



Keelman's Way School, Literacy Policy

L McGregor, Literacy Leader, updated May 2017

Introduction

This policy aims to guide educators and set out good practice and highlight the effective literacy strategies used in school. English is considered the body that encompasses the areas of Reading, writing, speaking and listening and the effective use of phonological understanding to enable effective listening skills and phoneme discrimination. When teaching pupils with additional educational needs we must be aware of current legislation, the needs of the pupils and present the curriculum in an effective and meaningful way.

“The development of communication and listening skills is an essential step towards Reading and writing for pupils with severe, complex and profound and multiple learning difficulties”
(Implementing the Literacy Hour for pupils with Learning Difficulties, 1999).

The most effective way to deliver an effective and stimulating English curriculum is to make life/stories/recount/songs/fables as accessible as possible and cater to each individual's needs and abilities. This then allows pupils to make sense of their environment through the spoken and written word, symbols, pictures, signing, sensory exploration and meaningful events through multi-sensory experiences.

“Good literacy teaching is lively, engaging and involves a carefully planned blend of approaches that direct children's learning. Children are challenged to think”.
(Primary Framework for literacy and mathematics, Primary National Strategy, 2006).

The shape of a literacy lesson

The weekly entitlement for literacy lessons is four to five hours. This can be split over morning or afternoons sessions. Lessons should adhere to a three part lesson, although flexibility may be required, it is important to consider that when teaching pupils whom are PMLD and ASD, that they perform better to lessons with a clear format,

“For children, the lesson is still their unit of learning and a lesson needs a clear start and end so that they know what they are learning and recognise the progress that they have made”,

Effective phonics teaching

“Phonics teaching needs to be carefully planned, reinforcing and building on previous learning to secure children’s progress. It needs to be taught discretely and daily and needs to be engaging and multisensory”.

(Primary Framework for literacy and mathematics, Primary National Strategy, 2006).

Effective teaching of phonics should be embedded within a phonics rich environment that can be adapted to any activity. There should be high quality, systematic phonic work/teaching as well as generic reading and decoding skills shown across the curriculum. The aspects to consider are, firstly the attention given to the development of children's speaking and listening skills; and its position within a broad and rich language curriculum that takes full account of developing the four independent strands of literacy – speaking, listening, reading and writing. The key aim of any effective reading/phonics programme is to enlarge pupils’ stock of known words.

High quality phonics programmes are used presently in school and should be followed and modified to suit the pupils. Following such programmes in the EYFS and Key stage 1 allow teachers to follow the structure and ensure phonics is covered in a necessary pace. When used in a collaborative approach they can provide a stimulating bank of resources and enhance pupils reading skills. All these high quantity activities ensure that we are giving children the opportunities to progress with their reading skills.

Pupils at Keelman’s Way School will develop reading skills at very individual levels and this must be considered when teaching in whole class, small groups and for individual reading sessions. Pupils may not progress in the same rate as their peers and this must be recorded and considered when moving through the key stages. It is common to be teaching pupils in one class at one time lots of different stages of phonics development. Teachers must be aware of pupil’s levels and address them in a ‘best fit’ approach when dealing with the whole class. The use of objects of reference, sensory stories, photographs, PECs symbols and Makaton signs support help this factor greatly to ensure all pupils involvement.

The learning/working environment

The teaching of literacy requires a whole school approach and should aim to create an environment which ensures targets and learning approaches are age-appropriate and reflective of the pupil’s ability and learning styles. As pupils pass through the key stages at a predicted pace showing progression and teachers to be aware of texts which are suited to certain age groups.

The classroom should reflect current learning and displays and work areas should be clearly labelled. Where necessary these areas should have symbols, written word and interactive resources such as sound buttons. This is to ensure that display boards, notices, posters and labels have meaning and clarity to the audience and its creators. Communication is key and all educators should use effective modes of communication when responding and interacting with pupils, e.g., clear speech, Makaton, PECs, photographs, Objects of reference and on-body signs. Clear interaction must be evident in and around the classroom.

