

# Planning across the literacy strands

## Integrating the 12 strands to support literacy learning

The literacy learning objectives in the renewed Framework are organised into 12 strands, grouped under four main headings: speaking, listening, reading and writing, to reflect the requirements of the programmes of study for English in the National Curriculum.

Skills in speaking and listening include the ability to speak effectively for different audiences; to listen, understand and respond appropriately to others; and to participate effectively in group discussion. Skills in reading and writing include the ability to read fluently a range of literary and non-fiction texts and reflect critically on what is read; and the ability to write fluently for a range of purposes and audiences, including critical analysis of their own and others' writing. (National Curriculum 2000)

While it is important to clarify the components of these four aspects of language to support teachers in recognising the distinctive progression in each strand, it is also vitally important for teachers to bring the strands together into a coherent whole within their teaching to make literacy learning meaningful and purposeful and to enable children to grow as confident users of language in all four of its aspects. This brief document is intended to support teachers as they consider planning for teaching literacy as a whole, both within dedicated literacy teaching time and across the curriculum.

As teachers plan their literacy teaching, they need to start from an understanding of where the children are in their current development and performance in the aspects to be addressed, and design their teaching to meet the intended learning outcomes. In the renewed Framework, we are suggesting that teachers organise their literacy teaching into units of learning to give coherence and purpose to learning and teaching and then to consider the pedagogy needed to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

Alongside the planning of holistic literacy teaching units, teachers need to plan for specific elements of speaking, listening, reading and writing and the continuous work in these four aspects which underpin all units. Within reading strands for example, teachers need to be aware of children's performance and progress in the two dimensions of reading identified in the new conceptual framework (<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/rosereview/finalreport/>) so that they can monitor progress and amend their teaching to address the different needs of children in the four quadrants described in Figure 3 of the Independent review of the teaching of early reading (the Rose Report) <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/rosereview/finalreport/>.

Careful assessment of, and for, learning will underpin the detailed planning necessary to secure the appropriate learning for all children.

## Integrating speaking and listening into the teaching of reading and writing

Speaking and listening, as well as being important skills in their own right, underpin reading and writing development. The four aspects of communication are interdependent.

Most children try out ideas in talk long before they are able to try to pin them down in writing. Reading aloud helps children to become familiar with the cadences and uses of English. For many children expressing ideas orally is easier than in writing, where it is more complicated to orchestrate all the necessary skills. The discipline of writing, which involves precision and clear articulation of meaning for a distant reader, aids clarity in oral communication, too. Reading gives children models of language, and discussion of texts helps them to

take such language into their own repertoire. So speaking and listening, reading and writing are not only interdependent, but also mutually enhancing.

(Jim Rose, *Independent review of the teaching of early reading*)  
([http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/literacy/818497/pns\\_speaklisten062403hbk.pdf](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/literacy/818497/pns_speaklisten062403hbk.pdf))

In early reading, the Rose Report reinforces the links between speaking and listening, reading and writing.

Phonic work should be set within a broad and rich language curriculum that takes full account of developing the four interdependent strands of language: speaking, listening, reading and writing and enlarging children's stock of words.

(Rose Report p. 70, March 2006)

Phonological skills (particularly phoneme awareness) underpin the development of word-decoding skills, especially phonics. However, wider language skills beyond phonology are required to understand the meanings of words and sentences, to integrate these meanings across texts and to make inferences that go beyond the printed words. These wider language skills include vocabulary knowledge, grammatical skills and pragmatic abilities.

The idea that reading comprehension depends on oral language skill is captured in the new conceptual framework outlined in the Rose Report – the 'simple view of reading'. According to this model, reading comprehension is the product of decoding and listening comprehension skill. Decoding is vital to reading comprehension: if children cannot decode, then they will quite obviously be unable to extract meaning from the written word. However, once words are decoded, a child must activate his or her oral language comprehension to understand what a writer conveys. It is well recognised that children vary in the ease with which they can decode; they also vary in their listening comprehension and hence in their reading comprehension. This is particularly salient both for children with English as an additional language (EAL) and for monolingual children whose experience of spoken language has been limited. From an educational perspective what this means is that teachers must foster the development of oral language skills in order to safeguard children's reading comprehension.

