



Cookstown High School

Literacy Policy

Reviewed: November 2024

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POLICY OVERVIEW

DETAILS

TITLE	Literacy Policy
TARGET AUDIENCE	Governors', Staff, Parents/Carers
REVIEW DATE	September 2024
REVIEW LEAD	Mr L Forbes
POLICY DEVELOPED BY	Senior Leadership Team
POLICY RATIFIED BY THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS ON:	November 2024
EFFECTIVE FROM:	November 2024
REVIEW FREQUENCY:	Every 3 years
REVIEW DATE:	November 2027
PRINCIPAL	Miss G J Evans
CHAIR OF BOARD OF GOVERNORS	Mrs L Dripps

RECORD OF POLICY AMENDMENTS

The following table outlines any significant changes/amendments made to this procedure since it was ratified by the Board of Governors on:

DATE OF REVIEW OR AMENDMENT	SUMMARY OF CHANGED / AMENDMENTS TO PROCEDURE	AMENDED BY

Mission Statement

Our mission at Cookstown High School, in respect of Literacy is:

“To enable and enrich the development of life-long literacy skills in the young people we teach, by providing them with opportunities and support that ensures they succeed whilst here at Cookstown High School, and as they transition to the wider world of further education and the workplace”.

Rationale

The development of an effective Literacy skillset (that is, speaking, listening, reading and writing) is fundamental to the achievement of a rich and fulfilling life. We use these skills every day in order to communicate with, and make sense of, the world around us. As such, the better we are at these skills the more successful we can expect to be in life. Improving literacy and learning can have an impact on students’ self-esteem, motivation, behaviour and attainment. It allows them to learn independently and is empowering.

At Cookstown High School we recognise that at the heart of improving literacy skills is the opportunity to practise them. The school curriculum is underpinned by developing students’ abilities to speak, listen, read and write for a wide range of purposes, including using language to learn, communicate, think, explore and organise. Helping students to express themselves clearly, through development of vocabulary, both orally and in writing, enhances and enriches teaching and learning in all subjects and prepares the student for life after school.

At Cookstown High School we believe all teachers are teachers of literacy. As such, the staff of Cookstown High School are committed to developing literacy skills in all of our pupils, in the belief that it will support their learning and raise standards across the curriculum.

“Acquiring literacy is an empowering process, enabling millions to enjoy access to knowledge and information which broadens horizons, increases opportunities and creates alternatives for building a better life”.

Kofi Annan (Seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations)

Summary

Literacy has been identified as a key skill that is integral to raising achievement across the curriculum as well as to equipping young people for the workplace. Literacy supports learning in a number of ways, providing students with the vocabulary and the organisational control that is needed to progress across all subjects. (see 2013 Ofsted report ‘Improved Literacy In Secondary Schools: a shared responsibility’).

This Literacy policy outlines how literacy is to be developed at Cookstown High School with the aim of promoting a shared understanding of how to enable students to transfer their literacy skills between different subjects.

Aims of the School Literacy Agenda

- Support students’ learning in all subjects by supporting teachers to be clear about the ways in which their work with students contributes to the development of students’ literacy skills.
- Increase students’ standards of achievement in literacy and across the curriculum.

- Promote knowledge and understanding of the students' standards of achievement and assessment in literacy across the curriculum, and the identification of any areas of strength and weakness.
- Raise students' own expectations of achievement, thus raising standards and aspirations.
- Develop a shared understanding, between all staff, of the role of language in students' learning and how work in different subjects can contribute to and benefit from the development of their ability to communicate effectively both in school and in preparation for life.
- Recognise that language is central to students' sense of identity, belonging and growth.
- Develop students' confidence and ability to express themselves.
- Support the staff team to implement effective literacy development and wider achievement across the school.

