



Introduction and Rationale

*"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". (Building the Curriculum 1, 2010)*

As educational professionals we are well aware of the benefits that competence and confidence in literacy can have in all subject areas. Competence in grammar, spelling and the spoken word, are without a doubt essential for progress in all areas of the curriculum and for this reason, all teachers have specific responsibility for promoting language and literacy development.

Active Literacy has been developed to support every teacher, in each area of the curriculum to make links with key Literacy approaches in the school with the view of maximising pupil engagement, confidence, attainment and life chances. Active Literacy will capitalise on key strategies used in Languages and the unified, skills-based methodologies can be used by pupils in subjects across the school syllabus. The driving force of the programme is the absolute need to approach Literacy in an active and positive way. Young people are well aware of how their bodies require exercise and activity to perform at the highest level and the same rules can be applied to the brain and the literacy strategies advocated by the programme. The aim is to empower the young people in the school to evaluate their own progress and development, while they make tangible and measureable links across learning. Many of the approaches are driven by the pupils themselves and there is a robust link to formative feedback from teachers, peers and self-evaluation.

In order to exploit the benefits of a holistic, skills-based literacy programme, Active Literacy will also promote and develop the use of a shared language about Literacy that will aid the understanding and self-evaluative processes of pupils. This shared language will form the basis for all work on Literacy in the school and will support staff and pupils alike in creating a culture where literacy skills are valued, developed and capitalised upon to improve the learning experiences of pupils at Lornshill Academy.

Active Literacy – Reading

Active Reading - Warm Up

The teacher can prepare for Active Reading by:

- Providing word banks of specialist vocabulary
- Contextualising any texts that you are to study in class
- Encouraging and supporting the use of Active Reading Strategies

Predicting

Predicting is an important skill for reading as it often helps to clarify the purpose of the reading task. Pupils often ask “Why are we reading this?” and all too often the unsupported answer is “My teacher is making me read this.” By predicting what the text might be about the pupils can gain more of an insight into the purposes of reading i.e. for pleasure, for information, for entertainment, for revision etc. The overall aim of prediction as a strategy is to identify features such as target audience, language and genre and in some cases provide substance to aid personal choice, research or criticism.

Predicting Strategies

- Look at any artwork or design on the front cover or page. Does this suggest a particular genre e.g. informative, scientific, horror, romantic, comedy?
- Who is this text aimed at? Look at the language, font, layout, colours.
- Encourage the pupils to make predictions about what they think the text will be about.

Clarifying

As students read it is important to remind them to note (mentally or in a physical sense) any words and phrases that are unclear to them. The process of identifying unfamiliar vocabulary and clarifying it is vital to building confidence, enhancing reading performance and improving the complexity and sophistication of written work.

Clarifying Strategies

- Encourage pupils to highlight or note any new or unfamiliar vocabulary, challenge them about the meaning of specific words and phrases.
- Pupils can clarify vocabulary by using a number of strategies:
 - Checking the dictionary or other resources for clarification
 - Asking a friend or classmate
 - Looking at the context of the word or phrase for clues
 - Looking for familiar root words, prefixes and suffixes
 - Asking the teacher or classroom assistant
- Pupils should keep a record of words and phrases that they have clarified to support future Literacy work.

Questioning

Questioning is also a key part of reading a text actively as opposed to more passive approaches as it requires dynamic interaction with a text that reading alone may not provide. Internally questioning texts in this way is part of a meta-cognitive process that allows us to identify and explore important aspects of written material, aspects such as: factual and statistical information; themes and central concerns; characters and their motivations; moral and social issues and many more. Actively questioning also increases pupil engagement and can aid recall and retention of information.

Questioning Strategies

- Pupils should take time after reading a text to ask themselves questions to check their comprehension of the text. These questions can be answered by the pupil themselves, by a peer or by the teacher depending on the class set-up and task.
- Pupils should be encouraged to use open questions to fully explore the key ideas and specific details of the text e.g. Why did this event happen? How did the character behave? What is the significance of this act? Why are these statistics important?
- Questioning does not have to be done by the pupil alone. Teacher- led questioning that adheres to AIFL guidelines and generally accepted best practice is by its very definition active and encourages pupil engagement.

