

Ballymacward *Primary School*



LANGUAGE & LITERACY POLICY

Reviewed On: September 2026

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1. CONTEXT:

The stated vision of the Department of Education for N Ireland (DENI) is 'To ensure that every learner fulfils his or her potential at each stage of his or her development.' (DENI 2010).

The Northern Ireland Curriculum aims to 'empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives.'

'Every School a Good School' has outlined indicators of effective practice under four key areas:

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

2. INTRODUCTION:

At Ballymacward Primary School, we believe that pupils' literacy skills, i.e. their ability to talk, listen, read and write effectively, for purpose and audience, is the key to educational progress, to social integration and to personal development and happiness. This is supported by the commitment of staff to promoting language development as one of the school's main priorities.

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 continuity and progression in our language planning will be underpinned by the learning intentions outlined in the Primary Language Framework.

3. STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Statutory requirements for the teaching and learning of English are laid out in the N Ireland Curriculum for English (CCEA, 2007) and include:

In the Foundation Stage (Primary 1 and 2) 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;
- become immersed in an environment rich in print and possibilities for communication.

At Key Stage One (Primary 3 and 4), 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.

At Key Stage Two (Primary 5-7), 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 literary and non-literary texts and learn how the structure of language works.

4. CHILD CENTRED PROVISION

The following indicators from 'Every School a Good School' are reflected in the school's approaches:

- Decisions on planning, resources, curriculum and pastoral care reflect at all times 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 to their views.

Inclusion:

We aim to provide for all children so that they reach their full potential in English according to their individual abilities. We will identify which pupils or groups of pupils are under-achieving, groups of children with low attainment, and those with special educational needs in order to take steps to improve their attainment. Higher ability children will be identified and suitable learning challenges provided.

- *Observations, formal and informal testing from P1 – P7 to set targets*
- *Differentiated lessons to ensure all pupils are being challenged and able to achieve targets set*
- *Support from Literacy Coordinator and Classroom Assistants*
- *Range and variety of resources used, including use of technology.*

Intervention programmes

Literacy intervention carried out by the Literacy Coordinator is reviewed on a half termly basis.

- *Low achievers and underachievers will receive support*
- *Qualitative and quantitative data is used to identify these children*
- *Sessions are carried out weekly, with one to one or small group teaching*
- *Reading Partnership, Alpha to Omega, Jolly Phonics, Linguistic Phonics and multi-sensory teaching strategies are used by the Literacy coordinator to enable children to reach targets set on Individual Education Plans*

Equal opportunities

All children are provided with equal access to the English curriculum. We aim to provide suitable learning opportunities regardless of gender, ethnicity or home background.

5. HIGH QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING

The following indicators from 'Every School a Good School' are reflected in the school's approaches:

- A broad and relevant curriculum is provided for the pupils.
- An emphasis on literacy and numeracy exists across the curriculum.
- 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 is used to effectively inform teaching and learning across the school and in the classroom and to promote improvement.
- 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.
- Education outcomes reflect positively on the school and compare well, when benchmarked measurement is undertaken, against the performance of similar schools.

Subject organisation

The English Curriculum is delivered using the requirements in the N. Ireland Curriculum for Language and Literacy. This subject is considered in an all-inclusive manner, taking account of the integral nature of Talking, Listening, Reading and Writing, which extends across all Areas of Learning. The yearly and termly overviews of the Primary Language Framework (SELB) allow our teachers to plan thoroughly for our composite classes.

Classes are organised as follows: P1, P2/3, P4/5, and P6/7. Teachers use the Primary Language Framework to create half-term plans, which incorporate learning intentions, teaching strategies/ activities, assessment details and resources. Weekly planners incorporate specific learning intentions and detailed evaluations. Daily lessons on our weekly planners are differentiated to meet the needs of high, middle, low ability and SEN children. Support staff and the role of Classroom Assistants are highlighted in these documents. Teachers evaluate daily to inform future lessons and to ensure progression.

The Principal and Literacy Coordinator will monitor plans on a regular basis, conduct lesson observations, view pupil performance in books ('Book Look'), view samples of work from the half term focus, view class 'Learning Journey' photograph books, and view displays.