Roles and Responsibilities within the School's Literacy Agenda

Senior Managers

Lead by example and give a high profile to literacy and the Literacy vision;

English Department

Will provide pupils with knowledge, skills, understanding and opportunities to read, write and speak and listen effectively;

Teachers Across the Curriculum

Contribute to pupils' development of language, since speaking, listening, writing and reading are, to varying degrees, integral to all lessons and achievement in all subject areas;

Literacy Co-Ordinator

To develop and promote Literacy across the school; to identify and support children who have Literacy difficulties; to support departments in the implementation of strategies and encourage departments to learn from each other's practice by sharing ideas.

Learning Support Staff

Will provide additional scaffolding for students with identified literacy weaknesses.

Parents

Encourage their children to use the range of strategies they have learnt to improve their levels of literacy;

Pupils

Take increasing responsibility for recognising their own literacy needs and making improvements;

Defining Literacy

Literacy involves the ability to read and write; however, it also involves recognising, reproducing and manipulating the conventions of a range of texts as well as developing speaking skills. There are also new forms of literacy which relate to the development of digital technology and the use of multimedia which also require consideration.

The Department for Education has suggested a range of ways in which literacy should be encouraged within the curriculum including the development of:

Speaking and Listening Skills

Speaking encourages students to organise and structure ideas, while active listening is key to picking out important information. These skills could be further enhanced by tasks which integrate speaking and listening skills with reading and writing tasks as this can help to reinforce both skill sets.

Reading Skills

This should include being able to interpret a range of different text types as well as understanding how style and format can affect how different meanings are communicated. We would particularly like to encourage reading for pleasure as well as for information.

Writing Skills

In conjunction with grammar, punctuation and spelling, students should also learn about the craft and different styles of writing for different purposes. The idea of **'text type'** is central to this, whereby a 'text' is a piece of writing, and the 'type' of text relates to its purpose or the reason why it is being written.

These skills should be reinforced both within specific subject areas as well as across the curriculum.

An Integrated Approach to Literacy Across Cookstown High School

Firstly, it is fundamental to reinforce to all teachers that they are a teacher of literacy and to acknowledge how different subjects can contribute to the development of literacy skills.

A whole school approach will also require a consistent approach to literacy, whilst enabling specific subjects to develop their own resources as appropriate.

Whole school PRSD/CPD opportunities will ensure that teachers are able to facilitate the development of literacy skills within subjects. In particular, it should be made apparent how literacy can be incorporated into medium term planning and schemes of learning. The Literacy Co-Ordinator will support departments with different strategies which can be drawn upon to promote different aspects of literacy within the classroom. He/she will be able to work with individual staff and/ or departments to help to incorporate different aspects of literacy into their planning more effectively.

Developing Literacy within Cookstown High School

Subject Specific Vocabulary

The use of **subject specific vocabulary** should be promoted across all departments and careful consideration needs to be given to which terminology is introduced and when. It is expected that all students should be able to use specialist vocabulary appropriately, fluently and with confidence. The use of glossaries and display within the department will ensure that this permeates the learning environment.

Success Criteria for Literacy

Teachers should make the success criteria for literacy clear in pieces of written or discussion-based work.

Literacy Skills

When planning for literacy, teachers should promote the following three skills, as appropriate to their schemes of learning:

- 1) **Learning through Speaking and Listening:** this includes developing strategies to teach pupils how to participate orally in groups and in the whole class, including: using talk to develop and clarify ideas; using active listening skills to identify the main points to arise from discussion; listening for a specific purpose; discussion to promote debate and the evaluation of ideas. Students should be able to use language precisely and coherently in order to respond to and build on their ideas constructively.

- 2) **Reading and Learning from text:** to enable students to use their reading skills to help them to learn and to develop increasing confidence and competence in reading different types of texts. In particular, they should be able to interpret the meaning behind these texts and the different ways in which this can be communicated through language. Students should be able to use strategies which enable them to: read with greater understanding; locate and use information; follow a process or argument; summarise; synthesise and adapt what they learn from their reading.

