



# Sheiling School Thornbury

## Literacy Teaching and Learning Curriculum Overview

### **School approaches to Literacy**

The School aims to provide a broad, balanced and differentiated Curriculum based on the principles of the Waldorf Curriculum National Curriculum. A range of accreditation is available for pupils aged 14 and above.

All classes start the day with a Main Lesson. During the Main Lesson there are opportunities to practice and develop literacy skills and work on individual IEP Literacy targets. These skills are highlighted in the schemes of work and daily lesson plans. Literacy is taught in Main Lesson through Waldorf Education approaches, in combination with synthetic phonics, for the skills being taught. For many of our pupils, the skills they are cultivating are from Classes 1 and 2 (ages 6-8, see below). To ensure lessons are age appropriate, these approaches from the early years of education are modified in content and presentation, and combined with other methods (see table below).

Literacy learning is a part of all aspects of the school day. Steiner Waldorf Education attempts to cultivate and encourage the significance of oral linguistic ability whilst cultivating literacy. Speaking and listening play a key role throughout the Curriculum. Poetry and verses are recited throughout the Curriculum and this begins on day one in Class 1 (age 6-7). At the Sheiling School, pupils begin each day by reciting a morning verse as a class. Additional verses, poems and songs related to the main lesson content, seasons or festivals are also listened to and learned by the pupils. Some of these involve movement and signing for both verbal and non-verbal communicators.

### **Introducing Letters in the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum**

All pupils have discreet literacy lessons (see table below).

As an introduction to reading and writing the shapes of the letters are presented to the pupils embedded in an artistic drawing with an accompanying story or verse which emphasises the character of the letter, for example the letter W may be evolved from the shape of waves This is different from the first alphabet book one may have had as a child in which the letter "A" was accompanied by the picture of an apple. Instead we introduce letters as lively "characters" that bridge from the picture consciousness of childhood to geometric symbols conveying various sounds. In tracing back the forms of our alphabet to their root symbols, one discovers that originally letters were pictorial, for example, an "A" inverted signified an ox with two horns. Prior to becoming fixed symbols for specific sounds that then embalmed the spoken word into written language, hieroglyphs, pictograms, and ideograms designated aspects of the phenomenal world and corresponding attributes. The letters joyfully rendered provide a transition between the picture script of nature, the imagination, and the abstract symbols of the alphabet that children are eager to learn. For example the big bear from Snow White and Rose Red can be drawn to resemble a capital "B," a dancing Rumpelstiltskin can be drawn to resemble a capital "R," the Golden Goose works well for the letter "G." It is crucially important that the teacher engage in the playful imaginative activity of finding such correspondences to prepare the way for imagination to come to life in the children. The teacher tells rather than reads the story and draws or paints the illustration in which the letter is embedded. This is how the Sheiling School presents early phonics to pupils in Class 3, starting from this creative approach.

During the main lesson pupils engage in morning rhythmic and concentration exercises (will precede thought). These would include the new letter being marched across the floor (bodily-kines-thetic intelligence) before drawing it as a geometric form derived from the earlier letter picture in the Main Lesson alphabet book. An alliterative verse is recited periodically as one points to the letters now written above the board, i.e. "B." A big, brown, burly bear bumbled through the bush with his basket of blueberries. Words are dictated beginning with letters that have been taught. At first the children write down only the initial consonant. Like all reading teachers, we invite the children to tell us words beginning with that sound/letter and write these on the board or perhaps we even make up simple riddles for words beginning with the letter of the day. Through such a multi-sensory approach, engaging the whole child, the letters become "user friendly" in a playful way. When the children soon come to write simple sentences, some of the pictorial quality may still remain, an "S" with the snake's eye, an "R" with a red cap.

Teaching the simple English alphabetic code in this way, one becomes sensitive, like a poet, to the genius of language's subtle connections between sound, meaning, and the picture forms of letters. Take, for example, the letter "B" again. How many "B" words subtly connect in meaning with the embracing fullness of the letter: bun, bucket, basket, berry, bread, baby, butter, butterfly, bowl, bounty, beauty, big. Learning is supplemented by a synthetic phonics programme drawn principally from Phonics International. Please see below for more information.

