Ballyvester Primary School

Language and Literacy Policy

Introduction

At Ballyvester Primary School we accept the fundamental principle that Literacy is the key to improving learning and raising standards to listen, speak, read and write. We aim to provide a supportive, stimulating and secure environment where pupils are encouraged to express themselves and where their contributions are valued and heard.

All teachers are responsible for the development of Literacy in their own classroom and the cross curricular teaching of Literacy through topic work.

Literacy is defined in '*Count, Read, Succeed*' 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.

Throughout this policy the term Literacy is used in a wide and inclusive way. The appropriate application of the term will vary with context. It can include 'Language and Literacy' when considering the curriculum as well as the Cross Curricular Skill of COMMUNICATION.

Put simply- at Ballyvester Primary School we view 'Language and Literacy' and 'Communication' as one and the same.

Aims

Communication is central to the whole curriculum.

Across the curriculum, at a level appropriate to their ability, pupils should be provided with opportunities to develop skills in Talking and Listening, Reading and Writing.

1. To give pupils the opportunity to experience many forms of writing appropriate to context, purpose and audience and reflecting **ALL AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM.**

2. To assist pupils' self-expression in reading, writing and conversation.

3. To offer pupils the opportunities to explore the differences between written and spoken language in the course of their work.

4. To help pupils analyse and express their reactions to experiences.

5. To encourage pupils to discuss and constructively criticise each other's work.

6. To encourage children to recognise and master the conventions of writing e.g. spelling and punctuation within the context of their work.

7. To help pupils develop an ability to make and shape text in order to communicate meaning in written language.

8. To encourage pupils to plan, compose, revise and redraft some of their writing in discussion with teachers and peers.

9. To assist pupils to communicate using non-verbal modes, using a range of techniques, forms and media to convey information and ideas creatively.

Roles and responsibilities:

The class teacher:

- To facilitate the development of Literacy in all areas of the curriculum
- To promote the skills of reading, writing and talking and listening
- To identify the differing needs of each child and cater for them appropriately
- To identify children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and create a Personal Learning Plan (PLP) or plan for classroom assistant intervention
- To monitor and assess children's progress and plan accordingly
- To keep parents informed of their child's progress
- To participate in staff development meetings and training

The Role of the Literacy Co-Ordinator

The Literacy co-ordinator will co-ordinate the Area of Learning 'Language & Literacy' within the school, aiming to secure high quality learning and teaching, effective use of resources, and the highest standards of achievement for all pupils.

The Literacy Co-ordinator will:

- Lead the development of policy
- Keep up to date with recent Literacy developments
- Monitor, evaluate and record progress on the Literacy action plan
- Manage and analyse data
- Promote self-evaluation
- Audit and support colleagues in their Continued Professional Development (CPD)
- Organise school-based INSET as required
- Lead all internal standardisation of Communication
- Lead the compilation of CCEA Communication portfolio
- Co-ordinate the purchase and organisation of resources
- Maintain and encourage communication with all relevant outside agencies, including DENI, EA, CCEA, etc.
- Report to the Principal and Governors about the school's Literacy development.

TALKING AND LISTENING

At Ballyvester Primary School, we recognise that talking and listening are fundamental skills to the pupils' development. Pupils are offered a language rich environment where their opinions are sought and valued and opportunities are given to participate in both formal and informal situations.

Shared reading takes place where pupils are encouraged to listen, discuss, re-enact and develop their own ideas. ICT equipment and media are used to extend and promote talking and listening skills in Literacy lessons. Role play situations are provided through play and Literacy sessions to develop confidence, self-esteem and provide an opportunity to express their ideas.

Staff are responsible for emphasising the importance of listening.

Assemblies, whole school productions, poetry recitals, newspaper articles, participation in church services and community events provide the opportunity for the children's efforts and skills to be acknowledged by a wider audience.

