

curriculum for excellence: literacy and English

principles and practice

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Literacy and English Principles and practice

Language and literacy are of personal, social and economic importance. Our ability to use language lies at the centre of the development and expression of our emotions, our thinking, our learning and our sense of personal identity. Language is itself a key aspect of our culture. Through language, children and young people can gain access to the literary heritage of humanity and develop their appreciation of the richness and breadth of Scotland's literary heritage. Children and young people encounter, enjoy and learn from the diversity of language used in their homes, their communities, by the media and by their peers.

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*.

The Literacy and English framework promotes the development of critical and creative thinking as well as competence in listening and talking, reading, writing and the personal, interpersonal and team-working skills which are so important in life and in the world of work. The framework provides, for learners, parents and teachers, broad descriptions of the range of learning opportunities which will contribute to the development of literacy, including critical literacy, creativity, and knowledge and appreciation of literature and culture.

Traditionally, all aspects of the language framework were developed by all practitioners in pre-school establishments and primary schools and by the English department in secondary schools. This will continue to be the case, but the framework recognises that all practitioners in secondary schools and in colleges and youth work settings have important responsibilities for and contributions to make towards the development of literacy.

How is the literacy and English framework structured?

The framework opens with a set of statements that describe the kinds of activity which all children and young people should experience throughout their learning, to nurture their skills and knowledge in literacy and language. Teachers will use them, alongside the more detailed experiences and outcomes, in planning for learning and teaching.

The statements of experiences and outcomes themselves include both literacy and English statements and emphasise that learning is an *active* process: for example, the outcomes stress *making* notes, rather than the passive activity implied by *taking* notes. Experiences represent important continuing aspects of learning such as exploring and enjoying text, and outcomes describe stages in the development of skills and understanding.

The three organisers within the literacy and English framework are the same as those used in the literacy and Gàidhlig, Gaelic (learners) and modern languages frameworks:

- listening and talking
- reading
- writing.

Within these organisers there are subdivisions.

Enjoyment and choice experiences and outcomes highlight the importance of providing opportunities for young people to make increasingly sophisticated choices.

The *tools* sections include important skills and knowledge: for example, in reading it includes such important matters as reading strategies, spelling and grammar.

The sections on *finding and using information* include, in reading, critical literacy skills; while the *understanding, analysing and evaluating* statements encourage progression in understanding of texts, developing not only literal understanding but also the higher order skills.

Finally, the *creating texts* experiences and outcomes describe the kind of opportunities which will help children and young people to develop their ability to communicate effectively, for example, by writing clear, well-structured explanations.

The experiences and outcomes have been written in an inclusive way which will allow teachers to interpret them for the needs of individual children and young people who use Braille, sign language and other forms of communication. This is exemplified in the words 'engaging with others' and 'interacting' within the listening and talking outcomes.

Effective learning and teaching in literacy and English

Throughout their education, children and young people should experience an environment which is rich in language and which sets high expectations for literacy and the use of language. Children and young people need to spend time with stories, literature and other texts which will enrich their learning, develop their language skills and enable them to find enjoyment. Spoken language has particular importance in the early years. Teachers will balance play-based learning with more systematic development and learning of skills and techniques for reading, including phonics.

Throughout education, effective learning and teaching in literacy and English will involve a skilful mix of appropriate approaches including:

- the use of relevant, real-life and enjoyable contexts which build upon children and young people's own experiences
- effective direct and interactive teaching
- a balance of spontaneous play and planned activities
- harnessing the motivational benefits of following children and young people's interests through responsive planning
- collaborative working and independent thinking and learning
- making meaningful links for learners across different curriculum areas
- building on the principles of Assessment is for Learning
- frequent opportunities to communicate in a wide range of contexts, for relevant purposes and for real audiences within and beyond places of learning
- the development of problem-solving skills and approaches
- the appropriate and effective use of ICT.

The balance between these approaches will vary at different stages and across different sectors and areas of the curriculum. Continuing dialogue about learning and teaching approaches within and across sectors will help to ensure continuity and progression.

The experiences and outcomes seem very broad – what if I'm not sure about progression within and between levels?

The experiences and outcomes embody appropriate levels of proficiency at each level but do not place a ceiling on achievement. The range of experiences allows for different rates of progression and for additional depth or breadth of study through the use of different contexts for learning. Progression within and across levels will take place in a range of ways, including:

- continuing development and consolidation of the range of skills
- increasing independence in applying these skills, and the ability to use them across a widening range of contexts in learning and life
- gradually decreasing levels of support used by the learner (for example from teachers, classroom assistants, parents or peers), and reduced reliance upon techniques such as wordlists or writing frames
- the ability to mediate discussions without teacher intervention
- in reading, the increasing length and complexity of text (for example the text's ideas, structure and vocabulary)
- in talking and writing, the increasing length, complexity and accuracy of response
- increasing awareness of how to apply language rules effectively.

At all levels, teachers will plan to enable learners to develop their skills with increasing depth over a range of contexts. This will be especially important at early level for those young people who may require additional support.

What is meant by literacy?

In defining literacy for the 21st century we must consider the changing forms of language which our children and young people will experience and use. Accordingly, the definition takes account of factors such as the speed with which information is shared and the ways it is shared. The breadth of the definition is intended to 'future proof' it. Within *Curriculum for Excellence*, therefore, literacy is 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.

