

Curriculum for Excellence Factfile – Literacy across Learning



What is literacy?

Curriculum for Excellence gives a new focus to literacy across learning. Literacy has been defined within Curriculum for Excellence as ‘the set of skills which allows an individual to engage fully in society and in learning, through the different forms of language, and the range of texts, which society values and finds useful’ (Principles and practice: Literacy across learning, 2009). This is a broader definition than one that just focuses on the ability to read and write.

The literacy framework has three elements:

- listening and talking
- reading
- writing.

Literacy skills will be developed in all subjects and across the eight curriculum areas – Expressive arts, Health and wellbeing, Languages, Mathematics, Religious and moral education, Sciences, Social studies and Technologies – not only in early years settings, language classes in primary schools or English and Gàidhlig classes in secondary schools and colleges.

Why does literacy matter?

Literacy is important in all areas of learning. Being able to read and write accurately, to listen carefully and to talk clearly about ideas will increase the opportunities for young people in all aspects of life and will allow them to participate fully in learning and later in a work environment.

Who is responsible for literacy?

It is the responsibility of all teachers and other practitioners who support young people’s learning to promote literacy development, regardless of where the young person is learning or the subject being taught.

What do the literacy experiences and outcomes cover?

The experiences and outcomes promote the development of:

- critical thinking
- creative thinking
- competence in listening and talking, reading and writing
- personal, interpersonal and team-working skills
- skills in using language.

Young people will learn the basic tools of communication. In their reading, they will learn how to explore sounds, letters and words, and how to contribute ideas and take turns when talking with others. In their writing, they will learn how to use correct spelling, punctuation and grammar and how to ensure their writing makes sense.

As young people become more skilled, they will learn how to find, comprehend and use information, and communicate more effectively.

Is literacy just to do with books?

Literacy doesn’t involve understanding only printed texts. In the 21st century young people experience a wide range of information, so they need the skills to work with written or printed texts as well as other forms of text, such as web pages, social networking sites, films, graphs, and the spoken word.

Who has a role to play?

Parents/Carers

Parents play a crucial role in helping children to develop literacy skills from an early age. They contribute to this by reading to their children every day, learning nursery rhymes together and using normal events in life to help children learn about the world around them, for example by pointing out signs. Parents can contribute further to their children’s learning by encouraging children to talk about their thoughts and ideas, and about how they are feeling. Parents can encourage children to explore literacy outside the classroom.

Young people will enjoy reading different types of texts and all reading helps them to develop their skills. So whether they are reading a book, a blog, a magazine or a sports report, it will help if parents are encouraging and supportive.

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Teachers and other practitioners

All practitioners who support young people's learning make important contributions to developing and reinforcing literacy skills through the learning activities they plan, both within and outwith school, and through communicating with young people. They encourage learners to:

- listen
- talk and share their thinking
- debate their ideas
- read
- find, select, sort and summarise information
- understand and compare texts
- write
- develop and use effective vocabulary, such as creating texts
- build on the many languages used in Scotland, including Scots and Gàidhlig, other languages spoken at home, Braille or sign language.

Learners

Learners are encouraged to think about developing literacy skills and how to improve their own skills. They will recognise that working in a group, watching a film or TV broadcast, reading a magazine and even blogging contribute to their literacy development.

How is literacy different from English classes taught in school?

Much of what young people learn in English classes includes developing their literacy skills. In English classes, they will also develop skills in studying literature, including Scottish literature and a wide range of texts. They will learn about characters, setting, plot and the techniques authors have used to make these effective. They will also be encouraged to talk and write imaginatively and listen to the ideas and thoughts of others.

What happens at different stages?

Pre-school and early primary

In nursery and early primary, children learn through conversation, play, exploration and investigation. Play helps children to develop their language, creativity and co-ordination skills.

Primary

In primary schools, children will develop their literacy skills through all areas of their learning. To begin with, a great deal of learning will be achieved through listening and talking. They will learn how to read, spell and write and go on to develop more advanced skills.

Secondary and beyond

In secondary schools and other settings where a young person might be learning, young people study a variety of curriculum areas with literacy across learning. At various times all their teachers will be supporting them in activities which involve listening and talking, reading or writing and so their literacy skills will continue to develop.

Assessing literacy skills

It is important to have a clear picture of the progress each child and young person is making across all aspects of literacy, so that further learning can be planned. From early years through to the senior phase, teachers will carry out ongoing assessment of literacy skills and gather evidence from different contexts, and different forms of information such as observation, records (oral, written, audio-visual), and products (piece of artwork, project) to see what each young person knows, understands and is able to do.

Parents will receive reports on assessment of progress in all curriculum areas, including literacy. National guidance on recognising achievement, profiling and reporting published in December 2010 provides further information.

For more information on assessment and the support for teachers available in this area such as the National Assessment Resource (NAR), you can refer to the Curriculum for Excellence factfile on Assessment and Qualifications.

Literacy qualifications

New Literacy Units will be available from SQA to support the development of listening and talking, reading and writing skills, relevant for learning, life and work. These Units will form part of the new courses in English/Gàidhlig at Access 3 and National 4. They will also be available as free-standing Units for all learners at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels 3, 4 and 5. Literacy skills will be partially embedded in National 5 English courses. See SQA leaflet *Qualifications are changing – A guide for parents and carers*, available in print from your school or to download at www.sqa.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence.

Literacy skills are expected to be developed where appropriate across the new qualifications. How this happens will vary from course to course, depending on the subject area.

Further information online:

www.LTScotland.org.uk/Parentzone – information for parents about all aspects of children's education

www.LTScotland.org.uk/understandingthecurriculum – more detailed information on Curriculum for Excellence

www.sqa.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence – latest information on the new qualifications

www.hmie.gov.uk – information on inspection and evaluation of education provision

www.employersandyoungpeople.org – making connections with employers to support learning

www.scotland.gov.uk/literacyactionplan – an action plan to improve literacy in Scotland from birth to adulthood, October 2010

www.thebigplus.com – help and support for adults with reading, writing and numbers

www.playtalkread.org – ideas for parents of young children

Curriculum for Excellence is a major change to the education system in Scotland that aims to raise standards of learning and teaching for all 3-18-year-olds, wherever they learn. In this factfile we sometimes use the term 'parents' for short – we mean all parents and carers. When we talk about 'learners' we mean all young people learning in nursery, school, college, community learning, training, special schools, extended support and secure settings. 'Teachers' or 'teaching staff' means all staff who support young people's learning, e.g. lecturers, nursery staff, trainers, youth workers, learning support personnel, among others.