- 3) **Learning through writing:** students should be able to use writing to express their ideas and thoughts. This in turn requires an understanding of how to organise their writing so that they can write in a widening variety of forms for different purposes e.g. to interpret, evaluate, explain, analyse and explore Subjects that require students to complete extended writing tasks should provide them with a **structure** which will enable them to better organise their writing.
 - **Topic sentences** are an effective way to do this and should be used as a **cross-curricular tool** to help organise extended pieces of writing.
 - Mnemonics such as **PEE/PEEL and TEAL** are also useful, providing students with a way of remembering how to develop their points fully
 - Students should also be clear about the tone, style, conventions, audience and purpose which underpin their work.

- 4) **Reading and Speaking:** Ensuring that links are drawn between speaking, reading and writing skills is important because reading and speaking can provide students with a clear model for their written work.

Each Department/Teacher's Role in Developing Literacy

Speaking and Listening

All staff will:

- Lead by example, ensuring Standard English is used at all times and is expected in response.
- Challenge students when slang or inappropriate colloquialisms are used. Encourage the correct use of English in the classroom environment.
- Encourage students to correct their own speech when errors are drawn attention to.
- Create opportunities for talk in a range of contexts and forms: whole class discussion, small group discussion, paired discussion, individual contribution, role play etc.

We begin with an expectation that students should respond in full sentences and in Standard English; teachers are expected to model this, to challenge poor oracy, and to provide students with the language necessary for a high-level response.

We will teach pupils to use language precisely and coherently. They should be able to listen to others, and to respond and build on their ideas and views constructively.

We will develop strategies to teach pupils how to participate orally in groups and in the whole class, including: using talk to develop and clarify ideas; identifying the main points to arise from a discussion; listening for a specific purpose; discussion and evaluation.

Reading

All staff will:

- Provide opportunities for reading as a class, in groups and individually. Encourage reading aloud if appropriate to task.
- Encourage further reading around the subject.
- Set reading and research tasks as part of class work and/or homework focused on books/newspapers/online articles etc.
- Promote skimming and scanning skills in lessons.
- Develop students' ability to locate and retrieve information; to select and interpret information; to collate supporting details within a text; to collate material from a variety of texts, including different types of text.
- Take every opportunity to promote the enjoyment of reading

We aim to give pupils a level of literacy that will enable them to cope with the increasing demands of subjects in terms of specific skills, knowledge and understanding. This applies particularly in the area of reading (including from the screen), as texts become more demanding.

We will teach pupils strategies to help them to: read with greater understanding; locate and use information; follow a process or argument; summarise; synthesise and adapt what they learn from their reading. This must be planned within the scope of reading for enjoyment and tasks should engage pupils with the world beyond the classroom.

Teachers should clarify pupils' purpose for reading. They should relate the reading to pupils' lives; pre-teach concepts that might inhibit understanding; and activate or build background.

Teachers must also develop pupils' toolbox of comprehension strategies such as making connections, asking questions and forecasting predictions. It could also involve previewing the text or questions related to the text so that it focuses reading. Teachers should pre-teach vocabulary through games, along with drama, to explore and bring new language alive.

Teachers should vary the way the text is read. This could involve silent reading, bringing a text alive by reading to pupils, oral reading by pupils, audio recordings or guided reading. Teachers should do everything to avoid reading becoming a dull and slow business – and this isn't achieved by just reading extracts, but on teacher approaches that are imaginative, innovative and lively.

Writing

All staff will:

- Model high standards of presentation. All work to be presented with date and title.
- Model all pieces of writing – never assume that the student will know what structure or tone to employ. Use writing frames etc. to aid extended writing for those who need them.
- Follow specific structures such as PEE/L, PAFT, etc.
- Promote punctuation, spelling and grammar within any writing task.

- Take every opportunity to expand vocabulary and range of expression. Be explicit about what vocabulary or key words you expect to find in any given piece of writing. The use of vocabulary 'starters' is particularly useful here.
- Insist on the use of full sentences within writing tasks.
- Take opportunities for peer literacy marking, using the literacy marking key. Focus on one or two aspects per opportunity e.g. are all key words spelled correctly?