Approaches to talking and listening

The strands of talking, listening, group discussion and interaction and drama pervade the whole curriculum. Oral language is a central prominence and focus in all areas of the curriculum and in the life of the school. Pupils are encouraged to listen attentively and to speak clearly, confidently, fluently and appropriately for a variety of different audiences and purposes.

Our aims are to develop each child's ability to:

- listen to and take part in discussions, explanations, role-plays and presentations:
- contribute comments, ask questions and respond to others' points of view:
- communicate information, ideas, opinions, feelings and imaginings, using an expanding vocabulary;
- structure their talk and speak clearly so that ideas can be understood by others;
- adapt ways of speaking to audience and situation;
- use non-verbal methods to express ideas and engage with the listener.

We will provide the children with contexts for the development of talking and listening skills: personal, factual, imaginative, and social.

Approaches to reading

Teachers plan for the teaching of reading through modelled, shared, guided, silent, paired and independent reading sessions. Emphasis is placed on the importance of comprehension skills and strategies. Enjoyment of reading is nurtured in the literacy lessons, across the curriculum and beyond the classroom. Involvement of the parents is critical in this context.

The teaching and learning of reading is embedded across the entire curriculum. We aim to provide a literacy rich learning environment to develop the children's skills in reading. Teaching strategies aim to enhance children's motivation and involvement in reading and to develop their skills.

Teachers aim to develop:

- a positive attitude to and enjoyment of reading
- independence in reading at increasing levels of difficulty
- efficiency in the use of books and other written sources to obtain information
- comprehension skills
- skills in finding and using appropriate sources of information
- appreciation of the use of language: aesthetic, persuasive, informative etc.

Teachers will:

- ensure that the teaching of reading is incorporated into medium and short term planning
- ensure that the teaching of reading is delivered in the ways outlined in this policy
- provide a wide range of stimulating reading material
- liaise with the Literacy Coordinator and inform her of any related issues
- ensure children with difficulties are identified and supported in school and, where necessary, seek external support.

Phonics programmes

Jolly Phonics in Primary 1 develops phonological awareness and allows children to explore how words are made. Primary 2 – 7 follow the Linguistic Phonics Programme and progress according to their ability. Pupils learn to recognise phonemes, graphemes, and whole words in a variety of ways but mainly through a multi-sensory approach (following training from SEN CPD, *'Difficulties in Literacy'*).

Reading Scheme

Bug Club (P1-3)

Accelerated Reader (P4-7)

Rapid Reader (Reading age of 5+)

Our reading books are supplemented with Ginn 360, our books are colour banded and stored centrally for all staff to access. Writing frames from our reading scheme may be used from time to time. The online aspects of our schemes can be accessed from school and home for an interactive reading experience. Running records carried out by staff and guided reading notes ensure children are reading at an appropriate level.

Library

The Library Bus visits Ballymacward fortnightly to provide an array of books for all pupils and staff. Each teacher maintains a class library with a selection of fiction, nonfiction and poetry books; this is updated throughout the year. The Literacy Coordinator maintains the school library with help from pupils, and ensures an attractive set-up of displays and recommended reads for different ability and interest groups.

Events

Various events in the year encourage and stimulate an enjoyment of reading:

World Book Day, Book Fair, National Poetry Day, Superhero Day, Nursery Rhyme Week, Roald Dahl Day, Readathon, Bedtime Read, 'Most interesting place to read', Young Writers competitions, visits from story tellers etc.

Approaches to writing

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 nurtured and encouraged to develop from emergent writing to independent writing, learning over time to use conventional spelling, punctuation, grammatical organisation and handwriting. The links between talking and writing are recognised and developed, e.g. reading as a writer and writing as a reader.

Teachers aim to develop:

- interest and competence in writing as a form of communication
- awareness of the audience and context for which they are writing
- an awareness of and skills in a range of forms of writing
- increasing independence in writing
- the ability to plan, organise and structure their writing
- a critical attitude to writing which leads to the ability to edit, redraft and refine their writing
- legible and aesthetically pleasing handwriting (Nelson Handwriting)
- accuracy in spelling
- correct use of grammatical conventions
- an ability to use word processing
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Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities/ Cross curricular opportunities for literacy development

Teachers will seek to take advantage of opportunities to develop Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities and to make cross-curricular links. They will plan for pupils to practise and apply the skills, knowledge and understanding acquired through language lessons to other areas of the curriculum.