It is essential that, as teachers plan for reading and writing, they include the related skills in speaking and listening. Such planning must also address the needs of all children in the class or setting.

## **Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Learning Difficulties/Disabilities**

Learning objectives should be chosen which are related to the aspect on which the whole class is working. If with appropriate access strategies and support a child can not work towards the same learning objective as the rest of the class, teachers may want to track back to an earlier objective. The structure and the new electronic format of the renewed Framework support multi-level curriculum planning, and allow teachers to easily track back through a progression strand to locate earlier learning objectives. It also makes direct links to a wealth of other useful materials which will help to plan teaching and children's learning.

Further guidance and principles on tracking back can be found in Including all children in the literacy hour and daily mathematics lesson: management guide (Ref: 0465-2002).

Further useful references for children working significantly below age-related expectations can be found in the QCA/DfES documents Planning, teaching and assessing the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties (QCA/01/736 [www.nc.uk.net/ld](http://www.nc.uk.net/ld)) and the QCA DVD 'Using the P scales '(QCA/05/1589).

Planning for individual children or groups of children based on Assessment for learning will be informed by knowledge of their priorities. For the majority of the time it will be appropriate for children to work on objectives that are similar and related to the whole class. However, at other times you will also have to consider whether the children have other priority needs that are central to their learning, for example a need to concentrate on some key skills.

For further guidance on planning for children with SEN/LDD see the library section, and: Learning and teaching for children with special educational needs in the primary years (Ref: 0302-2004), Teaching the literacy hour and daily mathematics lesson in special settings and Teaching the daily mathematics lesson for children with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties (Ref: 0033-2003)

## **Children who are gifted and talented**

Children who are working well above the overall level of their class or group will benefit from planning that may:

- add breadth (for example enrichment through a broader range of content, tasks and resources)
- increase depth (for example extension through complexity)
- accelerate the pace of learning by tracking forward to later objectives within or across key stages.

The structure and the new electronic format of the Framework for Literacy and Mathematics support multi-level curriculum planning, and allow teachers to easily track forward through a progression strand to locate later learning objectives. It also makes direct links to a wealth of other useful materials which will help to plan teaching and children's learning. For further guidance on planning for gifted and talented children see the library section and [www.nc.uk.net/gt/general/05\\_environment.htm](http://www.nc.uk.net/gt/general/05_environment.htm).

## **Children learning English as an additional language**

Children learning EAL must be supported to access curriculum content while also developing cognitive and academic language within whole-class, group and independent contexts. With the exception of children learning EAL who also have SEN, it is critical to maintain a level of cognitive challenge which is consistent with that of the rest of the class. Children who are /have become conversationally fluent will continue to require explicit attention to the development of the academic language associated with the subject and of specific aspects within the subject. Planning should identify the language demands of the objectives and associated activities and making sure EAL learners know and can use the language demanded by the curriculum content of the unit/lesson then becomes an additional objective. In order to identify the language demands, teachers and practitioners should consider the language children will need to understand in order to access this activity, and the language they will need to be able to produce, either oral or written, in order to demonstrate success in achieving the learning intentions.

For further guidance on planning for children learning EAL see the overview of planning for each year group, the library section and also Learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years: Unit 1 Planning and Assessment for Language and Learning and Unit 2: Creating the Learning Culture, Making it work in the classroom.

## **Planning the teaching units: principles**

- Each unit should cover development under the four main headings of speaking, listening, reading and writing in a coherent and meaningful way.
- Taking account of its timing in the term/year, it should lead learning at a challenging pace towards the end-of-year expectations or beyond.
- It should follow or build upon the teaching sequence, broadly moving from reading, through analysis into writing (although these will not necessarily be strictly segregated as activities – for example, the 'reading phase' of a unit may well involve writing which supports the reading objectives such as note-taking or summarising).
- It should involve development across all or most of the literacy learning strands, including speaking and listening, but not necessarily cover all the objectives in each strand.
- It should fully integrate the appropriate use of ICT, opportunities to develop key aspects of learning, and assessment opportunities. The planning should consider opportunities for literacy learning both within dedicated literacy teaching time and also across the whole curriculum.

