# Literacy Across the Curriculum

## at

## Firpark Secondary School

Aims

All learning and teaching uses language to develop knowledge, understanding and skills.  It is our aim to develop learners, at Firpark Secondary School, who are confident language users, both independently and collaboratively, and in a range of contexts and roles.  All learners have an entitlement to language development in English in order to achieve the following aims:

- to become effective learners who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve
- to become confident, versatile and powerful language users and communicators
- to develop their confidence and lead healthy, safe and fulfilling lives
- to be responsible and active citizens

It is the responsibility of all teaching staff to implement the whole-school strategies for the learning and teaching of listening and talking, reading and writing.

English is necessary for communicating with others within the school and, outwith the school, in the local and wider community.  In addition, it is essential to learning in all subjects across the curriculum. By learning English in every subject, learners will develop the key skills which are needed for social and economic interactions (listening and talking, reading and writing).  By developing language skills, learners develop their thinking skills and are better prepared for the next stage of learning.

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**Talking and listening**

Developing the ability to:

- Listen and respond to others (adding to or arguing against)
- Talk and present (with increasing formality)
- Participate in group discussion and interaction

**Reading**

Developing the ability to:

- Decode increasingly challenging words across the curriculum
- Read for meaning (through the use of reading strategies such as prediction, skimming, inference, summarising, etc.)
- Understand the author's craft (analysing the effect of the use of features of form, structure and language)
- Read and engage with a wide variety of texts
- Research for a wide range of purposes

**Writing**

Developing the ability to:

- Generate, plan and draft ideas for composition
- Select, shape and construct language for expression and effect in composition
- Proof-read and redraft written work, drawing on conventions and structures
- Use accurate grammar, punctuation and spelling

**Language**

Learners are also expected to explore language change and variation. As learners progress through the secondary curriculum, the language and literacy demands increase and learners need to develop a wider range of language skills, in particular making the transition from spoken to written forms. They also need to be able to adopt different styles (genres) to meet different purposes and audiences. Some of these genres have been taught in primary school, for example writing persuasive texts in English, or explanations in Science. Secondary school subjects have a much wider variety of written genres and these need to be taught to learners explicitly, while being shared consistently across the curriculum.

Functional English is essential English for success in learning, employment and life generally. It is required for the application of skills for problem-solving in realistic, purposeful and relevant contexts. It is important in developing learner confidence and independence. Functional English comprises a set of standards in:

- talking, listening and communication
- reading
- writing

**Language and literacy learning and teaching**

The teaching of these skills is statutory for English teachers, but they also need to be developed by other teachers in their own subject areas. The features of good English learning and teaching mirror the features of good language and literacy learning and teaching in any subject. It should:

- be enjoyable, motivating and challenging
- be actively engaging
- be focused and led by progressive learning objectives
- activate prior learning, secure understanding and provide opportunities to apply skills
- meet the needs of all learners
- develop learners' functional and personal learning and thinking skills
- use assessment for learning to engage learners

Literacy and language teaching requires a combination of the following teaching models:

- direct teaching to help learners acquire news skills and procedures
- cognitive teaching and learning to help learners understand new concepts and think creatively
- social teaching and learning such as paired, group and guided learning in which learners construct new knowledge for themselves through collaboration

Literacy and language teaching requires the following skills and techniques:

- activating prior knowledge (to build on what they know)
- modelling (to make explicit language conventions and processes)
- scaffolding (to support learners' first attempts and build confidence)
- explanation (to clarify and exemplify the best ways of working)
- questioning (to probe, draw out and extend learners' thinking)
- exploration (to encourage critical thinking)
- investigation (to encourage enquiry and self-help)
- discussion and dialogue (to shape and challenge developing ideas)
- assessment for learning (to help learners identify their own and each other's progress and plan their next steps)

**Whole-school literacy initiatives**

**<u>Augmentative and Alternative Communication</u>**

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) can provide a primary means of communication and interaction within the environment. ACC supports spoken and written communication and enhances the individuals' ability to convey meaning to others this in turn can raise self-esteem, achievement and quality of life.

AAC refers to the tools of total communication,

including unaided communication such as body language, facial expressions, gesture and vocalisations. Also used are aided communication including low technology aids such as objects, photos, pictures, symbols, and high technology aids such as voice output communication aids, computers and Ipads etc. Via an AAC approach, individuals can use whatever tool they find most appropriate and effective for them and the specific situation they find themselves in.

The school presently uses the following strategies in numerous settings to achieve pupils' communication.

**<u>PECS – Picture Exchange Communication System</u>**

The augmentative communication system has proved to be highly effective with ASD pupils with communication disorders. PECS is used with other pupils who do not have speech or who speak with limited effectiveness.

PECS is based on visual symbols that are easy to prepare and highly portable. A specific range of symbols will be personalised for each pupil and used to aid comprehension i.e. instruction and expression – pupil to communicate need, desire or command etc. PECS has an elaborate structure that can be applied to suit a wide range of communication abilities, used in structured and unstructured environments and by groups of people including parents who work in some way with pupils.

**<u>Makaton Communication System</u>**

The school uses Makaton signing (not the symbols) to promote functional communication. Speech and particularly key words are used when administering signs to promote pupils' grasp of the 'meaning' of exchanges both in

comprehension and expression. In many ways Makaton signs act as a 'bridge' between speech and its intended purpose or function. For some pupils, the use of signs may be faded as their understanding of communication grows. Makaton is a flexible programme that can be personalised to pupils' needs and can be successfully used with other systems of communication.