It is important that we provide for co-ordination across subjects to recognise and reinforce pupils' language skills, through:

- Making connections between pupils' reading and writing, so that pupils have clear models for their writing;
- Using the modelling process to make explicit to pupils *how* to write;
- Being clear about audience and purpose;
- Providing opportunities for a range of writing including sustained writing. It is important that we provide for co-ordination across subjects to recognise and reinforce pupils' language skills, through:
- Making connections between pupils' reading and writing, so that pupils have clear models for their writing;
- Using the modelling process to make explicit to pupils *how* to write;
- Being clear about audience and purpose;
- Providing opportunities for a range of writing including sustained writing.

Each department will:

Teach pupils how to write in ways that are special to that department's subject needs.

The text types are:

- *information;*
- *recount;*
- *explanation;*
- *instruction;*
- *persuasion;*
- *discursive writing;*
- *analysis;*
- *evaluation;*
- *formal essay.*

Spelling Strategies

Each department will:

- *identify and display key vocabulary;*
- *revise key vocabulary;*
- *teach agreed learning strategies which will help pupils to learn subject spelling lists;*
- *concentrate on the marking of high-frequency and key subject words taking into account the differing abilities of pupils.*
- *test or revise high frequency words regularly.*

Creating a Community

Of Readers at CHS

Wider reading is essential to developing an awareness of how tone, style, conventions, audience and structure can be used to communicate meaning within different texts.

The English department aims to develop these skills amongst key stage three students through their units of work and stand-alone Library periods, which encourages students to read and analyse books/text types from different 'genres' throughout the year.

Additionally, two form times per month will be devoted to pupils reading for pleasure.

Subject areas should also provide students (particularly those in the sixth form) with a 'wider' **reading list**. This has the dual benefit of encouraging students to further engage with the subject, whilst also encouraging them to draw meaning from a range of different text types. Reading lists produced by departments should aim to draw on a range of sources including journals, magazines, newspapers, novels, non-fiction books, textbooks, biographies, websites, blogs, twitter feeds etc. It is anticipated that these books will be made available in the school library.

Of Writers at CHS

It should be noted that writing will also be promoted within the wider context of the school through the creative writing club.

The English Department also from time-to-time participates in external writing competitions and adopts these into our curricular timeline throughout the year.

Of Effective Orators at CHS

Two form times per month will be devoted to developing pupil oracy. Pupils will discuss current issues as a class from a range of stimulus material.

The English Department has built in the opportunity for pupils to complete speaking and listening tasks for pupils in each year of study. We also convene the public speaking competition as part of the Shared Education Project. Other subject areas are also providing opportunities for speaking and listening tasks where appropriate.

It should be noted that oracy will also be promoted within the wider context of the school through the Debating Society and entry in the Bar Mock Trials.

Assessment of and Marking for Literacy

All staff will:

- Follow the Cookstown High School literacy marking code when assessing students' work and display the marking key/poster in their classroom.
- Underline mistakes and place appropriate symbols in the margin. If no margin available, symbols can be placed next to the error. It is not policy to indicate every single mistake in students' work especially when marking work of students who have low levels of literacy in all areas of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Specific areas may be targeted in different assessments. Ensure that the student knows which particular literacy focus will be assessed beforehand e.g. The particular focus for this piece of writing will be the correct spelling of all key words and the correct use of paragraphs.

- Take opportunities to praise, either verbally or through marking, the effective and accurate use of literacy skills.
- Utilise the self/peer marking of literacy with students marking their own or a partner's work.

There is an expectation that all teachers within the school will provide feedback on general literacy skills including spelling, punctuation and grammar using the Literacy Marking Code as disseminated each year (Appendix 1). Expectations regarding marking for literacy are reinforced by adhering to the 'marking and assessment policy'.

Feedback and marking should relate to speaking and listening, reading and writing across the curriculum, as appropriate. Within our context, high standards of verbal and written articulacy should be encouraged at all times.

