

Ashgrove Primary School

# Literacy Policy

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# Literacy Policy

## Rationale

We aim to provide a supportive, stimulating and secure environment where children are encouraged to express themselves and where their contributions are valued. We will provide for the language development of pupils and will develop their ability to use language to think, to explore, to recognise and to communicate their ideas.

## Principles

- We, as a staff, recognise that children are entitled to a teaching regime which will maximise their literacy skills. We will ensure that children, irrespective of ability, will be given the opportunity to develop to their full potential.
- We see literacy as central to the delivery of the N. I. Curriculum and believe that it is every teacher's responsibility to ensure that their pupils achieve appropriate levels of literacy.
- We consider literacy and learning to be mutually dependent and acknowledge that throughout the curriculum opportunities will occur for pupils to talk, listen, read and write.

## Aims

The aims of our literacy policy are:

- To maintain and improve the general standard of literacy in Ashgrove.
- To identify pupils with exceptional literacy needs and to take specific actions to meet these needs.
- To enable pupils to express and communicate meaning in spoken language, listening to and interpreting what others say and matching style and response to audience, context and purpose.
- To provide pupils with a range of relevant and purposeful opportunities to develop their ability to read, understand and engage with various types of text for enjoyment and learning.
- To enable children to communicate using written language effectively by making and shaping text appropriately, according to context, purpose, reader or audience.
- To enable children to recognise and develop the thinking and problem solving skills necessary for success in literacy and learning.

## Role of the Teacher

In the teaching of literacy, the teacher fulfils a number of roles in all modes of language. The teacher should be:

- A facilitator: setting up a well-resourced environment, creating opportunities, organising purposeful activities and enabling children to develop literacy skills.
- A model: providing examples of good language and exhibiting an appreciation of language consequently fostering positive attitudes towards literacy.
- An advisor: intervening at key points to support and further the process.
- An observer: watching, monitoring and recording the development of literacy skills.
- An assessor: evaluating and assessing the development of skills in literacy.

## Talking And Listening

### Rationale

Talking and listening are fundamental skills upon which the educational development of our children depends. Through the development of oral and aural skills, they learn about language and this equips them to demonstrate and refine their learning.

Our overall aim is for our children to become efficient language users. This will be achieved by devoting time, energy and resources to the development of oral communication. Through purposeful interaction with teachers, children will be provided with experiences that develop their skills and their thinking.

### The Classroom Environment

We will create a secure and warm environment, which stimulates interaction. In addition, to the incidental periods of talk that occur daily within the classroom, planned opportunities will be organised for the children to talk. Children will regard this talk as an integral part of their work. We will ensure that all children will be included in, and given opportunities to, participate in this work. We as a staff recognise that purposeful talk will facilitate learning and develop important social and communicative skills.

### Teaching Approaches and Organisation of Learning

Opportunities will be given for children to talk as individuals, in pairs, as members of a small group and as members of the class. The teacher will be aware of the need to vary the composition of groups and the roles within groups.

In their planning teachers will take into account the need for planned talk in all areas of the curriculum.

Teachers will provide experiences and activities to promote a wide range of types of talk.

At all times teachers should see themselves as models for their pupils' language.

Teachers will provide opportunities, whereby the children use drama strategies to make meaning and engage in a range of creative and imaginative role-plays.

Across the curriculum teachers will use questioning, as a means, to develop and extend their pupils' thinking.

Resources used will include interest tables, tape recorders, book displays, television and radio programmes, computer software and regular visits from storytellers and drama groups.

## Reading

### Rationale

Our aims are that our children will learn to read, will enjoy a wide variety of texts and will become independent, critical, life-long readers and learners.

### The Classroom Environment

Reading will be given a high profile in all classes. In order to demonstrate our belief in the importance of reading, time has been set aside daily for reading aloud throughout the school.

Each class has a well-stocked library and children are able to select from books of varying interest and degrees of difficulty. It is our intention to provide a balance between fiction and non-fiction, poetry and drama and to make accessible reading material in all forms e.g. magazines, comics, newspapers. We as a staff recognise the importance of giving the children sufficient time to browse and choose books. Opportunities will be given to talk about books and share reading experiences. Books will be displayed prominently and attractively, using a combination of commercially produced posters and the children's own work. These displays will be changed regularly.

Book events are organised regularly to promote reading and authors and storytellers often visit. A Book Fair is organised annually and we also have book clubs throughout the year. Through ICT further opportunities occur at Foundation and Key Stage One to use various programs to enhance literary skills e.g. Talking Books. While in addition at Key Stage Two children will have opportunities to access information independently from CD ROMs and on line systems.