Summarising

Summarising is a skill that young people use in many different contexts within their school experience. The ability to pick out the key information from a text and condense it into a brief and succinct account is a requirement in many subjects and classes and it is often of use in the world of work. Summarising can be used to demonstrate understanding of a text and can also help young people to gain confidence in using their judgement to gauge the importance of different parts within a particular text.

Summarising Strategies

- After reading pupils should ask themselves:
 - What are the main ideas in this text?
 - What are the crucial details required to support these ideas?
 - Which details are irrelevant or unnecessary?
- Pupils should make brief notes or use bullet points to support summarising.
- When writing or verbally presenting a summary, pupils should be encouraged to use simple, clear language and structure. They should also use their own words as far as possible.

Reading Cool –Down

After reading, pupils should think about the following questions:

- How well did I read?
- What did I enjoy or find straightforward?
- What did I find more difficult?
- Which words or phrases should I remember for next time?

Active Literacy – Listening

Active Listening Warm-up

Teachers can prepare for Active Listening by:

- Ensuring that the environment is quiet, calm and orderly.
- Ensuring that listening materials are of a good quality and clearly audible.
- Ensuring that pupils are in a relaxed and receptive frame of mind – perhaps by using a focussing or relaxation exercise.
- Contextualising the materials to be used and providing supportive materials such as vocabulary sheets or word banks as required.

Engaging

Really actively listening to others is perhaps one of the most useful tools for positive interaction with others and as such there must be a distinction made between merely hearing and engaging in true listening. It is important for pupils to recognise that their emotional state and preconceptions can have a real impact on their ability to listen effectively and they should practice getting into the right mind set for listening. Listening exercises can take the form of formal assessments e.g. the Listening paper in Modern Languages, or they can take place more informally as part of co-operative methodologies, group work or presentations.

Engaging Strategies

- Pupils should be encouraged to identify barriers to engagement e.g. external noise, discomfort, emotional state and attempt to address them either personally or by asking the teacher.
- Pupils should stop all non-relevant activities and attempt to avoid distractions and signs of disengagement e.g. fidgeting, talking.
- Pupils should attempt to display context-dependent verbal and non-verbal signs of listening such as eye contact or attention; physical gestures to signal agreement or verbal responses as appropriate.

Clarifying

As with reading exercises, clarification of texts or interactions that are listened to is vital for understanding and further study. As students listen it is important to remind them to note (mentally or in a physical sense) any words and phrases that are unclear to them. This may not occur in the formal manner that is advocated for reading tasks, however the rationale is the same. Pupils absorb vocabulary from spoken interactions frequently and adeptly and this should be capitalised upon to maximise success in Literacy.

Clarifying Strategies

- Encourage pupils to highlight verbally or note any new or unfamiliar vocabulary, challenge them about the meaning of specific words and phrases.
- Pupils can clarify vocabulary by using a number of strategies:
 - Checking the dictionary or other resources for clarification
 - Asking a friend or classmate
 - Looking at the context of the word or phrase for clues
 - Looking for familiar root words, prefixes and suffixes
 - Asking the teacher or classroom assistant
- Pupils should keep a record of words and phrases that they have clarified to support future Literacy work.

Questioning

As listening is a receptive and responsive skill, questioning is also a key part of actively listening to a text. The meta-cognitive processes involved in questioning the key aspects of read texts are also evident when we listen and this creates many of the same benefits in terms of engagement, processing and retention.

Questioning Strategies

- Pupils should take time during and after listening to ask themselves questions to check their comprehension. These questions can be answered by the pupil themselves, by a peer or by the teacher depending on the class set-up and task.
- Pupils should be encouraged to use open questions to fully explore the key ideas and specific details of the text e.g. Why did this event happen? How did the character behave? What is the significance of this act? Why are these statistics important?
- Questioning does not have to be done by the pupil alone. Teacher- led questioning that adheres to AIFL guidelines and generally accepted best practice is by its very definition active and encourages pupil engagement whether is text is for reading or listening.

