



**Sheiling School
Thornbury**

LITERACY POLICY

Our approach to Reading, Writing,
and Speaking and Listening



Literacy at the Sheiling School

Though working within a Waldorf framework, the literacy provision of the Sheiling School reflects the skills identified in the National Curriculum and the belief that, as a core subject, Literacy extends to all aspects of a pupil's life. By working pedagogically and therapeutically at a highly personalised level – by supporting each pupil according to the nature and degree of his/her particular educational needs – we aim to enable all students to access the broadest possible range of literacy skills, to nurture and encourage receptive and expressive communication at every opportunity, and to access a wealth of stories, songs, poetry, plays and non-fiction texts carefully selected for their cultural, educational and spiritual relevance. In order to contextualise, consolidate and expand this provision, literacy skills are taught through discreet literacy lessons as well embedded and evaluated across the curriculum.

Aims

Given the diverse range of abilities at the Sheiling School, and in pursuit of total inclusion, literacy programmes are carefully adapted to the needs of each individual pupil. Underlying these adaptations are the fundamental aims outlined in the National Curriculum. By school leaving age, the Sheiling School aims for each pupil to:

- read for information and enjoyment or otherwise access the written word in a meaningful way.
- develop the habit of reading for both pleasure and information, or at the very least take pleasure from accessing books and online texts.
- acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language, or at the very least develop all expressive capabilities to the fullest extent.
- have experienced access to our rich and varied literary heritage.
- write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting language and style in and for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences, or at the very least have developed expressive capabilities to the fullest possible extent, including the use of supported communication and IT based facilities.
- use discussion in order to elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas, or at the very least be able to present their preferences, needs and opinions by way of supported communication and IT based facilities.
- Develop their functional literacy skills that will facilitate them to lead more independent lives.



Roles & Responsibilities

Headteacher: the headteacher, supported by the Educational Leadership Team, has overall responsibility for education and the curriculum.

Literacy Coordinator: The Literacy Coordinator has responsibility for overseeing the literacy provision and pupils' progression across the school. The Literacy Coordinator will: ensure that teachers and support staff are well trained to deliver high quality Literacy lessons; ensure that teachers and support staff have access to high quality resources; oversee the assessment, analysis and the implementation of each pupils' Reading Progression Plan'; regularly report on pupil progress in Literacy to the headteacher.

Class teachers: Class teachers, supported by assistant teachers, are responsible for: the continuous assessment, planning and delivery of pupils' Literacy provision; maintaining a high quality of teaching and learning support in Literacy; engaging pupils through creative and innovative approaches to the teaching of Literacy; working directly with the Literacy Coordinator to assess, analysis, and implement pupils' Reading progression plans.

Support staff: Learning Support Assistants and Senior Learning Support Assistants are responsible for: supporting class teachers and assistant teachers in the implementation of pupils' Reading Progression Plans; supporting pupil to access Literacy throughout the day; supporting the development of functional literacy skills; monitoring, and feeding back to the class teacher on pupils' progress.

Approaches to Teaching and Learning

Reading

At the Sheiling School, we recognise that our pupils are individual learners, who require a personalised approach to their education. Our pupil cohort is extremely diverse in levels of academic attainment, engagement and experience, and therefore, no single approach to the teaching of reading is going to be effective overall. We also recognise that effective, fluent reading is the product of a reader applying a range of strategies to read and understand text in a meaningful and functional way. For this reason, we do not place an emphasis on a single strategy for reading, rather, we aim to nurture our pupils to develop a range of well-rounded strategies that support meaningful growth as a reader.

Our reading programme consists of two distinct, yet related dimensions: 'decoding words' and 'developing language comprehension'. Both of these



interrelated dimensions involve discrete skills that a reader must learn to become an effective, functional reader:

Decoding:

- **Phonetic awareness:** *the graphophonetic relationships between letters and sounds.*
- **Word recognition:** *the instant recognition of words within a known lexicon.*

Comprehending:

- **Semantics:** *the comprehension of language.*
- **Syntax:** The grammatical system of reading that impacts on the meaning of text.

These dimensions are the **primary** strategies that we use to read, combining the mechanical and contextual aspects of reading.

Writing

In keeping with the Waldorf approach to literacy, pupils at a stage of pre-writing/emergent writing or are introduced to letter shapes as they are embedded in artistic drawings with an accompanying story or verse to emphasise the character of the letter (for example the letter W may be embedded in the image of a wave, with the phoneme /w/ emphasised as the sound the wave makes). It is the pictorial, rather than the abstract, quality of the letter that is emphasised.

For pupils who are developing writing skills, a multi-sensory approach is used to practise formation of letters. This may include drawing in sand trays, using a wet sponge, and forming letter shapes using dough or even wood. Form-Drawing exercises are implemented to support letter formation, hand-eye co-ordination, and the left-to-right trajectory necessary for reading and writing. Pupils practise form drawing by tracing and then drawing progressively independently.

Writing ability is often connected to broader issues of bodily co-ordination and sensory integration. Where pupils exhibit difficulties with basic writing skills and letter formation, the Sheiling School adopts a multi-faceted therapeutic approach that may focus as much upon general motility and co-ordination (through movement exercises, the walking of shapes, the relationship of the right side of the body to the left etc.) as direct writing practice.