Listening centres will provide children with opportunities to listen, read along with and enjoy texts. Besides the class teacher children will have the opportunity to hear a variety of readers:

- Other members of staff
- Classroom assistant
- Other visiting adults and
- Other pupils

## Teaching Approaches and the Organisation of Learning

Examples of approaches used are as follows:

- Daily reading to children in all classes P1- P7
- Developing phonological awareness
- Following synthetic phonics programme
- In Year 1 children move from non-ability to emergent groups towards guided reading groups.
- Books are banded in Foundation and Key Stage 1 to provide a breadth of reading.
- In Key Stage 2 children read from a wide selection of novels, often linked to their various topics.
- The key strategies of Modelled, Shared and Guided Reading are used widely throughout all classes.
- Uninterrupted, sustained, silent reading (USSR) weekly on Fridays between 11:00 - 11:30
- Visits from a librarian or to a local library
- Weekly visits to the school library
- In Year 2 we offer the Forward Together programme to parents of children identified through MIST as needing support with reading.
- In Year 3 the Reading Partners programme operates.
- Volunteers from industry also support Key Stage 2 pupils with reading through the Reading Together programme.

## Non - Fiction and Reading for Information

Reading for the purposes of study requires specific skills. It is closely linked to the skill of Managing Information whereby pupils access, select, record and communicate information. In Ashgrove we use the following activities:

- Extracting information from books using the page or index
- Classifying information by alphabetical order
- Using dictionaries
- Using a computer database
- Using a search engine on the internet
- Using reference material such as encyclopaedias, atlases, directories, time-tables, brochures, etc.
- Skimming a text to get an impression of what it is about
- Scanning a text to search for specific information
- Making notes, selecting what is relevant and appropriate

- Distinguishing between fact and opinion in evaluating information

## Writing

### Rationale

Writing is an essential tool in the learning process. Children write to express their emotions, to convey their thoughts and opinions and to present evidence of research. By developing these skills we can equip our children to use writing across the range of curricular activities in which they are involved.

Our aim is that our children will develop the ability to write effectively in various forms according to purpose and audience. They are encouraged to develop as independent writers, learning over time to use conventional spelling, punctuation, grammatical organisation and handwriting.

### Classroom Environment

Writing tables are provided, with children having easy access to required resources i.e. various sizes and types of paper, writing tools, word processor, printer, laptops, dictionaries, thesauri, wall lists, word-banks. Every classroom has a whiteboard, with many being interactive. These are used by both the teachers and the children, as they share in the process and planning of writing. Various forms of writing are displayed in classrooms, wet areas and on display boards in corridors. A “Star Writers” board exists which displays the best efforts of children from Year 1 to Year 7. This is changed on a monthly basis. All contributors receive a certificate presented in assembly. Opportunities for writing occur during play-based learning activities e.g. shopping lists, invitations, birthday cards etc. Class books and collections of children’s stories will be kept in the class library to be enjoyed and re-read.

### Teaching Approaches and the Organisation of Learning

- In classrooms various forms of writing are displayed and discussed. Children are able to become familiar with the structure and features of language specific to the particular form of writing being taught. Big Books are also used to familiarise children with the structure and language features of different writing forms.
- All staff recognise writing as a complex process and understand the importance of the key strategies of modelled, shared and guided writing which they employ.
- The purpose of the writing is always made clear to the children before they begin e.g. to inform, frighten, amuse etc.
- In order to help and support pupils with their writing, frameworks are used. These are displayed on the white board or on prepared sheets and are used from Year 3 onwards.
- During guided writing sessions the teacher may choose to work with the children in small groups, this is referred to as a writing conference.

- Pupils are asked to write for many audiences e.g. peers, teachers, other classes, assemblies, parents, visitors and even the wider community.
- Throughout the year children are given the opportunity to enter poetry and letter-writing competitions.

## Responding to Writing

At Ashgrove, we as a staff, are agreed that we will value the children's writing efforts and will respond to these positively. Our responses will be individual, commensurate with Assessment for Learning and designed to encourage and improve the children as writers.

In Foundation Stage we interact with the children as they are engaged in their writing activities. We provide immediate help and support. Our response will be helpful and informative. We recognise that we should comment by specifically identifying good aspects of the writing. Similarly if there are opportunities for writing to be improved we must explain clearly how this can be achieved.

In Key Stage One and Key Stage Two the teachers will hold writing conferences with pupils, targeting three to four children during each writing session. As in the Foundation Stage, the main aim is to provide the child with immediate feedback about his/her writing. The teacher may offer suggestions for development and improvement and give support as necessary.

During the conference questions are intended to focus the child's attention on his/her writing and to find out about the writing strategies he/she uses. The conference should occur as the child is engaged on his/her first and subsequent drafts so that he/she can revise and improve his/her writing as a result of the conference.

In Ashgrove we introduce response partners in Year 4 to encourage the children to develop greater independence. The teacher will model the responsibilities of a response partner before the children embark on this for themselves. In Key Stage Two work with response partners will be continued and developed further.

