 **EDUCATION & CHILDREN’S SERVICES**

**Literacy Policy**

**Skene School**



**Working Together, Learning Together, To Be The Best We Can Be**

Skene School

Literacy and English Policy

**What is literacy?**

A *Curriculum for Excellence* has considered how language evolves and believes that in the 21st century literacy can be defined as:

*“the set of skills which allows an individual to engage fully in society and in learning, through the different forms of language, and the range of texts, which society values and finds useful.”*

**Rationale**

At Skene School we acknowledge the importance of literacy in everyday life. Literacy is a core subject within Curriculum for Excellence, as well as being integrated across all learning.

‘Literacy is fundamental to all areas of learning, as it unlocks access to the wider curriculum. Being literate increases opportunities for the individual in all aspects of life, lays the foundations for lifelong learning and work, and contributes strongly to the development of all four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence.’

Literacy and English: Principles and Practice

‘Language is at the core of thinking. We reflect, communicate and develop our ideas through language. Literacy offers an essential passport to learning, helping young people to achieve to the full and be ready for active involvement in society and work.’

Building the Curriculum 1

**Aims**

By teaching each aspect of Literacy as discrete subjects, as well as developing literacy skills across learning, we aim to develop core skills in our children and young people which will enable them to:

* develop their ability to communicate their thoughts and feelings and respond to those of other people
* develop the high level of skills in listening, talking, reading and writing which are essential for learning, work and life
* use different media effectively for learning and communication
* develop a secure understanding of how language works, and use language well to communicate ideas and information in English and other languages
* exercise their intellectual curiosity by questioning and developing their understanding, and use creative and critical thinking to synthesise ideas and arguments

Building the Curriculum 1

Curriculum for Excellence Experiences and Outcomes:

Literacy and English can be broken down into three main, broad areas. They are:

* Listening and Talking
* Reading
* Writing

Within each of these areas there will be opportunities for learning under five headers. They are:

* Enjoyment and Choice (all areas)
* Tools (all areas)
* Finding and using information (Listening and Talking, Reading) or Organising and using information (Writing)
* Understanding, analysing and evaluating (Listening and Talking, Reading)
* Creating texts (Listening and Talking, Writing)

**Enjoyment and Choice**

In listening and talking, reading and writing pupils will be given opportunities to develop an awareness of the relevance of texts in their lives, including Scottish and local literature, within a challenging and motivating environment. Pupils in Skene School will be encouraged to read for pleasure and will hopefully develop good reading habits that will stay with them as they grow. They will have chances to watch and listen to different media and will be encouraged to explain their preferences.

**Tools**

Within listening and talking pupils will be supported to develop skills that will help them interact or present within Skene School or beyond, for example within their local community.

In reading, pupils will develop skills to help them use texts that become increasingly complex in terms of unfamiliar ideas, structures or vocabulary.

In writing, pupils will gain knowledge of technical aspects and become increasingly confident as they use them to communicate effectively in a variety of written forms.

**Finding and using information or Organising and using information**

When listening to, watching or talking about texts with increasingly complex ideas, structures and specialist vocabulary pupils will be able to identify and discuss what they have heard or seen and use that information for different purposes.

In reading, pupils will become familiar with fiction and non-fiction texts with increasingly complex ideas, structures and specialist vocabulary. They will be supported to find, select, sort and use information for a specific purpose. They will learn how to make notes, organise information and create new texts.

In writing, pupils will consider texts to help them create short and extended texts for different purposes.

**Understanding, analysing and evaluating**

Within listening and talking the pupils will be supported to investigate and appreciate texts with increasingly complex ideas, structures and specialist vocabulary for different purposes. They should develop the skills to show their understanding by responding to literal, inferential, evaluative questions as well as making questions of their own.

In reading, pupils will investigate and appreciate fiction and non-fiction texts with increasingly complex ideas, structures and specialist vocabulary and they will develop the ability to show their understanding across different areas of learning by identifying and considering the purpose and main idea of texts and use supporting detail in their answers.

