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PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL

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Wheatfield Primary School

Language and Literacy Policy

Revised August 2021

Language and Literacy Policy

Rationale

In Wheatfield Primary School we strive to provide a supportive, caring and stimulating environment for all our pupils. We recognise that Literacy is essential for empowering pupils to become independent learners, to communicate in relationships and that it affects most aspects of everyday life, as well as being a source of pleasure and enjoyment. This is reflected in the commitment of the staff to promote language development across all areas of learning.

We believe that children's language and literacy skills are central to living and learning. Every teacher promotes and supports the development of children's talking, listening, reading, writing and thinking skills in a variety of meaningful contexts in all curricular areas. This policy document will outline the strategies and approaches we will support and develop in order to ensure that each child becomes equipped with the necessary language knowledge, understanding and skills.

The overall curriculum planning reflects the Northern Ireland Curriculum (CCEA, 2007), the aims of the school and the priorities outlined in the school development plan. At Wheatfield Primary School, we intend that, by the end of Key Stage 2, children will be able to understand and use language, both spoken and written, as an integral part of learning in all areas. The development of these skills enables children to interact effectively in the world around them, to express themselves creatively and to communicate confidently, using the four modes of communication (talking and listening, reading and writing) and a variety of skills and media.



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The Schools Improvement policy document, 'Every School a Good School,' (DENI 2009) has outlined indicators of what will be recognised as effective performance under four headings:

- **Child centred provision**
- **High quality teaching and learning**
- **Effective leadership**
- **A school connected to its local community**

Count, Read, Succeed; A Strategy to Improve Outcomes in Literacy and Numeracy' (DENI, 2011). paragraph 1.7 defines literacy as:

'the ability to read and use written information and to write appropriately and legibly, taking account of different purposes, contexts, conventions and audiences.'

It involves the development of:

- an integrated approach to the acquisition of talking, listening, reading and writing skills across the curriculum;
- knowledge that allows a speaker, writer and reader to use language appropriate to different social situations;
- formal and informal language across all areas of social interaction; and
- the ability to read, understand and use information in multiple formats and platforms, including traditional print and on-screen material.



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Aims

The aims of teaching and learning in Language and Literacy are:

- To raise the standards of literacy attainment across the school;
- To enable pupils to express and communicate meaning in spoken language, listening to and interpreting what others say and matching response to audience, context and purpose;
- To enable children to read fluently, independently and with understanding, purpose and enjoyment;
- To enable children to communicate using written language effectively, making and shaping text appropriately, according to context, purpose and audience;
- To develop children's thinking and problem-solving skills;
- To promote a wide use of ICT and media texts as a medium for the further development of language across the curriculum including iPads, Interactive whiteboards, Kindle, a fully equipped computer suite and interactive talking stories;
- To allow pupils to learn a second language.

Statutory Requirements

The statutory requirements for teaching and learning in Literacy are set out in the Northern Ireland Curriculum (CCEA, 2007) and include:

In the Foundation Stage:

Children should be given opportunities to talk and listen and represent ideas in their activities, use communication, language and literacy in every part of the curriculum and should be immersed in an environment rich in print and possibilities for communication.



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Key Stage One:

Children should learn to speak confidently and listen to what others have to say. They should begin to read and write independently and with enthusiasm. They should use language to explore their own experiences and imaginary worlds.

Key Stage Two:

Children should learn to change the way they talk and write to suit different situations, purposes and audiences. They should read a range of texts and respond to different layers of meaning in them. They should explore the use of language in literacy and non-literacy texts and learn how the structure of language works.

Child-Centred Provision

The following indicators from, “**Every School A Good School**” (*DENI 2009*), will be reflected in our approach:

- decisions on planning, resources, curriculum and pastoral care reflect, always, the needs and aspirations of the pupils within the school;
- a clear commitment exists to promoting equality of opportunity, high quality learning, a concern for individual pupils and a respect for diversity;
- a school culture of achievement, improvement and ambition exists with clear expectations that all pupils can and will achieve to the very best of their ability;
- effective interventions and support are in place to meet the additional education and other needs of pupils and to help them overcome barriers to learning;
- there is a commitment to involve young people in discussions and decisions on school life that directly affect them and to listen their views.



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Raising standards

We aim to provide provision for all children so that they reach their full potential in Language and Literacy according to their individual abilities. We identify which pupils or groups of pupils are under-achieving and those with special educational needs in order to take steps to improve attainment. Gifted children will be identified, and suitable learning challenges provided. Pupils who are gifted, underachieving or have Special Educational Needs are identified at the earliest opportunity using classroom observation, and through the testing of pupils.

