Ballyclare Secondary School

Literacy Policy

BALLYCLARE SECONDARY SCHOOL

LITERACY POLICY

"Every child, regardless of intellectual ability or social background, should have a rewarding educational experience"

Context

In Ballyclare Secondary School, we are committed to the belief that **all** teachers are teachers of literacy. We are dedicated to developing literacy skills in all of our pupils, in the confidence that it will support their learning and raise standards across the curriculum because:

- pupils need vocabulary, expression and organisational ability in order to cope with the demands of all areas of study;

- reading helps us to learn from sources beyond our immediate experience and explore the world we live in;

- writing helps us to sustain and order thought;

- language helps us to evaluate, reflect, and revise the things we do, and on the things others have said, written or done;

- responding to higher order questions encourages the development of thinking skills and enquiry;

- improving literacy and learning can have an impact on pupils' self-esteem, motivation and behaviour;

- high standards of literacy allow pupils to learn independently and

- the ability to effectively communicate is empowering.

Count, Read: Succeed (Department of Education, 2011) sets out a strategy to improve standards in literacy and numeracy in schools. Its aim is to *"support teachers and school leaders in their work to raise overall levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy among young people".* Our Literacy strategy aims to address the main points of *Every School a Good School* and *Count, Read: Succeed* to improve pupil confidence in Literacy and raise attainment in English.

What is Literacy?

English, Literacy and Communication have many definitions and are quite often mistaken as being all in one.

English is an area of study as set out in the Northern Ireland Curriculum and as such is the responsibility of the English department.

Literacy focuses on promoting and developing each child's ability to understand and use language as an integral part of the learning process across all areas of the curriculum. This emphasis enables pupils to interact effectively with the world around them, to express themselves creatively and to communicate confidently (through Talking and Listening, Reading and Writing) using a variety of skills and media. Literacy skills are vital to the success of our young people as they progress through school and beyond into further learning, work and life.

It involves:

- having the skills necessary to communicate clearly in a variety of formal and informal contexts and the development of confidence in the use of spoken language and listening skills;
- the development of writing skills for a range of purposes and audiences using spelling grammar and syntax appropriately and with confidence;
- the development of reading skills and increase pupils familiarity with a wide range of literature both fiction and non-fiction;
- the development of skills.

Underachievement

"Underachievement is used to describe the situation where performance is below what is expected based on ability. It can apply at the level of an individual pupil or describe a class".
(Count, Read: Succeed)

Ability in English is assessed at the beginning of Year 8 by the English teacher using appropriate methods such as KS2 results, MidYIS, Accelerated Reader Programme, Group Literacy Attainment Test and PIE. Pupils are assessed at the end of each topic using assessed homeworks and topic tests. These results are recorded on a departmental spreadsheet as well as a combination of assessments being recorded in the SIMs tracking system. A traffic light system is applied within SIMs based on these results. Pupils are also assessed through effective teacher questioning, class work and homework.

Pupils within Year 11 are assigned target grades and assessed through classwork, homework and tests. Results are recorded in the SIMs tracking, again using a traffic light system to highlight areas for concern.

Pupils within Year 12 are given aspirational grades; these grades are discussed with the pupils and parents and assessed throughout the year. After school classes are offered by the English teachers to assist pupils with areas of difficulty.

Roles and Responsibilities

Pupils make the most progress in Literacy when the home/school partnership is strong and everyone is aware of their roles.

Teachers across the curriculum: contribute to pupils' development of language, since speaking, listening, writing and reading are, to varying degrees, integral in all lessons;

Literacy co-ordinator (Mrs Black) and SENCO (Miss Miniss): support departments in the implementation of strategies and encourages departments to learn from each other's practice by sharing ideas.

English Department: provide pupils with knowledge, skills and understanding they need to read, write and speak and listen effectively;

Parents: encourage their children to use the range of strategies they have learnt to improve their levels of literacy, and above all encourage their children to read;

Pupils: take increasing responsibility for recognising their own literacy needs and making improvements.

Staff and Literacy Support Strategies

The SLT takes overall responsibility for Literacy within the school. Other staff involved at this level are:

- ❖ Mrs W Shingleton –Vice Principal for School Improvement
- ❖ Mrs E Colgan – Head of Learning
- ❖ Mrs M Black – Literacy Co-ordinator
- ❖ Mrs G Oliver – Head of English Department
- ❖ Miss J Miniss - SENCO

Pupils requiring literacy support are identified by the SENCO but areas for concern can also be identified by the Head of English, Literacy Co-ordinator and Subject Teacher. Methods of identification are:

- Literacy/dyslexia identified on the pupils' Individual Education Plan;
- MidYIS and PIE results;
- HOD and Literacy Co-ordinator analysis of results;
- parental concern;
- GCSE students who do not perform to target in mock exams.

Small group withdrawal is a strategy used by the English Department and at present some Year 9 and 10 Band 2 classes are provided with two periods of small group withdrawal support. At times the Literacy Support teacher may team teach with the English teacher depending on the task which may be an oral activity, spelling activities, differentiated tasks or thinking skills activities.