**Creating texts**

In listening and talking and in writing, pupils will apply the elements that others use to create different types of short and extended texts with increasingly complex ideas, structures and vocabulary. Pupils will learn to use language and style that engages and/or influences the reader or audience. They are regularly encouraged to write for real life purposes.

# Listening and talking

Listening and talking is at the heart of all learning and will take place across all areas of the curriculum. Regular opportunities to further develop pupils’ listening and talking skills are provided by:

* Encouraging and supporting active engagement with texts and pictures
* Encouraging talking and listening through play
* Taking part in activities which promote good listening habits e.g. stories, plays, poems, audio and visual material, assemblies, ICT programmes, etc.
* Introducing the skills for effective talking - taking turns, listening attentively in order to respond appropriately
* Working collaboratively with others to present information, solve problems and discuss a wide range of topics across the curriculum

# Assessment of listening and talking

Teachers should regularly assess pupils’ listening and talking skills and use the results to plan future learning opportunities. Assessment can be carried out in a variety of ways including:

* Observing pupils during collaborative work and play
* Using AiFL strategies to assess understanding, give effective feedback and establish next steps
* Formal assessment of individual/group presentations
* Pupil peer and self-assessment

# Reading

Skene School provides regular opportunities for pupils to develop their reading skills. We aim to:

* Teach pupils the skills necessary to become enthusiastic, independent and reflective readers
* Enable pupils to locate and use relevant information
* Encourage pupils to make links between reading, writing, talking and listening • Develop an awareness of different types of texts

# **Core reading**

At Skene School we use a variety of schemes to expose pupils to a wide range of texts. Our main scheme is The Oxford Reading Tree. A wide range of fiction and non-fiction books have been banded in line with the Active Literacy approach. Focused reading time is timetabled each week (amount of time depends on the stage they are at) and pupils are organised into groups of similar ability. At the beginning of their reading development, books are taught in school and sent home for additional practice. As they progress through the CfE levels, pupils are given more responsibility for reading sections of their book in advance in preparation for reading lessons.

Reading lessons may include:

* Introduction/walkthrough (teacher encourages pupils to predict content and question the text)
* Group reading (pupils take it in turns to read out loud, one at a time)
* Independent reading (pupils read text aloud at their own pace simultaneously)
* Paired reading (pupils practise their reading with a partner)
* Discussion of text (linked to characters, events, setting, vocabulary, etc)

Pupils are taught reading strategies such as:

* Using visual clues (pictures, the shape of words)
* Re-reading (thinking about context/grammatical clues)
* Sounding out letters and blending them together

Pupils will complete follow-up activities which are linked to the text that they are reading. They are encouraged to justify their answers and opinions, using evidence gathered from the text. Comprehension strategies taught will include:

* Skimming and scanning text
* Summarising main events
* Identifying key words which give information
* Recognising story structure (setting, events and plot)
* Answering questions – ‘Find it, prove it and talk about it’

When pupils have completed the final book band level they will move onto novels, supported by core readers when necessary. Pupils will complete activities which allow them to study the books in more depth and further develop reading skills for life-long learning.

# **Reading for enjoyment**

All pupils are encouraged to read for enjoyment and opportunities to do so are provided on a regular basis. They have the opportunity to visit our school library to borrow books and teachers in all classes regularly read to the pupils.

Skene School encourages reading for pleasure through a variety of whole school events. These include visits from the local library, and participation in national events such as World Book day.

# **Assessment of reading**

Teachers continually monitor pupils’ progress within reading. Individual records are kept and progress is monitored and tracked three times are year between teachers and the Head Teacher.

Formative and summative assessments are used to confirm progress in reading. These assessments provide additional information about pupils’ reading ability and how we can best support them.

The class teacher is responsible for the learning and teaching of all pupils within their class. Additional support can be provided for pupils who are experiencing difficulty with reading. Support for Learning staff may carry out more detailed assessments with pupils who are experiencing difficulties and can provide additional advice for supporting pupils with specific difficulties such as dyslexia (see SfL referral process).