Teaching approaches:

- Good listening reminders are displayed within the classroom
- Activities are planned to provide a wide range of discussions throughout all areas of the curriculum
- Teachers will model oral language and will provide opportunities to develop language skills through:
    - Think, pair, share work
    - Small and large group work
    - Individual work

Foundation stage:

The statutory requirements for Talking and Listening in the Foundation Stage are:

1. Attention and Listening skills
2. Phonological awareness
3. Social use of language
4. Language and thinking
5. An extended vocabulary

(The Northern Ireland Curriculum)

Planning, observation and the provision of talking and listening within play are vital to the development of these skills through:

1. Show and Tell
2. Think pair share
3. Hot seating
4. Circle time
5. Role play

Key stage 1:

"Children should be helped to speak clearly with clear pronunciation, intonation and use their language in imaginative ways." (The Northern Ireland Curriculum)

Key stage 2:

"Children should be helped to develop the ability to listen and respond in a range of contexts…to speak coherently and confidently for a variety of purposes and audiences. (The Northern Ireland Curriculum)

Assessment:

This is continuous and informal and the pupils will be assessed upon their ability to:

1. Speak with confidence
2. Take turns in conversations
3. Take the views of others into account
4. Ask relevant questions
5. Spontaneous speech
6. Body language

Phonics

Aim

To teach children oral discrimination, phonemic awareness and rhyme awareness in order to encourage good communication skills.

Learning Outcomes:

- To develop phonological awareness.
- To learn the 40+ sounds of English.
- To blend and segment sounds to form words.
- To transfer these skills across the curriculum promoting independent reading and writing.

Teaching and Learning Styles

Visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning styles will be catered for in line with our Learning and Teaching Policy. Our teaching at all levels should include:

- Teacher exposition
- Whole class, group and individual work
- Tricky word vocabulary

Reading

Rationale

‘Children should be helped to develop confidence in reading using a range of methods. They should be given opportunities to develop their confidence and independence through enjoyable reading experiences that will help them develop individual tastes and preferences and make sense of what they read.’ (NI Curriculum)

Aims

We believe that all children will learn to read confidently, develop a love of a wide range of texts, and grow into independent, reflective, and life-long readers and learners. We view reading as an active, problem-solving process in which children draw on a range of strategies to make meaning.

We aim to:

- Develop a positive reading atmosphere in the school where pupils develop attitudes leading to confidence, enjoyment of books and an enthusiasm for reading.
- Teach pupils to read with fluency, understanding and accuracy, using a wide variety of texts so that they can read for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Classroom environment

We will provide a classroom environment where pupils feel inspired to read. We will establish an attractive and well displayed reading area where appropriate reading material is available. Books of different genres will be displayed, taking account of the interests of both girls and boys. Fiction and non-fiction material, including big books, poetry, plays, magazines, leaflets and catalogues will be available. Environmental print e.g. charts, labels, lists and posters will be displayed. Children’s own work will be celebrated with displays of book reviews, class made books, topic books and samples of work.

Teaching approaches and organisation of learning

The reading programme in the school will reflect the needs of the children and the requirements of the N.I. Curriculum. Our programme will include:

- Exposure to a wide range of reading materials, including print and digital media
- In Year 1 children will move from non-ability groups to emergent groups towards guided reading groups
- Books are banded from Foundation to Y3 to provide a breadth of reading
- Regular reading to children in all classes Y1 – Y7
- Developing phonological awareness
- Jolly phonics resources
- The use of key strategies of modelled, shared and guided reading moving towards independent reading
- Whole Class Reading strategies used in Year 4-7 to develop pupils’ language and comprehension skills
- Accelerated Reader programme used with pupils from Year 4-7
- Uninterrupted, sustained, silent reading

- Group novels from Y4
- Reciprocal Reading
- Involvement of others e.g. Book Buddies
- Collaboration with the 'Time to Read' programme

We recognise that our children will have varying needs and we will seek, at all stages, to provide appropriate, differentiated reading tasks to meet their needs and extend their understanding and increase their enjoyment of text.

Reading for information

Reading for the purposes of study requires specific skills. It is linked to the skill of Managing Information (from the TS & PC framework) whereby children access, select, record and communicate information.

Through modelled, shared and guided reading we will develop the following skills:

- extracting information from books using the contents pages or index
- classifying information by alphabetical order
- posing questions for their research
- using dictionaries
- using a search engine on the Internet
- use the skill skimming 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

Accelerated Reader

At Ballyvester Primary School, we use the Accelerated Reader (AR) programme, from Year 4 – 7, to support and enhance pupils' independent reading. AR is a computer-based system that helps teachers manage and monitor children's reading practice. Pupils choose books at their appropriate reading level, read them at their own pace, and then complete short quizzes to assess comprehension. This approach fosters a love of reading, encourages reading for pleasure, and helps pupils develop critical thinking and comprehension skills. During the year, pupils will complete a STAR test, which gives important data to teachers regarding each pupil's reading age and appropriate levelled reading material. This test is completed 4 times a year. Teachers use the data generated by AR to inform planning, set personalised reading targets, and provide timely interventions where necessary. The programme is integrated into our wider literacy strategy to ensure that all pupils make sustained progress in reading.