## Boardmaker

Boardmaker is not an AAC system as such. However the school uses it as a resource for producing visual symbols i.e. to display daily timetables, personal timetables, and individual pupils picture/symbol communication books. Using a single source ensures that the use of visual symbols/pictures is standardised at school and home settings. This goes some way to providing a consistent and simple AAC system that is familiar to pupils and that they use effectively for a variety of purposes.

## Reduced Language Approach

Within Firpark Secondary we use a reduced language approach for pupils with communication difficulties, especially with those who have ASD. The approach is defined as the use of simple words and phrases that are adapted to the communication level of the pupil. The following is avoided: the use of too many words; speaking too quickly or providing too many ideas in an instruction.

## Writing With Symbols

Symbols are images which are used to support text, making the meaning clearer and easier to understand. They provide a visual representation of a concept. Symbol Sets are comprehensive collections of images that give greater support than clip art or icon sets. Symbol Sets often follow a schematic structure, or set of design 'rules', that help the reader independently grow their own vocabulary.

## Use of AAC

For maximum effectiveness AAC systems should be used consistently at home, school or local community. All significant parties should be encouraged to participate in appropriate training, target setting and review.

Pupils will be give the opportunities where possible to transfer the knowledge, skills and concepts they have learnt in other situations, e.g. work experience,

visiting local shops, travelling on public transport and in other relevant areas of the community.

Parental involvement is crucial; they work closely with the staff team to ensure that a common AAC approach is used in the respective environments.

In order to promote the use of AAC the following communication strategies may be employed:

- Look at the pupil, not the talker/communication aid
- Make sure the pupil has access to their talker/communication aid
- Give the AAC user **time** to initiate and respond
- Ask how the pupil **indicates 'yes/no'** if they do not have their talker/communication aid
- Encourage the use of AAC **everywhere and at all times.**
- Look at the total **communication that the pupil is using** e.g. body language facial expression as well as the use of their talker/communication aid.
- Find time just to 'chat' informally without an adult controlling the subject matter.
- Leave AAC resources around so that they can casually be used by other pupils.
- Encourage school staff and others to use the class/individual AAC resources themselves to find out how it feels to use it, and to encourage pupils and others to regard it as a 'normal' means of communication.
- Sign all the time and everywhere not just when speaking to a signing pupil. Hearing/speaking pupils hear spoken language everywhere, we should give signing pupils the same opportunity.

The school maintains a continual professional development programme for teaching staff and support staff over communication and AAC.

**Spelling Strategies**

These should be used to tackle and decode difficult words

e.g word attack skills, phonics

- Break it into sounds (d-i-a-r-y)

- Break it into syllables (re-mem-ber)

- Break it into affixes (dis + satisfy)

- Use a mnemonic

   Mnemonics are sentences created to help us remember how to spell words or a sequence of facts. The first letter of each word in the sentence is significant.
   The well-known examples are ones such as *Richard of York gave battle in vain* (**r**, **o**, **y**, **g**, **b**, **i**, **v** – the colours of the rainbow) or *Big elephants can't always use small exits* (for the word *because*). For homework, pupils can create a mnemonic to remind them how to spell a keyword. The results are shared and one selected by the class to become their mnemonic of choice. This is written up, displayed and its use encouraged.

- Refer to word in the same family (muscle – muscular) (word webs)

- Say it as it sounds (Wed-nes-day) (spellspeak)

- Words within words (Parliament – I AM parliament)

- Refer to etymology (bi + cycle = two + wheels)

- Visual memory (look-say-cover-write-say-check)


**Practical ideas to use in your classroom**

**1. Rainbow write** the words misspelled

**2. Create word banks**

After brainstorming/concept mapping, keywords from this activity are identified and written on strips of card by pupils. These are sorted and displayed around the room. Draw attention to the lists whenever pupils are undertaking written work.

### 3. Make word and definition cards

Support staff prepare boxes of cards for specific units of work. One set of cards contains the words, another definitions. These can be used for a variety of games and matching activities.

### 4. Create interactive glossaries

Make a booklet containing an alphabetical list of keywords from a unit of work. Leave a blank line alongside each word. Produce a separate sheet of definitions but these should be jumbled up and should not match the order of the words in the booklet. Pupils paste the booklet into the front of their workbooks. In each lesson, stress two or three keywords and use in context.

### 5. Keyword crosswords/word-searches

Pupils complete crosswords based on keywords and their definitions. The crosswords can be of the conventional type with the keyword definitions given as clues and the keywords being filled in on the crossword grid. Alternatively pupils can be given a completed crossword grid and are asked to create the clues for each word. Each activity helps reinforce meaning as well as spelling.

### 6. Use icons alongside words

Icons and symbols alongside keywords act as memory prompts and are particularly useful for pupils struggling with literacy. Standard icons can be adopted across the school and can be used on worksheets as well as on word lists and wall displays. For example, a drawing of a pencil can always accompany the instruction 'write'.

**Correction code**

These are the codes/symbols used when correcting all written work.

C        Use a capital letter

P ( )    Punctuation (like this)

^        A word is missing

/        Start a new sentence

//       Start a new paragraph

Sp       Spelling error

(nice)   Use a better word

✓        Correct. Well Done!

Outcomes covered across the curriculum

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