## Marking

As they write, pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 will use alternate lines providing space for teacher comments and for editing. Before children commence a piece of writing they will be reminded of the learning intentions and agree the success criteria. This will involve the teacher clarifying the focus of marking e.g. surface features, style and structure or ideas and content. Staff are agreed on comment-making and how their response must be specific and seek to improve the child's writing. Marking symbols are introduced in Year 4 with children being made aware of the meaning of each symbol. These are as follows:-

- Spelling error
- Grammatical error
- Sentence does not make sense

- New paragraph
- Particularly good description/phrase/word
- Missing word
- P5/P7 teachers use an oblique line when a new sentence is required

## Handwriting

Pupils will be taught the conventional ways of forming letter shapes in upper and lower case. When children are competent and legible with their printed style, they are then introduced to the cursive style. This usually takes place in Year 5.

## Spelling

In Ashgrove we begin to teach spelling formally in Year 3. We use the Jolly Grammar Books 1 and 2 throughout Key Stage 1.

## Parental Involvement

At Ashgrove, we believe it is essential to establish an effective partnership between home and school to facilitate children's learning. This process begins with an induction day before the children enter Year 1. At this time the school's approach to teaching is explained and the parent's role within this outlined. Parental interviews are held early in the first term to ensure that parents are aware of the plans for the year ahead. A second interview is held later in the year when information and views can be exchanged. However an open-door policy has always operated whereby parents are encouraged to approach the teacher informally if they have any concerns. Parents are invited into school to help on a weekly basis with the library and where opportunities arise to use their expertise to give talks on particular topics. When necessary, parents evenings are held to inform parents of new curriculum developments which may affect their children's learning. A yearly written report is completed for each child.

## Equal Opportunities

At Ashgrove we are aware of gender differences and the current issue of boys' under-achievement in literacy. We observe that fewer boys are achieving the higher levels of literacy. To this end we seek to provide a wide range of genre in both reading and writing to encourage all pupils. ICT is widely used in all aspects of literacy and we recognise its value as a motivational tool in combating under achievement.

## Assessment

The purpose of assessment is to record progress, to facilitate planning and to enable evaluation of learning. Wherever possible both qualitative and quantitative data are employed to raise standards. The teacher's experience informs opinion and this complements the use of data generated in standardised and other tests within the assessment process.

Observational assessment is on going and two pieces of work in literacy, one in reading and one in writing, are selected per term, as a record of the child's achievement and progress. As required by CCEA in Years 4 to 7 InCAS are undertaken.

In Year 2 the MIST test is administered and results identify children who may require additional help. These children and their parents are then offered the Forward Together programme. Teachers also use these results to inform their future planning.

In Year 3 the Neale Analysis test is carried out, this provides a reading and comprehension age for all the children. These results can highlight discrepancies which the teachers investigate further to ensure all children are receiving the support they require.

In Years 4, 5, 6 and 7 the Progress in English test is used to provide a standardised age for each child. Where necessary, a further reading or comprehension test may be set to clarify discrepancies and to ensure that teachers plan for all children to receive appropriate support.

Monitoring meetings are held each term allowing time for discussion amongst teachers. Pieces of children's work are studied for evidence of progress and suggestions made on how learning should proceed.

Further information is available in the school's Assessment Policy.

## ICT

Throughout the school all pupils have ready access to computer technology. When they are engaged in any computer-related activity talking and listening occurs naturally. For example, when producing a piece of shared writing children communicate their thoughts and ideas to one another. In Key Stage 2 children are taught the skills required to locate and select information from CD roms and from the internet and use this to enhance their learning. Computer programs and the internet add breadth to the reading curriculum and are another means by which the children can use and improve their reading skills. Writing is enhanced by the use of word processing and is widely used throughout the school to aid the writing process.

## Special Educational Needs

Children with Special Educational Needs are often identified by their class teachers who have concerns about their learning progress. Alternatively results of standardised tests highlight under-achievement. Following consultation with the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator children, if necessary, are placed on the Special Needs register and proceed through the stages as appropriate. Once on Stage 1 the class teacher will draw up an individual educational plan catering for the child's needs and setting targets to try to ensure progress. These plans are reviewed termly. Literacy and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators work closely together advising and supporting one another. Further details are available in the school's Special Educational Needs Policy.

## Monitoring & Evaluation

Planning, teaching, learning and assessment are monitored at various levels by the class teacher, key stage co-ordinator and principal in order to enable the evaluation of practice against performance and to facilitate changes that will lead to improvement. The process of monitoring and evaluation includes observation of lessons, books, samples of work, planning and assessment records.

## Resources

- Well-stocked class libraries
- Cassette recorders and listening centres
- A selection of audio tapes and listening games
- Television
- DVDs
- Photographs
- Digital camera
- Video camera
- Interactive whiteboard
- Computer programs
- Language games
- Big books (see list)
- Reading materials (see list)
- Text books