### **Handwriting**

Form drawing activities allow pupils to develop skills in drawing repeated patterns and shapes which will be helpful for handwriting, so that writing the letters becomes more natural. Pupils in all Sheiling School classes have the opportunity to do form drawing on a regular basis. This is especially helpful for pupils whose fine motor skills need to be developed to support their letter formation.

### **Reading**

There is a heavy focus on learning literacy *through* the context of a meaningful lesson. Similarly spoken language skills are promoted by children imitating the teacher's storytelling and re-telling fairy stories, so that the enjoyment and experience of the story is the context of the lesson.

In Waldorf Schools, the approach to teaching reading is more gradual and multi-sensory than the pace of mainstream and state schools. We consider this "slowness" a virtue, not a deficit. It is based on a radically different conception of child development and a much broader conception of what is important to learn and experience in early childhood. Formal instruction of reading in a Waldorf school begins in first year when a child is six, turning seven (older than Reception year children in mainstream and state schools). The "reading readiness" instruction and homework that oppresses five-year olds in some schools is very different in Waldorf kindergartens. Instead the teachers plan meaningful activities that engage the active will of the children. Through the activities of the kindergarten's daily and weekly rhythms, the children feel at home. The stress-free environment strengthens their language development through sensory integration, movement, gesture, music, art, as well as practical skills like baking and cleaning, social cooperation, and self-initiated free play.

In Class 2 (age 7-8) children engage in tongue twisters, more poetry (enacted or accompanied by gesture), and enjoy fables, legends, folklore and nature stories. Punctuation is taught on the basis of the spoken rhythms which indicate when the sentence starts, finishes or pauses. The transition to lower case writing is prepared by form drawing exercises.

The content of written work is related to the Main Lesson themes and children's own experiences. About a third of the writing is composed by the child, the rest is copied from the board or from teacher dictation. Free writing is encouraged by giving children opportunities to write letters regularly, to their teacher and classmates.

Reading is taught via writing –for example reading the letters they have written and writing from the board. It includes a book created by the class teacher, which is then personalised by pupils individually with illustrations. A class reader and individual reading schemes are regularly used.

### Curriculum Provision at the Sheiling School

Group	Scheme of Work used	Hours per week	Methods
<b>Key Stages 1 &amp; 2</b>			
<p><b>Class 3</b></p> <p>Years 3-6</p> <p>Some struggle with classroom based learning.</p> <p>Pupils working between P4 and NC Level 2.</p>	<p>Phonics International – pupils are baselined then follow the programme from the appropriate unit. This is integrated with the Steiner Waldorf approach as described above for early phonics, especially during main lesson.</p>	<p>During main lesson up to 45 mins per day; 2 literacy &amp; numeracy (combined) 45min lessons; 1 45min bookwork lesson</p> <p>Total: 5hours 15mins approx</p>	<p><u>Oral/listening skills:</u> Storytelling, drawings on the board, group games, verse and rhythmical activities, songs and dances</p> <p><u>Spelling/reading skills:</u> writing on the board, independent and supported reading (Oxford Reading Tree); Phonics international Sounds Book Sheets, grapheme cards (on carabenas) Sentences worksheets (or on board).</p> <p><u>Handwriting:</u> form drawing, handwriting practice (in sand, on paper, on the board)</p>
<b>Key Stage 3</b>			
Class	Scheme of Work	Hours per week	Methods
<p><b>Explorers (Outdoor Curriculum)</b></p> <p>Pupils join us at different stages of learning and struggle to access formal classroom learning.</p> <p>Pupils working between NC 1 and NC 3a.</p>	<p>Phonics International. Pupils are baseline assessed then follow programme from appropriate unit. Sessions are in short sharp bursts of 10-30 mins per day.</p> <p>Waldorf topics are taught in main lesson with emphasis on practising literacy (and numeracy) skills in meaningful contexts.</p>	<p>During main lesson (up to 45mins per day) plus 2 x 45min literacy lessons per week.</p> <p>Total: 4.5 hours approx. per week</p>	<p>Phonics international: grapheme cards (on keyrings), sounds book sheets/I can read sheets</p> <p>Dyslexic friendly games and resources – card games, Stop-Go Word Game, magnetic letters, alphabet arc (spelling); Nessy Learning Hairy Phonics, online games</p> <p>High interest reading books; books linked to main lesson topics</p>
<p><b>Class 8</b></p> <p>Mix of KS3 and KS4 pupils.</p> <p>Some non-verbal pupils and some with</p>	<p>KS3 Pupils:</p> <p>Learning is phonics based (ideas taken from Phonics International) with lots of repetition. Most of the class are working on simple alphabetic</p>	<p>2 x 45mins plus during main lessons (up to 45 mins per day)</p> <p>Total: Up to 4.5 hours per</p>	<p>Multi-sensory approaches</p> <p>Signalong and cued pronunciation for communication</p> <p>ICT- typing and listening to words aloud; communication/letter recognition games</p> <p>Poetry/music/rhyme</p> <p>1:1 work</p>