Writing

Rationale

‘Children should learn to communicate meaning through enjoyable writing activities, whereby they express themselves in writing both imaginatively and factually and including digital resources’ (NI Curriculum).

Aims

At Ballyvester Primary School, writing is taught as a developmental process that enables pupils to communicate clearly, creatively, and effectively for a range of purposes and audiences. We aim to build confident, fluent writers who can express ideas with accuracy, imagination, and increasing sophistication.

Teaching approaches and organisation of learning

Writing is taught through a structured and progressive approach that includes:

- **Modelled, shared, guided, and independent writing**
- **Explicit teaching of transcriptional skills** (spelling, handwriting, punctuation, grammar).
- **Explicit teaching of compositional skills** (planning, drafting, structuring, revising, and editing)
- **Talk for writing**, oral rehearsal, drama, and vocabulary development to support idea generation
- **Use of high-quality texts** to expose pupils to rich language, a variety of structures, and effective authorial techniques.
- **Ongoing assessment for learning**, including success criteria, self-evaluation, and peer feedback.

Teachers provide scaffolds to support emerging writers and gradually remove these as pupils gain independence.

Genres of Writing

Pupils are taught to write across a range of genres to ensure breadth and progression. Genre teaching includes:

Narrative Writing

- Traditional tales
- Adventure stories
- Stories with historical, fantasy, or real-life settings
- Character and setting descriptions

Focus areas include plot structure, character development, setting description, and use of figurative language.

Non-Fiction Writing

- Recounts (diary, newspaper)
- Reports
- Explanations
- Instructions

- Persuasion (letters, posters, adverts)
- Discussions/arguments (appropriate to upper KS2)

Teaching includes understanding audience and purpose, organisational features, and technical language.

Poetry

- Performance poetry
- List and shape poems
- Haiku, cinquain, and free verse
- Poems using imagery and figurative language

Pupils explore patterns, rhythm, and creative use of language.

Progression and Skills Development

Across the school, pupils develop:

- **Transcriptional skills**: accurate spelling, fluent handwriting, correct punctuation, and appropriate grammar.
- **Compositional skills**: planning, drafting, sequencing, revising, and editing writing for clarity and effect.
- **Vocabulary development**: using precise, varied, and ambitious vocabulary.
- **Writer's voice and style**: developing a personal style appropriate to genre and audience.
- **Understanding of purpose and audience**: selecting appropriate tone and structure.

Progression is mapped across year groups to ensure increasing complexity, challenge, and independence.

Inclusion and Support

All pupils are supported to succeed in writing through:

- Differentiated tasks and scaffolds
- Use of word banks, writing frames, and visual supports
- ICT to support composition
- Additional small-group or individual support where needed
- High expectations for every pupil, regardless of starting point

Handwriting

Nelson Handwriting

Rationale

'From the earliest mark-making, children are showing an understanding that messages can be recorded. As they realise that print carries a constant message, they recognise the need for more conventional forms of handwriting which other people can read.' (Handwriting in the Foundation Stage).

At Ballyvester Primary, handwriting is taught systematically and consistently using the Nelson Handwriting Scheme, which provides a structured progression from early mark-making to fluent, joined handwriting. Our aim is to ensure all pupils develop handwriting that is legible, fluent, consistent, and comfortable, allowing them to write with confidence across the curriculum.

Aims

Through the Nelson Handwriting Programme, we aim to ensure that pupils:

- Develop a correct pencil grip and effective posture.
- Form letters accurately and consistently, with correct orientation and proportion.
- Understand and apply joins as appropriate for their stage of development.
- Develop fluency and automaticity so handwriting does not impede composition.
- Take pride in the presentation of their written work.

Approach to Teaching Handwriting

Handwriting is taught regularly in discrete lessons and reinforced daily across all written activities. Teaching includes:

Early Years

- Development of gross and fine motor control through play-based activities.
- Correct pencil grip, sitting position, and letter formation.
- Introduction to letter families, based on shape and movement patterns (e.g., small letters, tall letters).

Key Stage 1

- Continued focus on consistent letter size, shape, and spacing.
- Introduction to simple joins once individual letters are secure.
- Emphasis on left-to-right orientation, clear ascenders and descenders, and correct letter positioning on the line.

