

Colquhoun Park Primary School Literacy Strategy and Policy (updated June 17)

This Literacy Strategy and Policy is part of a set which together make up our School Improvement Strategy. It should be considered alongside these others – Raising Attainment and Achievement, Self-Evaluation and Improvement, Assessment, Recording and Reporting, Wellbeing, Curriculum Rationale and within the context of our Vision, Values and Aims statement.

It should also be read in conjunction with East Dunbartonshire Council's Literacy for Learning and Life: Strategy to Improve Literacy.

Rationale

Improving the literacy/English skills of all children and young people is a national priority with the aim of raising attainment, reducing inequality, improving life chances and employment prospects.

‘Language and literacy are of personal, social and economic importance... 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*’. Principles and Practice Paper, P1

Aim

Our aim is to build on children's prior knowledge, ensuring we meet individual needs, by providing an environment which is rich in language and which sets high expectations for literacy and the use of language.

Effective Learning and Teaching Approaches

In broad terms, within Colquhoun Park, effective learning and teaching in Literacy and English will involve a skilful mix of appropriate approaches including:

- the use of relevant, real-life and enjoyable contexts which build upon children and young people's own experiences;
- effective direct and interactive teaching
- a balance of spontaneous play and planned activities
- Learning through play particular focus in Nursery and Primary 1
- harnessing the motivational benefits of following children and young people's interests through responsive planning
- collaborative working and independent thinking and learning
- making meaningful links for learners across different curriculum areas
- building on the principles of Assessment is for Learning
- frequent opportunities to communicate in a wide range of contexts, for relevant purposes and for real audiences within and beyond places of learning
- the development of problem-solving skills and approaches
- the appropriate and effective use of ICT

In addition to the above, Literacy learning should:

- develop metacognition so that learners from the earliest stages are aware of what and how they are learning
- develop higher order thinking skills and the ability to think critically
- use a wide range of texts including spoken, written, Scots Language and digital texts to promote literacy development
- be well planned and demonstrate progression, breadth and depth in learning across all stages
- provide opportunities for literacy learning to take place across the four contexts
- promote creative approaches and the imagination
- ensure that children are actively engaged in their own learning



- make connections between listening, talking, reading and writing explicit to learners
- provide opportunities for children to apply the knowledge and skills they have learned in literacy to other curriculum areas
- ensure that appropriate support and challenge is provided for learners in order to meet their needs and ensure equity for all learners.

Early Years

The Vocabulary Gap

‘Children from lower socio-economic backgrounds go to school having heard 32 million fewer words on average than their middle class peers. As a result, their comprehension and language development is likely to be more limited.’ (Read On – Get On’. – P15)

Much has been written regarding the vocabulary gap in the early years and the long lasting effects this can have on children’s achievement and attainment over time.

Some ideas to promote vocabulary development and communication in the early years:-

- Effective use of non-verbal cues such as gesture and facial expressions to provide unspoken acknowledgement e.g. by smiling / nodding in approval;
- Ask questions to help extend children’s play / understanding and vocabulary;
- Step in to conversations and play situations to ask a probing question, such as: ‘What would happen if?’
- Model new and interesting words and phrases with just enough challenge to support children’s language and communication skills;
- Describe to the child what they are thinking and doing and encourage the child to do the same;
- Provide time to talk in a supportive, unhurried way with a key adult in order to promote quality conversations;
- Make time to talk and listen to what a young child is saying and try to build on their meaning. Reply in a way that children will understand but which also models new language and descriptions;
- Encourage children to talk with each other and adults to share their thinking and ideas;
- Develop vocabulary enrichment through reading books – choose books whereby the illustrations match the meaning of the text. Discuss the meaning of new and unfamiliar words after sharing the text.
- Encourage children to play with rhyme and rhythm, songs and silly words to have fun and promote enjoyment of words and language;
- Expose children to a varied, rich and meaningful vocabulary;
- Ensure children know that both spoken and written words are important;
- Repeat new words that offer just the right amount of challenge in a range of nursery area / contexts;
- Provide interesting objects to touch / observe which stimulate questions / language and communication;
- Encourage and value conversations through play and real life contexts inside and out of doors;
- Family Learning – involve parents in developing understanding of importance of vocabulary and communication and the importance of talk / reading. Promotion of family literacy initiatives.

A Literacy Rich Environment

In addition to the above, children in the Early Years should have opportunity to experience a literacy rich environment. They should have opportunity to develop early learning skills through their interaction with both children and adults. Play, investigation, exploration and the development of curiosity and creativity are crucial.