<p>severe language difficulties.</p> <p>Some struggle with formal classroom learning.</p> <p>Pupils are working between P4 and NC level 2.</p>	<p>code with one pupil working at P4. Cued articulation and signalong support the learning for all pupils.</p> <p>KS4 Pupils: Pupils take units in Functional Skills from Equals Moving On accreditation with AQA Unit Awards where appropriate.</p>	<p>week.</p>	<p>Painting and craft</p> <p><u>Phonics:</u> Most of the class is working at recognising (hearing) phonemes and linking them to graphemes in the Simple Alphabetic Code (Phonics International).</p>
<p><b>Key Stages 4 and 5</b></p>			
<p><b>Woodland Class</b></p> <p>Mixed age group of KS3, KS4 and KS5 pupils.</p> <p>Pupils are working between P5 and P8.</p> <p>All pupils struggle greatly with accessing formal classroom lessons.</p>	<p>Pupils in KS4 and KS5 follow units in Functional Skills from Equals Moving On accreditation.</p> <p>KS3 pupils (P8) follow a differentiated version of the Phonics International programme with added reinforcement, repetition, visual cues and cued articulation as appropriate.</p>	<p>2 x 45mins plus cross curricular during main lesson and wider curriculum</p>	<p>Communication skills- visual symbols, signalong, objects of reference, Letter recognition games Poetry/music/rhyme 1:1 work Multi-sensory approaches (eg. feeling wooden letters, writing letters in sand) Signalong for communication Symbols for communication</p> <p><u>Phonics:</u> Pupils are introduced to the sounds in the same order as Phonics International but with additional reinforcement and support, focusing on key skills for life such as recognising own name, saying own name, naming one's needs.</p>
<p><b>Class</b></p>	<p><b>Scheme of Work</b></p>	<p><b>Hours per week</b></p>	<p><b>Methods</b></p>
<p><b>Seniors A</b></p> <p>Mixed group of KS4 and KS5 pupils</p> <p>Pupils are working at NC Levels 1-4</p>	<p>Entry Level Certificate in English (AQA).</p> <p>Pupils also use and develop their literacy skills in real life contexts as part of their other accredited courses (ASDAN CoPE/Bronze)</p>	<p>3 x 45min literacy lessons, plus ASDAN CoPE/Bronze during Main Lessons.</p>	<p>Coursework based accreditation focusing on skills for adult life and work.</p>
<p><b>Seniors B</b></p> <p>Mixed group of KS4 and</p>	<p>Pupils follow units in Functional Skills from Equals Moving On accreditation</p>	<p>Pupils do not have discreet literacy sessions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sign-a-long</li> <li>• Cued articulation</li> <li>• Poetry, music, rhyme</li> <li>• Context/lesson specific language</li> </ul>

<p>KS5 pupils</p> <p>Pupils are working between P6 and NC Level 1</p>		<p>Literacy targets are addressed through every subject lesson and during Main lesson activities when the whole class is working together on their other Moving On units.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flash cards</li> <li>• Conversational language/social skills during tuck shop and whole school activities and events such as assembly, folk dancing and festival activities.</li> <li>• 1:1 work (Headsprout, Talk Tools, Sign-a-long sessions)</li> <li>• Whole class activities and lessons</li> <li>• ICT work</li> </ul>
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### Resources and Schemes of Work

Class teachers and Assistant Teachers, with support from Learning Support Assistants and the Head of Education, will create termly Schemes of Work, which are highly personalised to pupils, making clear reference to individual pupils' targets. As appropriate for the pupils, any of the following resource sets or Schemes of Work may be used.