Key Stage 2

- Consolidation of joins and increasing fluency.
- Development of a personal, legible joined style suited to purpose and task.
- Increased independence in maintaining high standards of handwriting in all writing tasks.

Expectations for Presentation

Across all year groups, pupils are expected to:

- Start writing on the line and use consistent spacing between letters and words.
- Use ascenders and descenders clearly and correctly.
- Present work neatly across all curriculum areas, not just handwriting books.
- Use pen or pencil as appropriate to year-group expectations (e.g., transition to handwriting pens in UKS2).

- Pupils will be rewarded for excellent handwriting through the presentation of a Handwriting Trophy and pencils during our weekly assembly.

Teachers model high-quality handwriting consistently on boards, displays and resources.

Inclusion and Support
To ensure all pupils succeed:

- Additional support and targeted practice are provided for those who require it.
- Adaptations (e.g., pencil grips, sloped boards, wider lines) are used where needed.
- For pupils with specific fine-motor difficulties, structured interventions and OT-recommended activities may be provided.

Parental and Community Involvement

We believe that the education of our pupils is a shared responsibility involving teachers, parents, pupils, and the wider community. We are committed to maintaining regular, positive communication with parents through both formal and informal channels.

We aim to work in partnership with families to strengthen and support pupils' Literacy development. Homework is an integral and coordinated part of our school practice, and parents are encouraged to engage in Language and Literacy activities at home following teacher guidance.

We provide a range of opportunities for parents and the community to become actively involved in school life, including:

- **Parent meetings** across all Key Stages
- **School performances**, such as Christmas productions, assemblies, and other events
- **Visits from external guests**, including storytellers, theatre groups, poets, authors, and local services such as the school nurse, dentist, and fire service

Assessment

Assessment and Monitoring

A range of formative, diagnostic, evaluative, and summative assessments is used throughout the school to monitor pupils' progress in Literacy. Both formal and informal opportunities are provided for discussion and reporting, including annual written reports to parents, informal conversations as needed, and scheduled parent–teacher meetings.

To monitor attainment and plan effectively for future learning, we make use of the following standardised and diagnostic assessments:

- Progress Test in English (PTE) – administered annually from Year 4 to Year 7
- Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT) – completed in Year 4 and Year 6

Standardised scores are recorded in SIMS Assessment Manager, where data is used to track progress over time, set individual targets, identify areas of need, and inform planning at class, group, and individual levels.

Class-Based Assessment

In addition to formal assessments, teachers also gather evidence from a range of classroom-based activities, including:

- Mid-year tests and end-of-term assessments
- Ongoing teacher observation and monitoring
- Bi-annual parent–teacher interviews to discuss progress

Assessment for Learning (AfL)

Assessment for Learning strategies are embedded across Literacy teaching and include:

- Sharing learning intentions
- Sharing success criteria
- Providing pupils with clear, purposeful feedback
- Using effective questioning to deepen understanding
- Encouraging pupils to evaluate their own work and the work of others

These approaches enable pupils to understand their next steps and take increasing responsibility for their own learning.

Identifying and Addressing Underachievement

At Ballyvester Primary School, we aim to ensure that every pupil reaches their full potential as a learner. Identifying underachievement early is essential to providing effective support. We compare each pupil's Progress Test in English (PTE) standardised score with their most recent CAT Verbal standardised score. If the PTE score is more than 10 points below the CAT Verbal score, this may indicate underachievement in Literacy. In such cases, targeted withdrawal support is offered to help close the gap and address specific areas of difficulty. Progress for these pupils is monitored bi-annually to ensure interventions are effective and responsive.

Curriculum Planning

Curriculum planning for Literacy at Ballyvester Primary School is designed to ensure progression, consistency, and high-quality teaching and learning across all year groups. Planning is aligned with the Northern Ireland Curriculum and reflects the needs, abilities, and developmental stages of our pupils.

Long-Term Planning

Long-term Literacy plans outline the progression of key skills in Reading, Writing, Talking and Listening, and Spelling/Grammar/Handwriting across the school year. These plans ensure:

- A clear sequence of learning from year to year
- Coverage of all required Literacy genres, skills, and curriculum strands
- Integration of Literacy across the wider curriculum where appropriate
- Opportunities for rich, meaningful learning experiences linked to high-quality texts

Long-term plans are reviewed annually to ensure they remain relevant and responsive to school priorities.