All teachers in our school have responsibility for identifying and providing for pupils deemed to be gifted, underachieving, or with special educational needs within their class. Diagnostic tests are used appropriately to aid understanding of specific areas of difficulty. The scores from standardised assessments (including GL Assessment Progress Test in English and Suffolk Reading Scale) are compared to the CAT4 results.

Those pupils who have difficulties in relation to language and literacy skills, such as specific language difficulties, poor language experience and auditory problems, are referred for suitable outside agency support, such as Speech and Language Therapy or Peripatetic Hearing Service Support. Their needs are recorded and addressed on a Personal Learning Plan (PLP). Pupils in Years 3 and 4 who are underachieving in reading may be placed on the Reading Partnership Programme for a period of ten weeks, working for three 15-minute sessions with a trained reading partner, to raise their attainment in reading.

The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) maintains a 'register of concern', detailing teachers' specific concerns regarding children in their classes. The progress of children on this register is reviewed regularly by the class teacher and SENCo collaboratively, who take appropriate steps to improve the children's attainment. Early identification and intervention are fundamental for the



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appropriate provision of support. Children with a specific educational need regarding literacy are withdrawn from class in a small group or individual basis each week by the Learning Support teacher, EA Peripatetic teachers or Harberton Outreach teachers for specific Literacy intervention sessions. This support begins in P2 and runs through to P7. The needs of these pupils and methods of intervention are recorded and reviewed on a Personal Learning Plan. Nursery, P1 and P2 pupils participate in the Communication and Education Together (COMET) which help support communication in the Early Years.

The SENCo provides advice and support for all staff and liaises with class teachers, Peripatetic support staff and with other relevant professionals, particularly when drawing up Personal Learning Plans and monitoring pupil progress. Parents will be regularly advised of their own child's difficulties, the programme of support provided, and the progress being made.

High Quality Teaching and Learning

Throughout the school year there are regular opportunities for pupils to engage with Literacy in an enjoyable way, beyond normal classroom teaching and learning. These include weekly visits to the school library, local library visits, reading buddies, annual book fairs, handwriting competitions, sponsored reads and a World Book day fancy dress competition, writing workshops, poetry competitions, story writing competitions, webinars, local author visits etc. It is our aim that these activities will enhance the Literacy provision in school, allowing pupils to enjoy language in a variety of curricular and extra-curricular ways.

The following indicators from, “***Every School A Good School***” (DENI 2009), will be reflected in our approach:

- a broad and relevant curriculum is provided for the pupils
- an emphasis on literacy exists across the curriculum



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- teachers are committed and enthusiastic, enjoying a positive relationship with their pupils and with other school-based staff and dedicated to improving learning
- teachers use adaptable, flexible teaching strategies that respond to the diversity within the classroom
- assessment and other data are used to effectively inform teaching and learning across the school and in the classroom and to promote improvement
- individual pupil progress is effectively tracked from primary 1 to primary 7
- rigorous self-evaluation is carried out by teachers and the whole school, using objective data and leading to sustained self-improvement
- teachers reflect on their own work and the outcomes of individual pupils
- teachers strive to ensure that education outcomes reflect positively on the school and compare well, when benchmarked measurement is undertaken, against the performance of similar schools

Teachers employ a variety of teaching approaches, including whole-class teaching, small group work and individual work, differentiated as appropriate. Every teacher makes use of shared, modelled and guided reading and writing strategies to develop language and literacy and utilise effective questioning to enhance pupil learning. Pupils benefit from regular opportunities for extended writing and a variety of activities designed to develop talking and listening skills across the curriculum.

We are aware that progress is enhanced when teachers are sensitive to differences in learning styles. Since children learn in different ways and at different rates, a flexible approach which encourages children's active engagement in their learning through problem solving will extend the pupils' use of thinking and language and promote independence. Teachers will have realistically high expectations and will ensure that all children understand what is expected of them by sharing the learning intention and success criteria with



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them (WALT and WILF). An appropriate range of learning and teaching strategies, which are active and practical in their nature, motivate the pupils and engage them purposefully in their work both collaboratively and independently.

The strands of talking, listening, group discussion and interaction, and drama permeate the whole curriculum. We recognise oral language as the primary mode of language and place a central emphasis and focus in all areas of the curriculum and in the life of the school. Children are encouraged to listen attentively and to speak clearly, confidently, fluently and appropriately for a variety of different audiences and purposes.

Story sacks, 'show and tell' sessions, role play, hot seating, freeze frames, readings at assemblies, school productions, circle time, plan-do-review cycle, KWL grids, phonological awareness activities, music, listening games, rhymes etc. are used to promote thinking skills and oracy. There is an emphasis on providing opportunities for the children to interact with teachers, other adults and with peers through the use number of grouping strategies such as think-pair-share, group talks and whole class discussions.