#### Phonics

Phonics International (by Debbie Heppelwhite) is used as a basic synthetic phonics teaching programme, with activities and resources included as appropriate from *Jolly Phonics* (Sue Lloyd) and the *Letters and Sounds* (Department of Education) programme. Steiner Waldorf and teacher prepared resources are also used to support the delivery of phonics in line with Waldorf principles and practice.

Many of our pupils are working within the Performance levels and may continue within these levels for the length of their school career. These pupils will be introduced to the phonemes and graphemes in the same order as the Phonics International programme, but activities will be personalised to focus on important skills for life such as recognising one's own name or writing one's own name.

The majority of our pupils have significant Speech, Language and Communication difficulties. For many of these pupils the emphasis of their phonics learning will be either on producing phonemes, or hearing phonemes. This is an essential building block towards knowledge of sound and letter correspondences. Approaches include mirror work (to see the shape of the mouth in different sounds), using objects of reference to present phonemes, and games to develop segmenting and blending of phonemes.

Some pupils arrive at the school at a later stage in their educational career and many have developed coping strategies to support their learning of letters and sounds. For a few of these pupils, a synthetic phonics approach must be used with care, so as not to undermine the confidence they have gained through these older teaching and learning strategies. For many of these pupils, the Alphabetic Code chart from *Phonics International* is a useful tool to support their growing independence in trying out new spelling patterns.

#### Further Resources and Reading Schemes:

The school has a small pupils' library to which pupils have regular access. This includes a range of interesting and accessible fiction and non-fiction titles.

The resources below and schemes of work are tailored to various ages and it will be up to the Class Teacher to select what is the most age and interest appropriate for their group. Further resources are available in the Teachers' Room library.

## **P Levels**

*Letters and Sounds- Dfe*

*EQUALS Moving On Programme Functional Skills units*

*Pencil Control Practice book for Early Years- Oxford*

Hands on resources such as flashcards, wooden letters, magnetic letters, sand trays, clay, pipe cleaners.

## **P Levels to National Curriculum Levels (transition)**

Phonics, sentence work, spelling and grammar

*EQUALS Moving On Programme Functional Skills units*

*Active Literacy Kit* – The Dyslexia Institute

*Pencil Control Practice books* – Oxford

Phonics International – Debbie Hepplewhite

Reading schemes and resources

*Oxford Reading Tree – Floppy's Phonics* plus Stage 1 books and resources

Songbirds – Oxford University Press

## **National Curriculum levels 1-4**

Phonics, sentence work, spelling and grammar

*Active Literacy Kit* – The Dyslexia Institute

*Beat Dyslexia!* – LDA Scheme of Work and resource pack

*Headway Workbooks* –Oxford University Press – for older learners

Phonics International – Debbie Hepplewhite

Reading schemes and resources

*Oxford Reading Tree* – Oxford University Press

*Ruth Miskins Superphonics*- Hodder Children's Books/WKT Company Ltd

*Storyworlds Literacy Edition* Stages 7-9 – Heinemann publishing

*New Reading 360* Reading Scheme

Songbirds – Oxford University Press

*The Kaos World Chronicles* –published by LDA – for reluctant older readers at KS3 and KS4

## **National Curriculum level 5 and above**

*Headway Workbooks* –Oxford University Press – for older learners

We are looking to expand and develop our resources for learners working at Level 5 and above.

## **Opportunities for Certification**

All pupils aged 14 and above follow an accredited course for English/literacy.

**EQUALS Moving On 14-19 Curriculum Functional Skills Units** -Accreditation to suit the needs of pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties, Moderate Learning Difficulties and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties. <http://www.equals.co.uk/14-19.aspx?page=4ac8faba-d6f4-4247-95f1-7bb83ec5b74d#>

**AQA Unit Awards** are small units representing 10 to 30 hours of learning, available at pre-entry level, Entry Level or levels one and two. We use them to supplement the curriculum offered by Equals Moving On Functional Skills or Entry Level Certificate in English for those who need a greater level of challenge than offered by the qualification. Examples include:

- Writing a Story (Unit 88381)
- Reading for Pleasure (Unit 86250)
- Introduction to Literacy: Unit 1 (Unit 92682)
- Writing: Producing varied marks (Unit 73163)

*For full details see the Accreditation Folder.*

**Entry Level Certificate in English** is a coursework based qualification delivered over one or two years, aimed at pupils aged 14+. Learning relates to Levels 1-3 of the old National Curriculum (Primary school level attainment).

