

## Language & Literacy

Language and literacy are of personal, social and economic importance. Our ability to use language lies at the centre of the development and expression of our emotions, our thinking, our learning and our sense of personal identity. Language is itself a key aspect of our culture. Through language, children and young people can gain access to the literary heritage of humanity and develop their appreciation of the richness and breadth of Scotland's literary heritage. Children and young people encounter, enjoy and learn from the diversity of language used in their homes, their communities, by the media and by their peers.

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.

The new curriculum framework promotes the development of critical and creative thinking as well as competence in listening and talking, reading, writing and the personal, interpersonal and team-working skills which are so important in life and in the world of work. The framework provides, for learners, parents and teachers, broad descriptions of the range of learning opportunities which will contribute to the development of literacy, including critical literacy, creativity, and knowledge and appreciation of literature and culture.

Our basic reading programme is Oxford Reading Tree. ORT materials and resources provide us with a core of varied and enjoyable reading materials which is well structured and of good literary quality. By using these books the children develop a sound reading ability and are encouraged to try more demanding material. Other excellent resources are used from time to time to provide extra support or to extend reading skills. At home you can help your child enjoy reading, improve his vocabulary and develop a greater understanding by discussing events/pictures in the stories. Children will readily tell you what they see in a picture but it is worth asking them to think about why something has happened, what may happen next and how the characters feel etc. We then complement this work with a wide range of activities i.e. writing further discussions and creative work – all related to the reading books. Reading for pleasure is an essential part of your child's education and to foster this habit we also host several book fairs during the school year where parents can come along into the school and select books with their child.

Big Writing is a term used for our new approach to writing. A relatively 'new' way of teaching writing, it focuses on 4 main aspects of the writing process and gives the children the skills to improve their own writing through self assessment, sharing of work and fun, learning games throughout the weekly special writing session.

### The Four Elements of Big Write

The children are taught to think about their writing in four particular ways Vocabulary, Connectives, Openers and Punctuation. They then use these aspects to help them improve. It must be remembered however that this process is to do with one aspect of their writing. We are also committed to improving the quality of the content and how they use writing to express themselves. The elements below will vary according to the age group of the children.

For younger children much of what is taught will be less explicit and will use more 'friendly' terms and less grammatical terminology.

**Vocabulary:** Classes have a 'Vocabulary Wow Words' board where new and impressive words that the children have used are shared for everyone. The children are encouraged to use these words where appropriate in their writing.

**Connectives:** Older classes have a 'Connectives' display, where powerful connectives (joining words) are displayed. Children are encouraged to use these in their writing.

**Openers:** many classes have an 'Openers' display, with good openers (sentence starters) that the children can choose from. We also teach ways of improving a basic sentence e.g. 'The children climbed the hill slowly' to a better sentence by changing the word order; 'Slowly, the children climbed the hill.'

**Punctuation:** Key Stage 2 classes have a clearly displayed 'Punctuation Pyramid' showing the levels of punctuation. Children are taught the names of the higher level punctuation from Year One onwards and learn to use them in their writing. These 3-d pyramids sit on the tables in the classrooms and serve as a visual reminder for children. They help them remember what they need to do and then what they need to do to improve.

Big Writing lessons are also characterised by a 'special' atmosphere with quiet music playing while the children write to enhance the special experience. They may have special paper, special books and special pens or pencils.

We are approaching the developing of 'talking and listening' in increasingly more interesting and inventive ways. We recognise the importance of listening and talking and of effective collaborative working in the development of thinking and in learning. Pupils work in groups, pairs or individually and are given tasks to improve communication with each other, expression of ideas and audience engagement.

### **Modern Language**

Language learning is life enhancing. It opens the doors to possibilities and experiences which are not available to those who are restricted to the knowledge of one language. Learning an additional language also facilitates a deeper understanding of the possibilities of language and of communication, including those relating to the learner's mother tongue.

### **The 1+2 approach to modern languages**

Today's children are growing up in a multilingual world and the ability to communicate effectively in social, academic and commercial settings is crucial if they are to play their full part as global citizens. The Scottish Government's policy, Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach, is aimed at ensuring that every child has the opportunity to learn a modern language from P1 onwards. At Rashielea pupils begin learning French in Primary 1 and, from Primary 4 they are also given the opportunity to learn German.