Responding

As listening exercises occur most often as a result of interactions between people, the ways in which we respond to what we hear are very important. Pupils should consider factors such as tone, register, topic and reference to the subject matter of the listening example.

Responding Strategies

- Pupils should consider what has gone before in the dialogue or the listening example before responding. This is a key factor in responding appropriately to a listening text. Pupils can demonstrate this explicitly e.g. "I agree with what John said about"... or implicitly by referencing key ideas mentioned.
- Pupils may also respond by asking questions of the text or the speaker to clarify their understanding.

- It is important that pupil use an appropriate tone and register to respond to a speaker or text. Responses should mirror the level of formality or informality: they should be polite and any challenges or questions should be made in a non-aggressive, supportive manner.

Listening Cool –Down

After listening, pupils should think about the following questions:

- How well did I listen?
- What did I enjoy or find straightforward?
- What did I find more difficult?
- How could I improve my performance in listening and responding to listening tasks?

Active Literacy – Talking

Active Talking Warm-up

Teachers can prepare for talking activities by:

- Displaying clear success criteria for the talking task.
- Using success criteria that cover Literacy outcomes as well as subject specific material.
- Using exemplars to aid pupil understanding of expectations.
- Encouraging and supporting the use of Active Literacy Talking strategies.
- Reinforcing the requirement for non-verbal signals as well as verbal cues.

Planning

Rigorous and careful planning is vital to successful talking in any context – more than any other strand, failure to adequately prepare for talk tasks can lead to acute anxiety and fear for some pupils. Pupil planning should be strongly linked to subject- specific success criteria and in all subject areas there should be Literacy targets included in the expectations as well as the assessable areas of focus for that particular subject.

Planning Strategies

- Pupils should identify the purpose of their talking task. Why are they talking?
- Pupils should identify the target audience for their piece. Who will be listening to this? The teacher? Peers? Younger children? A Dragon's Den style panel?
- It is then advisable for young people to use mind-mapping strategies such as spider diagrams, bullet pointed lists or flow charts to specifically address the success criteria for the task. They may also wish to prepare supporting materials such as a PowerPoint presentation or cue cards.

Structuring

No matter what the talking task; a clear, cohesive and logical structure is an essential for success. This area will be supported with materials specifically designed for each subject area and talking task, but will also focus on structural and rhetorical techniques for increasing the impact of what we say.

Structuring Strategies

- Refer to subject specific talking frames and support materials for targeted assistance on talking for particular purposes.
- Pupils should focus on organising their ideas into a clear and logical structure to increase the clarity and cohesiveness of their talk.

- Pupils should also attempt to increase the complexity and impact of their use of language by using rhetorical techniques such as repetition for effect, rhetorical questions and climactic structure.

Delivering

The ability to talk and communicate meaning effectively is perhaps one of the most readily transferrable skills that we would hope to equip pupils with for the “real world”. Teachers can support talking tasks in the class by allowing pupils adequate time to prepare to talk, creating a respectful and calm atmosphere and minimising the potential for disruption. Talking tasks take place in a variety of formal and informal contexts across all subjects in the school and can be cooperative group tasks, solo talks, philosophical enquiry or any other relevant context for talking. Literacy outcomes assess *how* pupils *deliver* a talk task as well as the content of the activity.

- Pupils should focus on developing their use of tone, volume and pace to engage the attention of their audience. These factors should be varied and deliberately used to enhance expression for effect and clarity.
- Pupils should show that they are aware of their audience by making eye contact and using open body language where possible.
- Pupils should attempt to use non-verbal cues such as facial expressions and hand gestures to increase the impact of what they are saying and to reinforce points that they are making.

Responding

Talk tasks are most often part of group or class interaction and therefore pupils should be prepared to respond to the questions or points of others either during or after they have spoken. Examples would include responding to topic questions after completing a solo talk or presentation, or responding to a contradictory point made in Philosophical enquiry or class discussion. Talking and listening exist in a continuum so the approach to responding is largely the same over both areas.