**Benchmarking**

Benchmarks have been provided by Aberdeenshire Council within the Literacy Framework. Benchmarks can be used as a guide for where pupils should be at significant stages of learning.

# **Writing**

Skene School provides regular opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills. We aim to:

* Have a positive writing ethos throughout the school so that pupils develop confidence and pleasure in writing
* Ensure progression, continuity and consistency during writing lessons
* Link planning, teaching and assessment in order to raise levels of attainment/achievement throughout the school

Writing activities will take place daily across all areas of the curriculum. In addition, each class will have a weekly writing lesson which will focus on the aspects of writing detailed in a Curriculum for Excellence.

# **Big Writing**

In Skene School we are using Ros Wilson’s approach to writing. This approach is child-centred, interactive learning with a focus on four core targets; Vocabulary, Connectives, Openers and Punctuation (VCOP). Through weekly writing lessons (known as Big Writing) pupils will develop their skills in these areas.

Vocabulary:

New and impressive words that pupils have used or found in texts, are shared with the class. Pupils are encouraged to use these words in future writing tasks.

Connectives:

To improve the organisation of their writing, pupils are encouraged to use connectives (joining words) to join sentences and paragraphs.

Openers:

Pupils are encouraged to discuss and use good sentence ‘openers’ (sentence starters) to improve basic sentences and make overall texts more interesting.

Punctuation:

Pupils are introduced to a variety of punctuation by using a ‘Punctuation Pyramid’. From the beginning of Primary One, they are encouraged to experiment with different types of punctuation during writing activities.

The core targets of VCOP are discussed regularly and examples are displayed on the wall for pupils to use throughout other areas of the curriculum.

Grammar, spelling and handwriting are important technical skills, which are developed through specifically taught lessons. During writing lessons pupils will be expected to demonstrate their ability and understanding of these skills. Expectations are clearly outlined in the Learning Intentions and Success Criteria.

# **Assessment of writing**

A balance between formative and summative assessment will be used to:

* Provide pupils with clear and regular feedback
* Assist pupils and teachers to plan next steps
* Evaluate the effectiveness of teaching

Formative assessment comments are regularly provided by the teachers. Pupils will also have the opportunity to self-assess and peer-assess their writing.

Summative assessments will be carried out at least 3 times a year, in November, March and June. Teachers can choose to assess at other key times, if they wish. To determine the level that pupils are working within, writing is formally assessed using the Big Writing Criterion Scale. This assessment is then considered alongside teacher’s professional judgement for on-going writing abilities. It is a combination of summative assessments and on-going judgements which inform levels noted on the school tracking system.

# **Resources for Writing**

Teachers will use a range of stimuli to encourage the children to write including:

* Stories and extracts from novels
* Modelled stories
* Other children’s work
* Visual stimuli (art work, the outdoors)
* Different types of media (music, film trailers)

Core writing resources include:

* Write to the top (Big Writing approach, Andrell)
* Jolly Phonics
* Jolly Grammar Books 1-3

# **Writing – Phonics and Spelling**

Phonics and spelling at Skene School is taught using the Aberdeenshire Council approved scheme, Active Literacy. Pupils will develop their phonological awareness through a structured and comprehensive programme that aims to build confidence and engage children in their learning. Teachers use a multi-sensory approach where pupils are active in their learning, regularly working co-operatively to consolidate what they have learned. (See Appendix 1)

**Handwriting**

At Early level handwriting is taught to ensure correct letter formation. It should be taught as a discrete subject, at least once a week, but also reinforced regularly. Each individual will progress at a different pace. The school handwriting progression should be used as a guide (See Handwriting Policy).

**Transition Periods**

In order to achieve a smooth transition between stages teachers complete a transition profile for the class indicating coverage of maths outcomes over the year. Individual assessment information is also passed on indicating where each child is at in their learning, as well as any literacy plans and trackers. Teachers also engage in transition meetings where an overview of progress in all areas of literacy is shared.