Children are encouraged to develop a love of books and the disposition to read. They have opportunities to listen to a range of interesting and exciting genre and share a range of books with adults and other children. The ability to read is fundamental to pupils' development as independent learners.

To enable children to read across the curriculum with fluency, accuracy, understanding and enjoyment pupils need to orchestrate the range of strategies:

- phonic knowledge and skills
- contextual knowledge
- grammatical understanding
- word decoding and recognition
- language comprehension



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A consistent approach to the teaching of phonics is implemented throughout the school. Through the Jolly Learning approach children gain the knowledge and skills necessary to become competent readers and spellers.

Book fairs, story sacks, library visits to the local library, visits from storytellers and authors in addition to a wide range of non-fiction and fiction texts, including ICT, are used to foster a love of reading as well as promote and support learning and teaching.

Writing is an enjoyable, purposeful and creative experience. It is taught within the wide context of literacy which underpins the whole curriculum. Children have opportunities, throughout the school day, to write for a range of purposes and audiences. They have regular opportunities, as a whole class, in small groups or individually to see modelled writing and to participate in shared writing. We encourage writing for a purpose and in KS2 we offer opportunities to participate in writing workshops with local authors, pen pal correspondence and blogging. As children progress, they have opportunities to write individually, with a partner or in small groups with teacher/classroom assistant's guidance, where appropriate.

Teachers also encourage on-going improvement in the children's learning through self-assessment, peer-assessment and monitoring & evaluation of progress. Children's work will be marked positively and constructively in relation to the learning intention and the success criteria (WALT and WILF).

Teachers make effective use of qualitative and quantitative data to inform teaching and learning. The Literacy and Assessment Coordinators liaise with class teachers to target small groups of underachieving children who would benefit from additional guided reading/writing sessions in class. The progress of these pupils is reviewed regularly by class teachers and annually by coordinators. Teachers make effective use of Assessment for Learning strategies, in line with the school's marking policy, and provide opportunities for



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pupils to develop Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities through group and individual activities and activity-based learning.

All teachers in Wheatfield Primary School accept shared responsibility for promoting Literacy throughout the school. However, the Literacy Coordinator has responsibility for co-ordinating the development of Language and Literacy. There is a school development plan and Literacy Action plan in place which has been contributed to, agreed and is supported by appropriate action planning for language and literacy. A Literacy Team (consisting of a representative from each Key Stage was established in September 2017) has identified priority areas for development. The Literacy Coordinator and Numeracy Coordinator maintain a collegiate assessment and evaluative cycle to better inform future targets and provision.

Effective Leadership

In Wheatfield Primary School all staff and governors have a responsibility to promote and develop language and literacy across the school. Each of their respective responsibilities are outlined below.

Board of Governors (Chairperson- Mr Gourley)

- are familiar with the School Development Plan and the targets of the Literacy Action Plan
- are informed of the annual targets for improvement and are updated on the progress against these targets annually
- attend relevant Education Authority professional development courses as appropriate.

Principal (Miss Clarke)

- leads the staff in writing and reviewing the School Development Plan



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- collaborates with the Assessment and Literacy Coordinator in setting annual targets for improvement, analysing data and tracking pupils' progress
- supports all staff through provision of and accessing professional development opportunities
- ensures effective communication between all staff in relation to achieving the aims of the school's Literacy policy

Literacy Coordinator (Mrs McKittrick)

- contributes to the school development planning process and particularly the Literacy Action Plan
- collaborates with the Principal, Numeracy Coordinator and class teachers in setting annual targets for improvement, analysing data and tracking pupils' progress
- supports class teachers in addressing underachievement
- accesses appropriate support for teachers from EA or other sources when required
- facilitates the sharing of best practice across the school through regular Literacy meetings and peer observations
- monitors and evaluates the ongoing planning, learning and teaching and assessment in Literacy across the school
- ensures effective communication between all staff and relevant outside agencies in relation to achieving the aims of the school's Literacy policy
- provision of leadership and direction in promoting Literacy
- encouragement of high standards of teaching and learning, with responsibility for language and literacy across the curriculum
- development and review of a Literacy Policy in consultation with all staff
- supports and motivates colleagues
- responsible for the setting of priorities and targets, in liaison with staff, to improve provision for all children