The option of (AQA) **Functional Skills English Levels 1 and 2**, will be provided for the minority of pupils who are able to sit the long exam and meet other requirements of the course.

### **Cross-curricular approaches to Literacy**

Communication skills are a key part of lessons across the school. It is crucial that pupils should learn to communicate for different real-life settings and about real-life events. Pupils are engaged in communication regarding their individual timetable throughout each day. Pupils who are unable to use spoken language communicate using visual timetables, Signalong and communication devices. Some examples of literacy skill development in other subject areas include:

In the Bakery pupils are encouraged to follow written and visual directions for routines and baking.

Eurythmy therapy involves a physical enjoyment of poetry rhyme and other verbal expression. It can support pupils' understanding of literary and artistic language by using accompanying gesture, and inspires pupils to enjoy the sounds of the language.

Form drawing – Pupils engage in form drawing in a range of contexts throughout the school; practise may feature as a daily or weekly activity within literacy lessons or as a separate lesson with a specialist teacher. Drawing the lines fits in with the pupil's need for movement, schools their sense of form, exercises fine motor skills and in regard to literacy, provides an appropriate forerunner for writing. Forms can be selected to correspond with specific letter formation or as additional practise at changing direction, stopping and starting and distinguishing between straight lines and curves.

Painting – Painting lessons can be taught in correspondence with story requiring development of listening skills in addition to providing additional experience of qualities of spoken sound and sentence melody. The lesson may begin with colour stories, fairy tales or healing/pedagogical stories which serve to settle the pupils into the classroom, inspire the use of colour, rhythm and movement of the brush or determine the image itself. Healing stories for challenging behaviour can act as catalysts for change within the pupils, doing their work silently and invisibly.

### **Literacy in Woodland Class**

As appropriate to the pupils' individual needs, the majority of the timetable is spent doing practical activities ranging from horse riding and painting to bush craft and Weavery. Pupils are offered two 45 minute class based literacy sessions where teaching and learning methods mirror those across the school. In addition speaking and listening skills are awarded special emphasis throughout the day, for example individual targets are addressed through the rhythmical part of Main Lesson (daily) where pupils are encouraged to greet staff and peers and join in with verses/songs, as well as discuss the timetable for that day. Communication and listening skills are reinforced during all practical sessions where pupils need to listen to and understand instructions for completing tasks, and demonstrate their understanding of tasks and wider subject knowledge.

Literacy lessons focus on developing letter sound recognition and writing.

Rather than teaching the letters in order alphabetically, the sounds are introduced in the order suggested by Phonics International, prioritising the most commonly used sounds in the English language. The teaching of phonics is taught using the Waldorf pictorial approach using story, poetry

and an image to represent discrete graphemes and their corresponding phoneme, e.g. 's' 'a' 't' 'p' 'i' 'n' as well as digraphs, e.g. /ai/ as snail.

Each sound is introduced using a story or verse featuring repeated examples of simple code and perhaps a few complex graphemes. The verse in connection with the sound is read aloud to the pupils which leads them to experience the qualities of the spoken sounds and sentence melody. Where the focussed phonetic sound is repeated within the verse, some pupils are able to identify the letter(s) which represents the sound and point to/ highlight/underline examples.

A multi-sensory approach is used to practise formation of letters, including drawing in sand trays, using a wet sponge and forming letter shapes using dough. These activities further develop the pupil's relationship to the letter shape as well as meeting their sensory needs and the urge of the etheric body to be at work in modelling. Pupils practise form drawing by tracing and then drawing progressively independently. This sequence is also applied to the writing of whole words; pupils initially trace either on the blackboard, in the sand tray or on paper using crayon. They then work a letter at a time using key strokes as a guide, before finally writing independently. Pupils practise writing their name during each lesson, with some pupils progressing to CVC words from the lesson's story or verse.

In line with Waldorf principles outlined by Rudolf Steiner, the teaching of reading follows writing, therefore only some pupils are working on the initial stages of reading by identifying corresponding letters and sounds. Whole word recognition of CVC words is also practised through matching games.

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