The literacy experiences and outcomes promote the development of skills in using language, particularly those that are used regularly by everyone in their everyday lives. These include the ability to apply knowledge about language. They reflect the need for young people to be able to communicate effectively both face-to-face and in writing through an increasing range of media. They take account of national and international research and of other skills frameworks. They recognise the importance of listening and talking and of effective collaborative working in the development of thinking and in learning.

In particular, the experiences and outcomes address the important skills of critical literacy. Children and young people not only need to be able to read for information: they also need to be able to work out what trust they should place on the information and to identify when and how people are aiming to persuade or influence them.

What about literacy across the curriculum?

The importance of the development of literacy skills across all areas of the curriculum is stressed in *Building the Curriculum 1*. All practitioners – from the early years, through primary and secondary education, in youth work settings and in colleges – are in a position to make important contributions to developing and reinforcing the literacy skills of children and young people, both through the learning activities which they plan and through their interaction with children and young people. Schools and their partners need to ensure a shared understanding of these responsibilities and that the approaches to learning and teaching will enable each child and young person to make good progress in developing their literacy and language skills. In order to highlight the shared nature of these responsibilities, the literacy experiences and outcomes also appear as a separate document, and implications for learning and teaching are explored further in the document which accompanies it.

What is the connection between literacy and English and other frameworks?

Close attention has been paid to matching with Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The level of achievement at the fourth level has been designed to approximate to that associated with SCQF level 4. The framework has been developed to support essential skills within *Skills for Scotland* and within *An Adult Literacy and Numeracy Framework for Scotland*.

Links with other areas of the curriculum

In addition to the opportunities to develop literacy in all aspects of learning, there are strong connections between learning in English and learning in other areas of the curriculum. There are close links, for example, between the expressive arts and creative writing, and social studies and critical literacy. Interdisciplinary studies are likely to involve both research and a strong element of presentation and provide valuable opportunities to extend language skills. In numeracy, information handling outcomes link clearly to the critical literacy outcomes where learners are asked to assess the reliability of information.

Whatever the sector, whatever the subject area, young people will be:

- engaged in talking together to deepen their learning and thinking
- working together to prepare for reading unfamiliar texts
- reading a wide range of texts to gather and analyse information for a range of purposes
- writing clear explanations
- communicating information or opinions.

What is meant by 'texts'?

The definition of 'texts' needs to be broad and future proof: therefore within *Curriculum for Excellence*,

a text is the medium through which ideas, experiences, opinions and information can be communicated.

Reading and responding to literature and other texts play a central role in the development of learners' knowledge and understanding. Texts not only include those presented in traditional written or print form, but also orally, electronically or on film. Texts can be in continuous form, including traditional formal prose, or non-continuous, for example charts and graphs. The literacy and English framework reflects the increased use of multimodal texts, digital communication, social networking and the other forms of electronic communication encountered by children and young people in their daily lives. It recognises that the skills which children and young people need to learn to read these texts differ from the skills they need for reading continuous prose. Examples are given below.

Examples of texts
novels, short stories, plays, poems reference texts the spoken word charts, maps, graphs and timetables advertisements, promotional leaflets comics, newspapers and magazines CVs, letters and emails films, games and TV programmes labels, signs and posters recipes, manuals and instructions reports and reviews text messages, blogs and social networking sites web pages, catalogues and directories

In planning for learning in any curriculum area it is important for practitioners to ensure that children and young people encounter a wide range of different types of text in different media. As they progress in their learning, children and young people will encounter texts of increasing complexity in terms of length, structure, vocabulary, ideas and concepts.

What about Scots and Scottish texts?

The languages, dialects and literature of Scotland provide a rich resource for children and young people to learn about Scotland's culture, identity and language. Through engaging with a wide range of texts they will develop an appreciation of Scotland's vibrant literary and linguistic heritage and its indigenous languages and dialects. This principle suffuses the experiences and outcomes and it is expected that practitioners will build upon the diversity of language represented within the communities of Scotland, valuing the languages which children and young people bring to school.

What are broad features of assessment in literacy and English?

(This section should be read alongside the advice for literacy.)

Assessment in literacy and English will focus on the responses of children and young people to the language and to the ideas and information that they find in texts, and on the development and application of their skills in listening and talking, reading and writing.

Teachers will see evidence of their progress through children and young people's growing skills in communicating their thinking and using language appropriately for different purposes and audiences. Much of the evidence will be gathered as part of day-to-day learning. The use of specific assessment tasks is also important to provide evidence of progress, particularly at transitions.

Assessment of progress in literacy and English will focus on judgements about the success of children and young people in developing key literacy and English language skills and applying their skills in their learning and in their daily lives and in preparing for the world of work. For example:

- How well are they communicating with confidence to suit their purpose and audience and showing increasing awareness of others in interactions?
- How does their confidence in listening and talking help their personal development, social skills and ability to solve problems?
- To what extent are they exploring and enjoying fiction and non-fiction texts of increasing depth, complexity and variety and making increasingly sophisticated personal responses?
- How well do they engage with challenging issues raised in texts?

Long-term success in using literacy and English is closely linked to learners' motivation and capacity to engage with and complete tasks and assignments. For this reason, it is important to observe and discuss their enthusiasm for stories, poetry and prose, their interest in words, their preferences in reading, and their enthusiasm for sharing experiences through talk and writing. Their progress can be seen, for example, in their increasingly creative use of language and their developing appreciation of literature and culture.

Documents mentioned above

An Adult Literacy and Numeracy Framework for Scotland

http://www.lc.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/cs_008875.pdf

Skills for Scotland

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/09/06091114/0>