For each class, every opportunity should be taken to ensure that:

- Subject specific technical terms are used correctly and spelled accurately.
- vocabulary tests on terminology are given as appropriate.
- the criteria for written and discussion-based work in terms of tone, style, conventions, audience and structure are shared and discussed. This will ensure that ideas are clearly structured and easy for the reader to follow, whether it be imaginative prose, mathematical symbols, notes or any other form, there is a shape (e.g. a logical sequence) that gives it coherence.
- students can use various means of conveying information; for example, speeches, prose, narratives, graphs, maps, statistics, brief notes, diagrams.
- students draw upon and analyse a range of different texts to inform their ideas.
- written errors are pointed out when work is checked.

Monitoring Literacy Across the School

Departments will monitor the implementation of the marking for literacy policy via observations, departmental meetings and other quality assurance.

Each department will be issued with a checklist of methods that they could draw upon to promote literacy. This can be used to assess current schemes of learning and identify further opportunities for incorporating the teaching of literacy into these (Appendix 2).

We will make use of available data to assess the standards of pupils' literacy. Senior managers, the Head of English, the SENCo and the literacy coordinator, will decide how to monitor progress in the school.

Possible approaches are:

- sampling work – both pupils' work and departmental schemes;
- observation – pupil pursuit and literacy teaching;
- meetings; pupil interviews;
- scrutiny of development plans;
- encouraging departments to share good practice by exhibiting or exemplifying pupils' work.



Marking Code

CL - A missing Capital Letter.

FS - A Full Stop is required

 - Not a sentence

// - A new paragraph is required.

SP - A spelling mistake

P - A Punctuation error.

Gr - A Grammatical error.

? - unclear/doesn't make sense



Appendix 2

Checklist of Ways to Promote Literacy within School

Speaking

What are our aims for our pupils? To be able to...

- express and clarify ideas and explain their thinking
- use varied and specialised vocabulary
- speak for a range of purposes: narration, analysis, explanation etc.
- adapt speech for paired and group discussions and larger audiences with confidence

Useful Strategies

- 'Think, pair, share' and 'no-hands-up'
- Vocabulary lists and glossaries
- Vocabulary cards to prompt discussion
- 'Mastermind' and 'Ask the Expert'
- 'Say it in reverse' – good for checking understanding of processes
- 'Are you questioning my question?'- interrogating a statement
- 'Guess my tone' – identifying intention from speech
- Pupil presentations – posters or power point

Listening

What are our aims for our pupils? To be able to...

- Listen for comprehension
- Pick out key words and technical terms
- Identify the register of language used and the main points being made
- Recognise cues to speak, and respond sensitively and appropriately

Useful Strategies

- 'Pay attention, Pause, Paraphrase' and 'Say it Once'
- Video clips/podcasts used with Qs or What/How/Why grids
- Discrete thumbs up on the table – have they understood?
- Pupils taking on the role of chair or scribe
- Pupils creating questions during listening
- Numbered turn-taking – to ensure participation

Reading

What are our aims for our pupils? To be able to...

- Read fluently, accurately and with understanding
- Use techniques such as skimming, scanning, and text-marking to aid their approach to a text
- Locate, select and synthesize information from a wide range of sources including print, media and ICT
- Read critically, with an awareness of style, register and authority

Useful Strategies

- Directed Activities Related to Text – DARTS
- Mind maps, highlighting;
- Establishing key vocabulary, especially with EAL pupils
- Illustrating from a text- using description to create diagrams/images
- Sharing reading experiences

- Providing extension reading lists

Writing

What are our aims for our pupils? To be able to...

- Communicate meaning with an effective style, structuring sentences grammatically and whole texts coherently
- Present writing clearly, using correct spelling, accurate punctuation and legible handwriting
- Command a wide-ranging and technical vocabulary
- Write in a widening variety of forms for different purposes and audiences e.g. to interpret, evaluate, explain, analyse and explore
- Use word-processing, presentation and other ICT conventions correctly

Useful Strategies

- Topic sentences
- PEE/PEEL, and writing frames
- Free writing
- Displays listing 'Pivot words' and connectives
- Consistent marking for SPAG