The Literacy Support teacher works closely with the English teacher and the work is set in advance of the lessons. This enables the literacy support teacher to discuss any difficulties, set up additional resources or to give specific guidance before the start of the class when required. The English class and Literacy Support Group cover the same tasks and topics however the literacy support group have the work differentiated to meet their specific needs.

The literacy programme develops individual reading programmes and activities, phonic programmes, spelling programmes, thinking skills and comprehension exercises, cloze passages, sequencing and other basic skills.

All teachers within the English department offer extra tuition after school for pupils within their classes requiring extra assistance with class work, homework or exam preparation.

The English department employ a range of strategies /resources to target pupils of all abilities.

Literacy across all Learning Areas

"The key role of literacy across the curriculum is emphasised through the cross curricular skill, Communication. Literacy skills are supported by the wider opportunities now provided for pupils to develop other important skills in their role as citizens, including cultural and mutual understanding, thinking skills and personal capabilities, and employability."

(Count, Read: Succeed)

Each teacher is responsible for developing pupils' literacy skills within their own area of learning. The skills are not intended to be something that is added on at the end but rather a way of helping pupils develop and demonstrate a deeper understanding of the subject. Some subjects are obviously better suited to meeting certain curriculum requirements more than others.

The English Department will teach the key skills of literacy but every teacher should expect to develop and improve standards of literacy through providing good models and opportunities for pupils to practice reading, writing, talking and listening in planned and focused ways.

The subject teacher has a central role in relation to the literacy of every pupil. All pupils are helped to develop their literacy skills in order to enhance learning in all curriculum areas.

Literacy concepts can be developed in all subjects:

Although the following is divided into three sections, Talking and Listening, Reading and Writing, we recognise that the three language modes are interdependent.

Talking and Listening

Talking is our main means of communication in everyday life and is fundamental to the development of understanding. It is only by teaching pupils the skills associated with Talking and Listening within a variety of curriculum contexts by meaningful and relevant activities that teachers can ensure that students will become literate in the true sense of the word, and that they will enjoy language and communication in all their forms. All lessons depend upon oral as well as written communication. The teacher explains, questions, describes, organises and evaluates in the classroom and does this mainly by talk.

It is the responsibility of all staff at Ballyclare Secondary School to foster these skills in their pupils so they can use speech appropriately and listen actively.

We want our students to develop increasing confidence and competence in speaking and listening so that they are able to:

➢ clarify and express their ideas and explain their thinking;

➢ adapt their speech to a widening range of circumstances including paired and group discussions and speaking to a larger audience;

➢ use varied and specialised vocabulary;

➢ speak for a range of purposes e.g. to narrate, to analyse, to explain, to reflect and evaluate;

➢ listen with understanding and respond sensitively and appropriately.

Reading

Reading allows pupils access to countless avenues of exploration and sources of knowledge. It equips them with the ability to understand the ideas of others in the past, present and future and can be an enjoyable experience. Perhaps most important of all, reading develops pupils' potential as learners.
Fluent reading is the product of a complex combination of knowledge, skills and understanding. All readers, from the apprentice reader to the experienced readers, have to use and integrate various kinds of information in order to create meaning from text.

Reading is an active process in which the reader makes sense of messages encoded in writing by making connections between what is read and what is already known.

Making judgements about what is read is also a part of the process. The ability to respond critically to what is significant in a text develops as readers gain experience of a wide variety of texts.

We want our students to enjoy reading, to be able to use their reading to help them learn and to develop increasing confidence and competence in reading so that they are able to:

> ➢ read fluently, accurately and with understanding;
>
> ➢ become independent and critical readers and make informed and appropriate choices;
>
> ➢ select information from a wide range of texts and sources including print, media and ICT and to evaluate those sources;
>
> ➢ apply techniques such as skimming, scanning, and text-marking effectively in order to research and appraise texts.

Writing

Many lessons include and depend on written communication. Pupils do not learn particular features of written language once and for all at a specific stage. They should therefore be encouraged to behave as independent writers throughout their school career. They should be expected to compose written work from Year 8, gradually developing the range and extent of their writing. Teachers will, therefore, have diverse roles to play in the development of independent writers. They will need to be observers, facilitators, modellers, readers and supporters. In particular, all teachers will need to address writing development as well as subject content.

We want our students to develop increasing confidence and competence in writing so that they are able to:

> ➢ write in a widening variety of forms for different purposes e.g. to interpret, evaluate, explain, analyse and explore;
>
> ➢ write coherently about a wide range of topics, issues, ideas and incidents, organising text in ways which help the reader;
>
> ➢ craft their writing, showing an improved control of grammatical structure and of a differentiated vocabulary;
>
> ➢ develop ideas and communicate meaning to a reader using wide-ranging and technical vocabulary and an effective style, organising and structuring sentences grammatically and whole texts coherently;

➢ present their writing clearly using accurate punctuation, correct spelling and legible handwriting;

➢ know when and how to plan, draft, redraft and proof-read their work;

➢ apply word processing conventions and understand the principles of authoring multi-media text

Talking and Listening – Suggested Strategies

In our teaching we should provide planned opportunities across the curriculum for students to engage in purposeful talk, both formally and informally.