Medium-Term Planning

Medium-term plans provide detail on the teaching and learning of Literacy over a block or unit of work. These plans outline:

- Learning intentions and success criteria
- Texts, themes, or contexts to be used
- Planned teaching approaches (modelled, shared, guided, independent work)
- Assessment opportunities and evidence to be gathered
- Differentiation to meet diverse needs
- Cross-curricular links to reinforce and apply Literacy skills

This level of planning ensures coherence, skill development, and meaningful links between learning experiences.

Short-Term / Weekly Planning

Weekly plans translate the broader curriculum goals into daily teaching. These include:

- Clear learning intentions and success criteria
- Specific teaching points for comprehension, writing, grammar, spelling, and handwriting
- Activities that build on prior learning and move children forward
- Targeted support and differentiation for pupils with additional needs
- Opportunities for Assessment for Learning such as questioning, discussion, and feedback
- Use of resources including digital tools, guided reading texts, and writing scaffolds

Short-term planning remains flexible and responsive, allowing teachers to adjust teaching based on ongoing assessment and pupil need.

Consistency and Collaboration

Teachers work collaboratively to ensure:

- Consistent expectations and progression across year groups
- Moderation of writing and assessment to maintain shared standards
- Shared planning of key genres and units to reduce workload and strengthen quality
- Integration of whole-school Literacy priorities and initiatives

Subject leaders monitor planning across the school to ensure continuity, progression, and alignment with whole-school goals.

Meeting the Needs of All Learners

Curriculum planning incorporates strategies to support all pupils, including:

- Differentiated tasks and outcomes
- Use of scaffolding, writing frames, and vocabulary supports
- Targeted intervention and small-group teaching
- Enrichment opportunities for high-attaining pupils

This ensures that Literacy teaching is inclusive, accessible, and ambitious for every child.

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

Teachers will ensure that the activities which the pupils experience in Language and Literacy will enable them to develop the statutory Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities set out in the Northern Ireland Curriculum:

- Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision Making;
- Self-Management;
- Working with Others;
- Managing Information;
- Being Creative.

Use of ICT to Support Literacy

We aim to make effective use of ICT across the curriculum to enhance pupils' Literacy skills while also developing their competence and confidence in using digital technologies. This includes using computers, iPads, Interactive Whiteboards, and a wide range of audio-visual materials, graphics, and digital media resources.

Pupils are provided with regular opportunities to apply ICT in meaningful Literacy contexts. Examples include drafting and editing written work using word-processing tools, organising information, and using online platforms and digital resources for research and communication. These activities help pupils develop skills aligned with the 5 Es of Using ICT (Explore, Express, Exchange, Evaluate, and Exhibit).

ICT Resources Available

A wide range of ICT resources is available to support teaching and learning, including:

- Desktop computers and laptops with access to the C2k network
- Interactive Whiteboards in classrooms
- iPads
- Internet access to support research and communication

ICT is used not only within the Language and Literacy programme of study, but as an integral part of all curriculum areas. Its role is to enhance learning, promote pupil engagement, and support the development of high-quality Literacy skills across the curriculum.

Special Educational Needs

The class teacher's role is central in meeting the special needs of each individual pupil. The following action will be taken to meet the needs of identified children:

- Early identification of problems reinforced by results of standardised tests
- Informing SENCO of concerns about a child's progress for consultation and possible placement on the Code of Practice and SEN Register
- Providing children with SEN access to a broad and balanced curriculum and ensuring that the provision is at an appropriate level
- Liaising with SENCO in providing individual PLPs for all children with SEN in their class. The Education Plans should set clear, realistic targets, which indicate the special educational provision required to address the needs of the pupils on the register.
- Liaison with Education Authority (Educational Psychology)

Monitoring & Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation of Language and Literacy within the school will include:

- Classroom observation
- Book Scoops
- Class and corridor displays
- Folders/portfolios of pupils' work
- Discussion and sharing of approaches at staff meetings
- Teachers' Planners
- Home-school reading records
- Pupil target setting
- Standardised tests e.g. PTE
- Running Records
- Long and Medium term planning (half termly)
- Work samples of pupils' responses to reading
- Parent Questionnaires
- PLPs

Connected School Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Learning and Teaching Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Marking Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- ICT Policy

Policy Review

This policy will be agreed with the Board of Governors and shared with teachers and parents. It will be reviewed every three years by the Literacy co-ordinator and uploaded to the school website.