- There should be a mix of opportunities for both child –led and adult-led activities to promote learning. There should be explicit links between play and learning;
- Effective and skilled questioning by staff is essential in promoting learners’ early literacy skills;
- Children should be consulted on their learning and asked their opinion – activities should build on what learners already know;
- A range of meaningful contexts should be created within and outwith the nursery to promote literacy development so that children see that this is not something they just do at the writing table or book corner;
- Children must have opportunity to both listen and talk for a range of purposes;
- They should have opportunity to listen to and follow instructions for a range of reasons. They should be supported to listen and take turns in a conversation;



- Reading – children must have opportunity to listen to and hear a range of different texts read to them as well as having favourite and familiar texts read to them on a regular basis;
- Children should have opportunity to experience an exciting and well-resourced book area (including quality story books, fiction / non fiction texts/ poetry / rhyme), books children have made themselves, recordings of experiences and stories they want to share and tell with their peer group and adults;
- Be provided with opportunities to hear / say / identify the initial sound of their name and eventually their whole name;
- Experience of Nursery Rhymes – we know from research that knowledge of nursery rhymes can be a predictor of later reading success. Children should have opportunity to hear and recite a range of nursery rhymes and also have opportunity to play with the rhyming patterns in words e.g. nonsense rhymes;
- Draw children’s attention of words, both verbal and in print, and helps them realise print has meaning; for example, labelling their own pictures, writing during shop or home play, writing cards and letters and signs or labels on resources;
- Writing – children should have access to a range of mark making tools across the nursery and in a range of play contexts. They should have opportunities to use their drawings and mark makings to express their thoughts and ideas;
- Staff should have a clear understanding of the stages of early writing development in order that they can support children to develop such skills according to their needs and stage of development;
- Children should be provided with a range of meaningful and relevant activities to practise their writing skills e.g. self registration, making shopping lists, writing notes and plans;
- Staff should share writing for everyday purposes, explaining why and pointing out signs and symbols and what they mean;
- Encourage an interest in early writing skills and opportunities to mark make in real life contexts with clear mark-making tools, paint, pens and brushes;
- Encourages children’s own sense of self by using their names, both oral and written, and those of friends and family frequently.

(English Review -3-18 – Page 7, Early Years Advice – pages 8 and 9, Building the Ambition)

Effective Learning and Teaching in the Primary School

At Colquhoun Park we use a variety of teaching strategies, in line with Curriculum for Excellence, to provide range of different learning opportunities for pupils which develop their Literacy and English skills for learning, life and work. All areas of Literacy and English are taught coherently and wherever possible linked to other subject areas. We recognise that children are motivated by a range of contexts and that literacy skills can be developed by effective cross curricular links.

Listening and Talking

Children will develop skills within Listening and Talking individually and in groups, in a variety of contexts and for a variety of purposes to gain information, understand what they have heard and respond appropriately to speakers and texts. Teachers plan for these types of activities through specific Literacy activities or in an interdisciplinary approach to learning. Our Literature Circles approach and Cooperative Learning strategies are key areas through which we develop key skills in Listening and Talking. These skills are also developed as part of everyday school and class routines and children are also given opportunities to perform to various audiences over each session.

Listening and Talking Skills include:

- Contribute to class and group discussions/ debates;
- Ask and answer questions and access a range of texts including written, digital and Scots Language;
- Listen and talk with confidence across a range of topics and curriculum areas;
- Have opportunities to develop Pupil Voice through Committees and assemblies;
- Talk with increasing confidence to a range of audiences;
- Respect the contributions of others;
- Have increased ability to summarise and clarify key points;



- Use appropriate tone, pace, language and register to engage the audience.

Reading

Children in Colquhoun Park are encouraged to read a mixture of fiction and non-fiction books as well as other forms of texts. Reading is taught in ability groups and these groups are reviewed regularly to ensure pace and challenge.

Storyworlds is used at Early Level and the beginning of First Level. Literacy World is used at the end of First Level and throughout Second Level. These core readers are supplemented with novels. For children struggling with the core readers other texts can be used to support learning - Dandelion Readers (P1-4), Rigby Star Readers; Totem and Talisman readers (P5-7)/ Storyworld Bridges, Teachers also have access to Intervention Resources which can be used for whole class/group work.

Effective questioning (using HOTS) is used during reading sessions to further children's critical thinking skills. Each class has its own Fiction library and the school library in ICT Suite contains all non fiction, allowing the opportunity for children to access a variety of texts.

Reading skills include:

- Develop awareness of rhyme and patterns in language;
- Aware of common features of books and are beginning to ask questions to help understand what they have read;
- Share their ideas and opinions regarding texts they have read;
- Locate information from a range of sources and select / sort information to support their views.
- Can use a range of reading tools and become metacognitively aware of what would be the most appropriate strategy to use when;
- Have real life opportunities to skim to ascertain the gist of a text or to scan for a specific piece of information;
- Are able to read texts with increasing fluency, expression and accuracy;
- Have opportunities to read between and beyond the lines of text in order to comprehend texts more fully;
- Be provided with opportunities to apply their reading skills across a range of curriculum areas;
- Experience a range of texts which offer appropriate levels of challenge and increase in complexity;
- The link between reading and writing is made explicit to learners so that they can begin to use some of the techniques and effective figurative language in their own writing;

Writing

The children are encouraged to write for a purpose in different genres. There should be a weekly writing lesson in a 'taught writing' jotter. All writing should be dated (a date stamp can be used in P1-3) and the learning intention and success criteria (I can) should be included with the writing. These will help children self and peer assess and will aid teachers when providing feedback. Traffic lighting or two stars and/or a wish are effective ways of writing feedback.

