

Yetholm/Morebattle Primary Schools – Language & Literacy Approach



Rationale

Literacy skills are central to equipping our children with the capacity to confidently meet the challenges of a changing world. With solid, strong literacy skills we provide our children with the tools to meet the challenges presented by the formal curriculum and beyond, helping to unlock their potential as independent, lifelong learners. We know that good literacy skills have a positive impact on self-esteem, motivation and future aspirations. They support children to clearly articulate their thoughts, express their emotions, make sense of the world around them and develop their understanding of themselves and their place in society. Language is itself a key aspect of our culture.

Approaches

Learning through language and literacy at Yetholm/Morebattle Primary Schools is approached with a number of key principles in mind:

- Use of relevant, real-life and engaging contexts for learning, building on children's experiences.
- Balance of spontaneous play and planned learning activities.
- Core skills will be regularly taught, discussed, reflected upon and developed.
- Progressive pathways in reading, writing and listening & talking ensure key teaching is delivered and progression/challenge as children progress through the school.

As a school we also aim to:

- Develop a positive attitude towards language and literacy and an understanding of its vital importance in the wider world.
- To assist children towards an understanding of their own needs in reading, writing, talking & listening, for different situations.
- Children who enjoy reading, relish the creative process of writing and are appropriate in their talking and listening.

READING

At Yetholm and Morebattle Primary Schools, we recognise the vital importance of reading, not only for the access it gives children to the rest of their learning, but also for the pleasure and wellbeing it can provide as they learn to love 'a good read'.

We believe there are key texts that all children passing through our school should have the chance to encounter, think about and enjoy. These texts are examples of both prose and poetry and are clearly defined in our progressive learning pathway for reading.

We believe that reading should be taught, not 'heard', and the pathway lays out the key learning from Early to Second level under the headings of:

- Enjoyment & Choice
- Tools for Reading
- Finding & Using Information
- Understanding, Analysing and Evaluating

A variety of approaches, blended across the years, make for a broad and rich experience of reading for our children. In the early years the skills for reading are supported and modelled by teachers, with a focus on reading in the environment, using context clues and understanding phonics, initial sounds, and so on. As children move through to the school, developing their skills, we provide challenging reading in the later years, encouraging independence, inferential and deductive skills and so on.

A number of key approaches support reading and make this possible.

- Regular reading for pleasure (eg Drop & Read)
- Reciprocal Reading
- Uses of Blooms taxonomy/Higher order skills.
- Book Detectives
- Established reading schemes (Read Write Inc)
- Story of the Week

Additional support resources used regularly include:

- Indirect Dyslexia Learning (IDL)
- Word Wasp
- Fresh Start
- Toe-by-Toe
- Phonic flashcards and prompts
- Focussed Support for Learning input, eg CVC-blending, vowel sounds, initial sounds, etc.

We recognise that, in order to develop children's comprehension, we need to challenge them to move from the literal to inferential and evaluative encounters with text. However, this is a simplistic perspective and within these broader areas, focus will be given to and children challenged to consider:

- *Previewing*
- *Deduction*
- *Prediction*
- *Inference*
- *Recall*
- *Drawing conclusions*
- *Synthesising*
- *Personal response*
- *Empathising*
- *Summarising*

Teachers plan to deliver key reading skills throughout the week, at times discretely and also in the context of wider learning. They ensure reading is given high status in the learning and prioritise it as a morning learning activity. There are clear links between the reading pathway and the writing pathway – they are not mutually exclusive and we recognise the need to support all our children to become as proficient and confident across both areas as possible.

WRITING

Writing approaches across our schools share a common approach. Staff worked together to consider good practice, looking at key principles from the Highland literacy project, blending this together with established good practice already in place. In all aspects of teaching & learning in writing we encourage an active learning approach – collaboration, discussion and the sharing of ideas is powerful and effective. Children should also have the chance to work individually, at times.

Planning

Before good writing comes good planning. Where possible, teachers plan writing for a clear purpose, taking cross-curricular opportunities where they fit well. Approaches are adapted for Nursery and P1/2 in their early mark-making/writing. Teachers plan to meet the needs of the individuals in the class. As in all teaching and learning, differentiation is vital to ensure these needs are met. A lesson may be delivered to all, but different expectations and tasks are needed to ensure all are able to engage and experience success. Alternatively, the class might be split into 2 groups and taught as such. Working with a greater number of writing groups is counter-productive. A visible plan for when direct teaching is happening, for children to follow, is also very helpful.

Planning should be flexible and responsive depending on what issues arise and as such it is suggested not to plan too far ahead

Good approaches to writing include:

Before:

- Clarity about the task
- Modelling of good examples of text
- Introductions that provide a 'hook', a focus, establish the criteria of the genre and note key words and language

During:

- Children engage in planned/structured peer and self assessment.
- Editing, amending, re-reading are encouraged.
- The session might be split with brain-breaks or over more than one day.
- Use of time could be made visible, with timers, etc.
- Appropriate scaffolding is provided where necessary, reducing as children develop their independent writing skills further.