Teachers will:

- show an awareness of different styles of learning and the need to encourage pupils to use their visual, auditory and kinaesthetic channels for better learning
- use of a range of active learning strategies in the classroom, including drama strategies
- ensure effective questioning by the teacher and pupils.

The use of ICT to support and develop Language and Literacy

Opportunities to use ICT to support teaching and learning in Literacy will be planned for and used as appropriate. We aim to make maximum use of ICT across the curriculum to promote pupils' language and literacy skills, as well as to develop their competence in ICT skills. All pupils will have the opportunity to access computers.

Resources for the use of ICT in Literacy include:

- Interactive White Boards
- Ipads
- Laptop computers
- Desktop computers
- C2K software titles
- Bug Club
- Accelerated Reader
- Nessy
- Digital Cameras
- Beebots
- Recording devices

For further details, see ICT policy.

Assessment and target-setting

Assessment is an integral part of the learning and teaching process. Teachers use a variety of resources and techniques to assess pupils and set class and individual targets which then inform planning:

- Pupil Surveys
- Observation
- Class discussion
- Oral, written and visual presentations
- Project work
- Homework
- Half term tests
- Baseline testing (primary 1 and Literacy Intervention)
- Standardised tests: CAT, NGRT, NILA, PTE
- Salford Reading Test
- Star Readers (Accelerated Reader)
- Bug Club band testing
- Running Records

6. EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

The following indicators from 'Every School a Good School' are reflected in the school's approaches:

- An effective school development plan is in place, providing clear and realistic targets for improvement based on a sound vision for the school.
- Governors understand their responsibilities and provide clear strategic direction as well as support and challenge to the Principal in carrying forward the process of improvement.
- School leaders demonstrate a commitment to providing professional development opportunities for staff, particularly teachers, and promote a readiness to share and learn from best practice.
- Teachers are given the opportunity to share in the leadership of the school.
- The resources at the disposal of the school are managed properly and effectively, with appropriate arrangements in place for financial management, attendance management, and working relationships
- School leaders monitor and evaluate effectively school outcomes, policies, practices and procedures and the School Development Plan itself.

Role of the Literacy Co-Ordinator

The Literacy Co-Ordinator is responsible, in consultation with the Principal, teachers and parents, for improving the standards of teaching and learning in Literacy through:

Monitoring and evaluating:

- pupil progress
- management and analysis of relevant data
- provision of Literacy (including Intervention and Support programmes)
- the quality of the Learning Environment
- the deployment and provision of support staff
- auditing and supporting colleagues in their CPD
- taking the lead in policy development
- purchasing and organising resources
- keeping up to date with recent Literacy developments
- maintaining contact with all stake holders: Principal, Senior Management in the school, teachers, other staff, parents, and pupils
- ensuring channels of communication are open and active with all relevant outside agencies, including the EA, CCMS, Down Outreach, Language Outreach etc.

The Board of Governors

The Literacy Coordinator will report to the governors and the Literacy Link Governor on the progress of Literacy provision and on standards being achieved by the school.

7. A SCHOOL CONNECTED TO ITS LOCAL COMMUNITY

The following indicators from 'Every School a Good School' are reflected in the school's approaches:

- 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.
- The school uses its involvement in particular programmes effectively in meeting the needs of the community and nearby schools.
- 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, the Public Library Service and, where appropriate, local Neighbourhood Renewal groups.

Parental involvement:

We encourage parents to support their children through;

- Reading and talking to their children at home
- Supporting homework
- Involvement in Bug Club and Accelerated Reader
- Attendance at Curriculum Evening and parent – teacher conferences
- Involvement in World Book Day, Book Fair and Bedtime Read
- Volunteering for reading sessions
- Volunteering to supervise on school trips

Community links include (but are not limited to):

- Extended Schools cluster events and clubs
- Local cultural events
- Connecting to local businesses
- Community competitions
- Having useful and active links with the local post-primary school

8. CONCLUSION:

This policy should be in line with other school policies, including:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy
- E-Learning Policy
- ICT Policy
- Homework Policy

9. REVIEW OF POLICY:

This Literacy policy is reviewed annually and updated to reflect new statutory requirements and to incorporate best practice and recommendations from educational research.