing an interest and talking to their child/children about school life.

In addition, teachers have the opportunity to talk to parents at the end of the school day and at certain events in school such as Christmas Concert, Dancing Festival etc. Parents can discuss any problems or concerns with the class teacher by making an appointment through the school secretary.

We aim to harness the support of the home (where it already exists) and to stimulate support (where it does not) in order to enhance the pupils' literacy development. To help fulfil parents' important role in their child's education and to keep them informed as possible, we will endeavour to provide as many new and varied opportunities for parents to be involved e.g. Literacy links on school website, suggested apps for iPads, town library links, library books sent home etc.

Our community links include utilising the available services e.g. story teller from Asda, story teller in Nursery and Foundation Stage funded by Writers' Project, visits to school by the SELB library van to restock library, Fire Service, Shared Education with Bocombra Primary School and curriculum links with St. John The Baptist's College.

## CONCLUSION

This policy should be in line with other school policies, including:

- Learning and Teaching Policy
- Assessment and Record Keeping Policy
- Marking Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- ICT Policy

## REVIEW OF POLICY

A commitment should be made to the review and monitoring of the policy document on an annual basis.