After:

- More opportunity for peer/self-assessment
- Revisit the criteria.
- Celebration and sharing of the writing.

Hints & Tips by Genre

Functional Writing: In our schools children will have the opportunity to encounter functional writing as below (other examples are possible):

Early	First	Second
Invitation	Invitation	Invitation
Poster	Poster	Poster
Letter	Letter	Letter
Instructions	Instructions	Instructions
Simple report	Persuasive	Persuasive
Simple recount	Report	Report
	Recount	Recount
		Discursive
		Biography/Autobiography

Children should have the chance to be exposed to good examples of the genre. Redrafting is a key part of the process of refining functional writing. The skills of note-taking should be taught in order to support children to establish key ideas, themes, words and phrases. ICT might be used to give children the opportunity to work on their writing from a prepared plan.

Personal Writing: In our schools children will have the opportunity to encounter personal writing as below (other examples are possible):

Early	First	Second
Weekend News	Weekend News	
Personal Story	Personal Story	Personal Story
	Diary entry	Diary entry
	Newspaper Report about personal story	Newspaper report
	Structured argument – fact/opinion	Structured argument – fact/opinion
		Memoire

Personal writing evolves and develops from the earliest mark making. At all times discussion and verbal explanation are very important in encouraging children to elaborate, expand and improve.

In the early years it may include features such as drawing a plan, talking through the story in two-way dialogue with peers/teachers and receiving oral feedback from the teacher whilst they are writing. At all times children are encouraged to ‘Have a go’ and teachers will not correct every spelling mistake. Regular opportunities for personal writing are key – at least every week, and at times more often than this. Children should have the opportunity to tell their story both during and after the writing. Personal writing in the early years is largely in the first person.

In the middle school there is more emphasis on order/structure of personal writing. This can be done orally. Thinking time is important, as is the chance to talk a partner through their thinking. Teachers will mark the work focussing on quality over quantity – it may be that only half the children are marked in a given piece, the other half the next time.

As children move into the upper primary, the context and demand will be broadened and deepened. Children may be asked for example: “Write about a time you were really scared; saved the day; were disappointed”. They should be asked to reflect on their opinions and introduced to the idea of a more detailed structured argument. Links with moral issues, world events or local news should be sought.

Children should now also be writing in the third person, where this suits the learning. Children should be increasingly independent in their personal writing as they move into second level.

Imaginative Writing: In our schools children will have the opportunity to encounter imaginative writing as below (other examples are possible):

<u>Imaginative</u>	<u>Imaginative</u>	<u>Imaginative</u>
Nursery Rhyme		
Picture Book	Picture Book	Picture Book
Poetry	Poetry	Poetry
Short Story	Short Story	Short Story
	Traditional Fairy Tale	Anti-Fairy tale (with a twist)
		Comic/Graphic story
		Fantasy
		Tall Tale

Imaginative writing is a great way to help children develop their creative thinking. The use of objects/artefacts/photographs/film clips/music/sounds is encouraged, helping prompt thinking about mood, tone, setting, character and plot, and firing the imagination. Teachers might support the writing by setting clear contexts, which may link to wider learning, where relevant and helpful. Drama is a powerful tool in helping children act-out and describe verbally their thoughts. It can also elicit key language that feeds writing. Looking at how an actor play a role and portrays character can be helpful. Children may benefit from using examples from texts to help them create characters of their own.

Other hints/tips/ideas:

Early writers follow a progressive process – initially the teacher scribes, then they over-write, then under-write, before writing independently.

Use ‘Big-Books’ to make the connection between reading and writing in the early years – consider who, what, why and where.

Consider giving children access to a well-stocked writing bag, freely available in the classroom.

Travelling Ted is another idea (through JRSO perhaps), providing the opportunity to write and illustrate in the form of a journal.

Writing Tables – provided with a choice of paper, pens, felt-pens, etc. this is a valuable creative writing opportunity. Good ‘models’ of writing (eg poems, story starters, environmental print), a post-box and picture dictionaries are helpful.

Best bits books – keeping a record of great passages, phrases, sentences to celebrate and highlight great moments in children’s writing.

Assessment:

Again, dialogue with pupils is key. Focussing on working with groups means teachers can pay closer attention to individuals. A running record of ongoing assessment of writing should be kept. Teachers should mark against clear criteria – learning intentions should provide a clear focus. Self-assessment should be encouraged, with children have the chance to reflect in (during) and on (after) the writing. Pupils should be encouraged to self-evaluate from the very early years.