Information regarding pupil attainment in literacy at P7 will be passed on to Westhill Academy through existing and developing primary/secondary liaison arrangements.

# **Partnerships**

Partnership working will underpin the literacy policy in practice:

1. Teaching and support staff collaboration to enhance learning experiences with practical activities
2. Partnership working between children will be encouraged when appropriate
3. Collaboration between ASN Teacher and Class Teacher to plan IEPs for children as needs arise
4. Teaching staff and support staff collaboration to ensure resources and displays are well organised and maintained
5. Partnership with parents will be encouraged through the appropriate use of Homework.

# **Role of Pupils**

Pupils are expected to participate fully in all classroom and homework activities. They should set themselves targets in collaboration with teachers and have high expectations of themselves. Pupils have a responsibility to read/listen to any formative assessment comments about their work and use them to improve their literacy skills.

# **Role of the Head Teacher**

The Head Teacher will:

* Monitor/evaluate teacher planning in all aspects of Literacy and English
* Engage in reflective discussions regarding literacy at planning reviews
* Engage in informal/formal discussions with pupils
* Ensure that there are opportunities to embed/develop literacy skills across learning
* Ensure teachers set targets in Literacy and English
* Discuss assessment results with staff
* Analyse, reflect upon and share the standardised testing results
* Monitor classroom practice in Literacy and English (in accordance with school development plan)
* Provide opportunities for professional development
* Identify resources which may be required

**Role of Parents/Carers**

At Skene School we value the role of parents/carers in our pupils’ education. Parents/carers are asked to support the work of the school through encouraging their children to complete literacy homework tasks.

The yearly report card will indicate the level that each pupil is working at in term 4.

Parents/carers are encouraged to get in touch with their child’s teacher in the first instance if they have any concerns regarding their child’s progress in literacy, then contact the head teacher, if required.

**What does literacy look like at early level?**

* Children have time to play, explore and revisit learning.
* Planning starts from what children know.
* Children explore at their own level and their ideas are responded to.
* Everyday experiences are used as relevant contexts.
* Teachers find out what is happening in a child’s head.
* The environment is literacy rich and opportunities to model literacy and language are planned.
* There is a lot of talking and questioning to develop and enrich thinking.
* Children are allowed to start mark making and use their own symbols; formal work is not rushed and recording happens in a variety of different ways.
* The enjoyment of stories and imaginary play opportunities are used to develop early literacy skills.
* Teachers will balance play-based learning with more systematic development and learning of skills and techniques for reading, including phonics
* Resources for core skills in P1 include Jolly Phonics and Oxford Reading Tree reading programmes.

**What does literacy look like at first level?**

* Learning and teaching builds on early level.
* Children can explain their answers and thinking, and are developing skills to represent this.
* Teachers model literacy and language skills using creative and relevant contexts.
* Lessons provide progression in concepts, skills and understanding.
* Children make connections with prior learning.
* Active learning approaches engage children fully.
* Pupils have a greater awareness of strategies and conventions when communicating with others and can use their language skills for a specific purpose.
* Resources for core literacy skills at first level include Jolly Phonics (P2), Jolly Grammar, Active Literacy, Oxford Reading Tree and a variety of novels.

**What does literacy look like at second level and beyond?**

* Learning and teachings builds on first level
* Pupils transfer skills and make links between different areas of learning.
* Pupils can give more detailed explanations for choices and opinions.
* Pupils use increasingly complex information from a variety of texts for different purposes.
* Creative contexts are used to engage pupil’s interest and develop enjoyment for literacy including Scottish texts.
* Pupils work with increasing independence and accuracy.
* Pupils have a clear idea of their learning and how to improve it (Assessment is for Learning)
* Pupils develop greater confidence when communicating in a wider variety of ways.
* Pupils have an increasing awareness of the importance of texts in their learning, live and work.
* Resources for core literacy skills at second level include Oxford Reading Tree Tops, Four Corners and Novels.