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- aids identification of needs, in the area of language and literacy, in relation to the needs of the school, in consultation with the literacy team
- contributes to evaluation and monitoring procedures
- audits and supports colleagues in their continuing professional development (CPD)
- is committed to on-going professional development, and subsequent dissemination of key messages and new knowledge/ resources
- establishes clear and open channels of communication between principal, senior management team, teachers, classroom assistants, parents and children
- ensures channels of communication are open and active with all relevant outside agencies

Monitoring: The quality of children's learning is carefully monitored throughout the school. Evidence used to inform the evaluation of language and literacy includes:

- monitoring teachers' plans
- samples of children's work including their books
- displays and photographs
- discussions with teachers, children and parents
- staff/ parent/ pupil questionnaires
- key Stage meetings /staff meetings
- observations

The outcomes of the monitoring process are used to inform future planning and evaluation.



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Teacher

- promotes the aims of the Literacy policy through all curricular activities
- contributes to the school development planning process
- collaborates with the Principal, Assessment and Literacy Coordinators in setting annual targets for improvement, analysing data and tracking pupils' progress
- is responsible for addressing underachievement within their own class
- differentiates all activities appropriately to cater for the range of learning needs represented in their class
- regularly reviews and tracks the progress of the pupils in their class throughout the year
- shares best practice with other staff through regular Literacy meetings and peer observations
- self-evaluates the planning, learning and teaching and assessment within Literacy that takes place in their own class in order to improve as practitioners
- regularly communicates with outside agencies involved in teaching Literacy to track pupils' progress

Literacy Team (Mrs McKittrick, Ms Waugh, Mr Darragh)

- contribute to the school development planning process and particularly the Literacy Action Plan
- contribute to setting annual targets for improvement, analysing data and tracking pupils' progress
- collaborate with the Literacy Coordinator to monitor and evaluate the ongoing planning, learning and teaching and assessment in Literacy across the school

Classroom Assistants

- assist the teacher in promoting the aims of the Literacy policy through all curricular activities



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- are aware of the Literacy targets set for their class and the methods of improvement in place
- assist the class teacher in facilitating learning activities and in assessing pupils' progress throughout the year, where appropriate
- regularly discuss pupils' progress with the class teacher

SENCo (Miss Clarke)

- contributes to the school development planning process
- collaborates with the Principal, Assessment Coordinator and class teachers in analysing data and tracking SEN pupils' progress
- supports class teachers in addressing underachievement
- provides additional Literacy support for significantly low-achieving pupils
- supports all staff through provision of and accessing relevant professional development opportunities
- ensures effective communication between staff and relevant outside agencies in relation to achieving the aims of the school's Literacy policy and monitoring pupils' progress
- regularly review and track the progress of the pupils on the school's SEN register throughout the year
- share best practice with other staff through regular Literacy meetings and peer observations
- self-evaluate the planning, learning and teaching and assessment that takes place in withdrawal sessions in order to improve as a practitioner

Parents

- support the development of their children's Literacy by assisting with homework
- read regularly with and to their child at home
- attend phonics workshops and library sessions provided by the school



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- encourage children to engage with Literacy when completing everyday activities, such as writing shopping lists, reading road signs, singing rhymes, etc.

We endeavour to sustain excellent parental involvement in our pupils' learning through; homework; literacy-based programmes with parents as educational partners e.g. Paired Reading and Reading Partnerships. Each class teacher provides parents with topic information sheets containing information about the terms learning objectives across the curriculum. Parents are invited to assemblies, school productions, book fairs, World Book Day, opportunities for school fund-raising for resources and our new school website offers tips to parents for activities that support their children's learning

Connections to the Local Community

The following indicators from, "Every School A Good School" (DENI 2009), will be reflected in our approach:

- good relationships that facilitate engagement and communication between the school and its parents and the wider community that it serves;
- the school and its teachers are held in respect by parents and the local community who in turn actively support the work of the school;
- good relationships and clear channels of communication are in place between the school and the education agencies that support it;
- the school works closely with other relevant statutory and voluntary agencies whose work impacts on education, especially Health, Social Services, and the Public Library Service
- Ready To Learn by Barnardo's, Time to Read with Queens University and Business in the Community

Reading Together



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- library workshops
- phonics workshops for parents
- Book fairs
- links with external agencies – Harberton outreach, BELB Peripatetic, Educational Psychology
- clusters for staff development
- visits to other schools to observe good practice
- joint productions with local schools
- links with post primary schools to ensure a smooth transition for our pupils

To ensure transparency and consistency of good practice this Language and Literacy policy will be:

- regularly reviewed and updated in consultation with staff, particularly Senior Leadership Team and SENCo;
- presented to the Board of Governors annually;
- shared with parents;
- in line with whole school learning and teaching policy.