Home/school support network

Continuity in the approach of teaching literacy and phonics is essential to pupil's success. Therefore parental involvement is key as to not encourage bad practice such as misuse of sounds, such as /buh/ /cuh/ /duh/. This acts as a barrier to learning and all persons involved should be informed on suitable teaching approaches. Importantly when parents are reading at home with their children, they should be clear of what the expectations are of the pupils as to not confuse or cause negativity to the activity. Regular contact through reading diaries is essential and an open door policy should be encouraged to allow parents to air any concerns, confusion and celebrate successes. Support can be sought from the Literacy Leader.

'Assessment for learning' during literacy sessions

Assessment for learning involves using assessment in the classroom to raise pupils' achievements. "their process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there".

(Assessment Reform Group, 2002)

Key characteristics of 'Assessment for learning' are:

Using effective open questioning techniques, by use of switches and communication boards/books where necessary.

Using effective marking and feedback strategies

Sharing learning goals- where appropriate

Peer and self- assessment – where appropriate

The effective educator will ensure all of the above factors are part of the everyday lesson and pupils are given responsibility for their learning, by listening and observing good work, giving feedback and increasing motivation and self-esteem through their work.

The use of drama for multi-sensory teaching

The use of drama in literacy has long been celebrated at Keelman's Way School and teachers are highly skilled in creating drama based on a text or song/rhyme. Multi-sensory recreation of texts or social stories are devised specifically for PMLD pupils. Drama based activities are an essential way to develop skills in Speaking and Listening and is included in every Key stage,

"Explore familiar themes and characters through improvisation and role-play.

Act out their own and well-known stories, using voices for characters.

Discuss why they like a performance".

(Core learning in Literacy, Year 1, Primary Framework for Literacy and Numeracy (2007)).

Literacy across the curriculum

Pupils work levels should be evident over the entire curriculum in terms of written work, use of symbols and speaking and listening skills. The pupil's literacy level should be consistent when

looking at workbooks and/or pictures. Literacy levels of the pupils should be considered when setting targets for other curriculum subjects such as mathematics and Science.

Age appropriateness of texts

There should be with all schemes of work progression of skills and content although it must remain relevant and stimulating for pupils. The literacy book list attached shows books that are deemed appropriate according to the key stage but all educators must have high expectations of all pupils and therefore texts should have breadth and coverage of suitable topics and literacy strands. The frequently revisiting of texts should be encouraged, e.g., 'The three little pigs' to make a warning poster about wolves or The Gruffalo to make an alternative text ending.

Alternative reading strategies

Look, read, write models of teaching to read and flashcards are highly effective for ASD Pupils and pupils with Down's syndrome. A reading assessment is the best to categorise pupils who are not phonic based readers. It is a skill that goes hand in hand with phonic reading for most pupils such as the teaching of tricky words which cannot be easily sounded out by initial sound recognition, e.g., y-o-u. without the knowledge of the entire phonetic alphabet so as not hinder pupils reading skills these word are learnt as 'sight-words'.

Learning styles

Literacy is essentially about enabling pupils to make sense of the environment through the written word, symbols, pictures, signing and multi-sensory experiences. When pupils have a significant sensory loss then their experience is significantly challenged. It is the role of the educator to recognise these significant factors and enable learning to occur in an alternative supportive way. Addressing pupil's sensory processing issues can in fact directly affect the behaviour of pupils in their lessons. This is particularly relevant when teaching phonics to allow the auditory system is fully supported and the visual system when teaching reading and grapheme discrimination.

Assessment criteria for literacy in Keelman's Way School

At Keelman's Way School many pupils are working within the P scales and this is statutory for children with special educational needs (SEN) who are working below level 1 of the National Curriculum. If a child working at levels P1(i)–P3(ii), then reading, writing, speaking or listening levels would not normally be appropriate. If a child is at an English level higher than P3(ii), then the relevant separate levels P4–P8 in reading, writing, speaking or listening are appropriate. Pupils are assessed yearly using PIVATs and scores are submitted at the beginning of the summer term. It is generally accepted that pupils achieving below P4 level would not benefit from discrete phonics teaching but would benefit from exposure to Stage 1 of the phonics assessment. Each pupil will have an assessment document that should be assessed regularly and kept as a record for the next teacher. To allow a baseline of skills to be used by the new teacher at the beginning of every academic year.

To be reviewed May 2018 LM