In planning for talk we should consider pace and timing so that purposeful talk is maintained.

We should give students regular opportunities to speak and listen in the following contexts:

➢ in pairs with a working partner;

➢ in small groups with opportunities to take on the roles of chair or scribe;

➢ with the teacher or another adult;

➢ in whole class discussions;

➢ presentations to a wider audience;

In these contexts some of the following activities should take place:

➢ exploring and describing events, activities and problems, exploring and developing ideas with others;

➢ reporting back to a wider audience in order to consolidate ideas and understanding;

➢ asking questions as well as answering them;

➢ speculating, hypothesising and imagining;

➢ planning, organising and reviewing activities;

➢ investigating and solving problems collaboratively;

➢ evaluating experiences and reflecting on learning;

Reading – Suggested Strategies

We should use available data on students' reading levels in order to make informed choices about appropriate texts and to plan appropriate support for pupils in order that they may successfully access texts.

We should take opportunities to demonstrate pleasure in reading.

We should make opportunities both in lessons and in tutorial times for students and teachers to share their reading experiences.

We should provide planned opportunities across the curriculum for students to:

➢ read and follow written instructions;

➢ read and engage with narratives of events or activities;

➢ follow up their interests and read texts of varying lengths;

➢ question and challenge printed information and views;

➢ read with understanding descriptions of processes, structures and mechanisms;

➢ read and explore ideas and theories;

➢ learn how to sift and select, and take notes from text and read to locate and relocate information;

➢ learn how to scan for overall meaning and scan for key points, words and phrases;

➢ use reading to research and investigate from printed words and moving images ICT texts.

Choosing texts

The following may be used when selecting texts and when generating texts i.e. worksheets, study units.

1. Scanning for overall impressions

Print

- Is the print clear?
- Are the lines of print short enough to be easily read?
- Is the size and style of font appropriate?

Illustrations

- Are the illustrations appropriate/informative/attractive/accurate?
- Are the illustrations representative of the whole community?
- Are the graphics clear/helpful?
- How well does the text relate to illustrations and graphics?

Signposts

- Are headings and sub-headings clear/helpful?
- Are the contents pages, index, glossary appropriate and clear?

Quality

- Is the text balanced in its presentation of gender?
- Is the text balanced in its presentation of different peoples and cultures?
- Is the information accurate/up to date/reliable?
- Is the content relevant and accessible to pupils?

2. Looking closely at a sample page

Sentences

- How long are the sentences?
- How complex are the sentences?

Vocabulary

- Is the choice of vocabulary and terminology appropriate?
- Are difficult words made clear/re-phrased in the text?

Cohesion

- Is the text clearly organised/logical/easy to follow?

3. Asking students to comment

Choose students to represent the full range of ability with which the text might be used:

- What are their general impressions?
- Can they use the index to find information?
- Can they relate the illustrations to the text?
- Can they read and understand the text?

4. Assessing overall suitability

Use:

- How often will the text be used?
- Which students would you use this text with?
- How would you use it with the students?
- Would you use it for background reading?

Communication (Cross-Curricular)

The statutory requirement for assessing Communication was introduced in 2012/2013. Departments will report in each pupil's Communication Level in Years 8 and 9 in the annual report. In Year 10 a level will be assigned as well as a report on the pupil's level. The following Learning Areas will be responsible for assessing and reporting on Communication:

Y8:   Religious Studies

Y9:   History

Y10:   English

Pupils with Special Educational Needs

A child is considered to have a special educational need if they have a learning difficulty or disability. A child has a learning difficulty if they *"have significant greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age" (Code of Practice 1998)*. A disability is *"a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day to day activities" (Disability Discrimination Act 1995)*.

Every pupil who has a learning difficulty in literacy, identified on their Individual Education Plan, will receive Literacy Support. Gifted pupils in English who are working at a higher level than their class will also be selected for literacy support to build on their strengths.

Banding in English means that pupils can be placed in a class with others who have similar ability. Pupils in Band 1 classes are stretched while the lower classes, whilst also being stretched, receive appropriate support from their class teacher.

Role of Parents

Parents can contribute to the development of literacy through home learning. Support in completion of homework is invaluable.

Spelling booklets were produced by the Literacy Department and distributed to all Year 8 parents with the "Success in Spelling" leaflet. These booklets include the key words which pupils will encounter in all subjects unit by unit. Use of these booklets at home would be invaluable.

Pupils with Individual Pupils Educations Plans benefit greatly from parental support. IEPs act as a means of communication between home and school.

Information Communication Technology

Appropriate ICT resources will be used in each Area of Learning to enhance pupils' learning experiences, for example spell checkers and word processing packages.

Staff Development

"The strategy recognises that teachers are the key to raising standards by meeting the needs and aspirations of pupils through high-quality teaching and learning. It recognises the particular importance of the teaching of literacy and numeracy and sets out in greater detail how teachers are to be supported in this vital work".

(Count, Read: Succeed)

Literacy has been introduced as part of the PRSD system and departments are encouraged to incorporate literacy into their lessons where possible. Staff are assisted in this process through the use of resources. These resources are distributed electronically by the literacy co-ordinator.

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