Speaking and Listening

The quality of spoken language is of prime importance throughout the school day in all arenas, social and academic. Attention to the spoken word – to precision, care and eloquence – is understood to underpin the development of reading and writing capacities, but also multiple aspects of personal and social development. Since many of our pupils struggle with communication (both receptive and expressive), and since some are entirely non-verbal, the school employs a programme of total communication including the use of picture symbols and Signalong to supplement the spoken word.

In keeping with the Waldorf ethos of the school, staff are asked to pay care and attention to the content and form of speech at all times. Although clarity and conciseness of intent is central, great importance is allotted to aesthetic qualities of the spoken word – verses and poems are chosen not least for their beauty – and also to the issue of age appropriacy in keeping with the stages of child development. The spoken word is 'modelled' by staff so that the pupil lives into all aspects – not only the informational content, but also the musical/tonal aspect, the pictorial aspect, and the grammatical inflections.

Drama and recitation are an important part of school life, with verses, poems and speech exercises incorporated into the daily routine and whole school plays happening two or three times a year. Pupils are encouraged to articulate their preferences, opinions and needs either verbally or through the use of supported communication, including the opportunity to contribute to school policy in regular inclusive pupil voice meetings. Speech and language assessment and ongoing therapy is offered to those pupils where it is deemed beneficial or specified on a pupil's EHCP.

In order to be fully inclusive, the aims set out in the National Curriculum are individually adapted according to ability and issues arising from special educational needs and emotional/behavioural considerations:

- to listen and respond appropriately to adults and peers.
- to speak/communicate audibly and fluently with an increasing command of Standard English.
- to maintain attention and participate actively in collaborative conversations, staying on topic and initiating and responding to comments.
- to ask relevant questions to extend understanding and knowledge
- to use relevant strategies to build vocabulary.
- to articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions.
- to give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings.
- to use spoken language in order to develop understanding through speculating, imagining and exploring ideas.



- to participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role play/improvisations and debates.
- to gain, maintain and monitor the interest of the listener(s).
- to consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others.
- to select and use appropriate registers for effective communication.

Planning and implementation

At the Sheiling School, we aim to plan meaningful lessons that are personalised to pupils' learning needs and are informed by previous learning and assessment. This enables us to track pupils' progress and identify their next steps in an ongoing assessment cycle (see assessment sections). Teachers devise a Medium-Term planning document that will outline the '**Why?**', '**What?**' and '**How?**' of a half term's Literacy provision.

Why?

The 'why?' outlines the rationale for a pupil learning the targeted learning objective/skill. This takes in to consideration assessment data, teacher observations and prior knowledge.

What?

The 'What?' indicates each pupil's planned learning objectives for the half term. Learning objectives are informed by assessments of pupils' next steps as outlined in the assessment of the termly planning (see assessment section below).

How?

The 'How?' outlines the planned process or activity that will act as a 'vehicle' for pupils to meet their intended learning objectives.

In the lower school (Class 1-10), each class will access discreet literacy lessons on a daily basis during '2nd lesson' as well as consolidating and applying their learning through a range of cross-curricula learning opportunities throughout their day.

The 6th form provision (16 – 19) at Sheiling School is largely based on preparing our young adults for their life beyond our school. Therefore, the aim of the 6th form curriculum is to make everything our students encounter as 'real' as possible, which means connecting everything we do to the outside world. Functional literacy skills are embedded in practical 'real world' activities, so that all learning becomes a tool for increased independence, self-realisation and the possibility of meaningful employment.



Assessment

Across the school's Literacy provision, teachers, assistant teachers, and LSAs are constantly engaged in on-going formative assessment of pupils' reading, writing and speaking and listening skills. See our '*Reading Progression Policy*' for more information of the assessment of reading.

Assessment Process Cycle:

1. SMART Literacy learning objectives set: Based on EHCP outcomes, previous or baseline assessments, Reading Response Analysis, and teacher observations of pupils' next steps.
2. Literacy provision outlined: including a Reading Progression Plan and Literacy medium-term planning.
3. Implementation and Literacy Provision including on-going formative assessment by class teams and progress tracked using the termly target trackers
4. At the end of the half term, Class teachers (supported by assistant teachers and LSAs) will assess Literacy learning objectives and this will eventually inform summative BSquared assessments and the review of EHCP targets at pupils' annual reviews.
5. Back to step 1.

Accreditation and Qualifications

For pupils aged 14+, we offer the opportunity to gain qualifications and accreditation in literacy and numeracy but only if it meaningful for the pupil and their future pathway both at school and beyond. Currently we offer the following accreditations:

- AQA Entry Level 1, 2, and 3 Certificate (English and Maths)
- AQA Functional Skills
- GCSE Maths and English

Moderation of Assessment

Moderation of Literacy and Numeracy assessment are conducted on a rolling yearly cycle. For example:

Half term 1. Reading

Half term 2. Number

Half term 3. Writing

Half term 4. Space, Shape and Measurement

Half term 5. Speaking and Listening

Half term 6. Using and Applying/ Statistics



The purpose of moderation is to ensure consistency of teachers' judgment once they have made their assessments across the school.

Reviewing and Evaluating

The school's Literacy Coordinator is responsible for the implementation, reviewing, and the evaluation of the effectiveness of this policy. The effectiveness will be measured using the overall level of pupil progress in Literacy in the school.

Links to other policies

Reading Progression Policy; Assessment Policy; Curriculum Policy

Policy Created on	Created/Reviewed by:	Review date:
May 2019	Jordan Bool, Assistant Headteacher & Literacy Coordinator	May 2020
	Dean Frances-Hawksley	May 2021