Writing has close links with other areas of the curriculum, for example Expressive Arts and Creative Writing, Science and functional writing and Social Studies and Critical Literacy. Inter-disciplinary studies are likely to involve both research and a strong element of presentation, and provide valuable opportunities to extend language skills.

Teachers use their professional judgement to select appropriate stimuli and topics for writing. Ros Wilson's Big Writing approach is used for the four targets of: vocabulary, connectives, openers and punctuation (VCOP). There are core VCOP lessons to help children engage with this process. VCOP will mainly be used for imaginative writing but can be used to aid writing in the other genres. The VCOP highlighting code is as follows:

Vocabulary – blue
Connectives – pink
Openers – green
Punctuation – yellow



We have a progression Planner to ensure all writing genres are taught over a level These are:

- narrative/ story
- instructions/direction
- information/ report
- persuasive writing
- recount
- explanation
- personal writing
- poetry

Moderation sessions are carried out regularly by staff to ensure understanding of the achievement of a level. This also helps new members of staff to better understand the expected standard for each level.

A star writer is chosen in most classes and stickers awarded by SMT. Good samples of writing are displayed on our progression wall in the main corridor showing writing from Nursery to P7.

All other English written work will be completed in either the Literacy and English jotter e.g. comprehension tasks, grammar, etc, or in the IDL project books/folders e.g. health, social studies, etc.

Spelling

Jolly Phonics is used for the teaching of phonics in Primary 1 and 2 and Jolly Grammar introduced in Primary 3. Nelson Spelling Programme is used from P4-P7. Active Spelling strategies are used to teach spelling throughout. At Colquhoun Park, we have devised a Phonological Awareness Assessment used to identify key gaps in learning and linked activities to 'plug the gap' Doorway online is used to support struggling spellers from P4-7. Partnership with parents is encouraged and family learning approaches to support learning and ensure equity.

Handwriting

We aim to encourage a high standard of presentation in written work. In Primary 1 all lower case and upper case letters are taught and these are reinforced in Primary 2. Nelson Handwriting is used in Primary 3 to 7. By the end of Primary 3/beginning of Primary 4 children should be using a joined script.

Writing skills include:

- Children should have opportunities to write effectively for a range of different purposes and audiences;
- Opportunities to write for a range of real and relevant contexts;
- Can plan, make notes and write at length with increasing confidence;
- Whole school approaches to writing are used in order to ensure children are developing skills in a coherent and consistent way;
- Children have opportunities from the early stages to experience high quality texts and encouraged to consider, at their own level, what makes a good text;
- Children should be given many opportunities to write at length for a range of purposes across the four contexts in order to improve achievement and attainment in literacy;
- Continue to give a high priority to technical accuracy, presentation and developing children's understanding and use of punctuation, sentence structure and paragraphing.
- Whole school approaches to writing are used in order to ensure children are learning skills in a planned and progressive way which builds on their prior learning;
- Opportunities are provided for learners to familiarise themselves with a range of writing styles and genres; this should be planned into blocks of time so children have adequate experience;
- A wide range of vocabulary is used and children learn how to use this and apply this appropriately to engage the reader;
- Children experience a range of figurative language, vocabulary, punctuation, effective sentence started and conjunctions and know how to use these to make their writing interesting;
- Children should be provided with quality models of writing and have opportunity to deconstruct these with the teacher so that they can begin to use such strategies in their own writing e.g. simile, metaphor.



- Children should receive timely feedback about their writing and offered next steps to help improve their writing,
- Learners must be provided with enough time to write extended pieces of writing;
- Children should be encouraged on a regular basis to read their writing to ensure it makes sense and become self – reflective on the writing process;
- Peer and self assessment approaches should be used to help children improve their writing.
- A high priority to should be given to technical accuracy, presentation, use of a variety of sentence structure and paragraphing.
- Have opportunities to embed what they have learned about the writing process in literacy across a range of curriculum areas.

Planning

Termly Planning

In Colquhoun Park termly planning includes details of ability groups, experiences/outcomes to be met, and skills taught in each area of Literacy and English. Benchmarks are used by staff to plan teaching and learning across Early – Third level and these are use to support assessment. Resources to be used are detailed/highlighted and evaluations are completed termly. These provide information for teaching and future planning.

Weekly Planning

In Colquhoun Park weekly planning includes details of differentiated activities to be carried out for whole class or groups to develop key skills in Listening and talking, Reading and Writing across the 4 contexts of learning.

Family Learning and Parental Engagement

“Family learning is a powerful method of engagement and learning which can foster positive attitudes towards life-long learning, promote socio-economic resilience ad challenge educational disadvantage.” (Education Scotland)

Parental involvement and engagement are key factors in securing successful outcomes for children. Research shows that when parents support learning and when children live in a stimulating home learning environment, attainment and achievement are improved. In Colquhoun Park Primary we work with the Parent Council to develop parental engagement and family learning as part of our school’s improvement plan and individualise this work to meet the needs of parents and carers.

For further information on assessment, equity, universal and targeted support, moderation, monitoring and tracking and staff responsibilities in relation to Literacy and English, please see the other policies referenced at the start of this policy.