Responding Strategies

- Pupils should consider what has gone before in the dialogue or the listening example before responding. This is a key factor in responding appropriately. Pupils can demonstrate this explicitly e.g. “I agree with what John said about”... or implicitly by referencing key ideas mentioned.
- Pupils may also respond by asking questions of the text or the speaker to clarify their understanding.
- It is important that pupils use an appropriate tone and register to respond to a speaker or text. Responses should mirror the level of formality or informality: they should be polite and any challenges or questions should be made in a non-aggressive, supportive manner.

Active Talking Cool –Down

After talking, pupils should think about the following questions:

- How well did I talk?
- What did I enjoy or find straightforward?
- What did I find more difficult?
- How could I improve my performance by responding to teacher and peer feedback?

Active Literacy – Writing

Active Writing Warm-up

Teachers can prepare for Active Writing by:

- Displaying clear success criteria for the writing task.
- Using success criteria that cover Literacy outcomes as well as subject specific material.
- Using exemplar pieces to aid pupil understanding of expectations.
- Encouraging and supporting the use of Active Literacy Writing strategies.

Planning

Rigorous and careful planning is vital to consistently successful writing. Pupils are asked to complete written tasks in all areas of the school and each task, in each subject area has its own specific success criteria. Pupil planning should be strongly linked to these criteria and in all subject areas there should be Literacy targets included in the expectations as well as the subject specific areas of focus.

Planning Strategies

- Pupils should identify the purpose of their writing piece. Why are they writing it?
- Pupils should identify the target audience for their piece. Who will be reading this? The teacher or exam board? Peers? Younger children?
- It is then advisable for young people to use mind-mapping strategies such as spider diagrams, bullet pointed lists or flow charts to specifically address the success criteria for the task.

Structuring

No matter what the writing task; a clear, cohesive and logical structure is an essential element for success. This area will be supported with materials specifically designed for each subject area and writing task, but will also focus on paragraphing, punctuation and sentence structure (Teachers should refer to the Lornshill Literacy Code to ensure that pupils are familiar with any Literacy feedback given.)

Structuring Strategies

- Refer to subject specific writing frames and support materials for targeted assistance on writing for particular purposes.
- Pupils should focus on ensuring that work is paragraphed correctly and punctuated to aid reader understanding and clarify meaning. This should build on work done as part of Big Writing in English.
- Pupils should also attempt to increase the complexity of their use of punctuation over time e.g. move away from short, simple sentences to more sophisticated sentence structure.

Editing

A Curriculum for Excellence places strong emphasis on pupils identifying their own areas for improvement and evaluating their own work, so the process of reviewing and editing writing pieces is very important in terms of pupil self-knowledge and target setting for future pieces within a culture of continuous development. Editing can be the process of self-checking before a piece is handed in or can be a response to peer or teacher feedback.

Editing Strategies

- Pupils should always be encouraged to check their work before handing it in. Simple errors in spelling, punctuation, clarity and sentence structure can often be avoided with rigorous reviewing.
- Teachers should use formative feedback for writing that relates back to the success criteria that the pupils have planned for. Pupils should engage with this feedback and attempt to demonstrate (either in a redrafted piece or in subsequent work) that this area for concern has been addressed.
- Pupils should have the opportunity to share their work with others for formal or informal peer assessment and feedback.

Up-Levelling

“Up-levelling” is the term used for pupil-led improvement measures as part of the Big Writing strategy. This methodology is used in many of our feeder primaries and in schools across Scotland to increase success in writing. Pupils will be aware of the meaning of the term and will have experience “up-levelling” writing pieces in English. In basic terms pupils should look back at work that they have completed and attempt to improve it by focussing on key areas:

Up-Levelling Strategies

- Pupils should attempt to use more varied and challenging **vocabulary**. This can be subject specific and can be supported by word banks and writing frames.
- Pupils should attempt to develop their use of **connective** words to increase the complexity and sophistication of their sentence structure.
- There should be a focus on starting sentences in more interesting and effective ways using a range of **openers**.
- Pupils should develop their use of **punctuation** to create effects and increase the clarity and impact of their writing.

Writing Cool –Down

After writing, pupils should think about the following questions:

- How well did I write today?
- What did I enjoy or find straightforward?
- What did I find more difficult?
- How could I improve my writing performance using teacher and peer feedback?