- It should involve a wide variety of enjoyable and engaging learning opportunities related to children's experience, building on previous learning and therefore appropriately personalised. It will lead to a meaningful outcome which has a real and clearly understood purpose and audience.
- Each unit should provide enough time for the achievement of the above, without being so protracted as to lead to loss of interest, or preclude coverage over the year of development in all key objectives across the full range of texts. (Usually 3 to 4 weeks per unit provides about the best balance on this, but timing can be flexible, within the constraints of the long term plan.)

### **Basic process**

- Identify the organising theme and all the associated key learning objectives for the unit from your long term plan.
- Decide on an appropriate final learning outcome or outcomes to work towards, bearing in mind that this need not always be a written outcome.
- Map the key reading and writing strand objectives against the three main parts of the teaching sequence (reading, analysis and writing), thus defining the three main teaching phases of the unit. This is the learning journey that leads to the final outcome of the unit.
- Check the progression documents for the main aspect(s) of work being covered, for example narrative, word reading and spelling, and depending on the stage of the year when the unit is to be taught, define clear learning outcomes for each phase of the unit which will support the achievement of the final outcome. Ensure these represent progression from previous learning and will lead at an appropriate pace towards the end-of-year expectation (or beyond where appropriate).
- Add initial thoughts on content for each phase of the unit (texts to be used, main learning activities/opportunities, etc.). Ensure that these provide enjoyable and engaging activity that leads meaningfully and purposefully towards the required outcomes for each phase and that each phase similarly builds towards the outcome for the unit as a whole. Consider how this content can be exploited through the whole curriculum – bringing content from other curriculum areas into the literacy teaching and applying literacy learning in other subjects.
- Look for suitable opportunities in the proposed learning experiences for relevant objectives from speaking and listening strands to be pursued/developed. If necessary, amend the content to accommodate these meaningfully. Adapt or extend the learning outcomes to cover these.
- Incorporate the appropriate use of ICT in a similar way. Ensure that the reading and writing of multi-modal texts is sometimes included in the range of experiences.
- Consider the key aspects of learning appropriate to the children concerned and in a similar way identify the opportunities for these to be developed.
- Consider appropriate assessment opportunities that could be integrated to help you deliver the learning objectives effectively. These opportunities should sometimes include assessment of speaking and listening, for example responses to an interim assessment of children's ability to make an oral summary might shape your plans for supporting the children to prepare a written summary.
- Design an introduction to the unit, considering how it will be related to the children's experience and their previous learning, how the learning objectives will be communicated to them and how they will understand the purpose and relevance of outcome(s).
- Drawing on your repertoire of teaching strategies, select those which will fit the purpose most effectively. For example: pairs, small groups or whole class? Starting with a text, a film clip or a real experience? Structured discussion using jigsawing, or response partners?
- Allowing ample opportunity for meaningful and varied learning experience, add approximate timings for each phase of the unit within the overall time allocated in the medium term plan. Firm up the proposed teaching sequence and its content in the light of all these considerations.
- Identify appropriate ('child speak') learning targets for individuals and/or groups of children to be pursued through phases of the unit and the unit as a whole.

Note: Although the above process is presented as a particular sequence for the sake of clarity, in application it may not be as strictly linear as this suggests.

More detailed guidance on the teaching of different strands of literacy, links to key aspects of learning and embedding literacy learning in social, emotional and behavioural aspects of learning are listed below.

- Speaking, listening, learning: working with children in Key Stages 1 and 2 (Ref: 0626-2003)  
[http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/literacy/818497/pns\\_speaklisten062403hbk.pdf](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/literacy/818497/pns_speaklisten062403hbk.pdf)
- Speaking, listening, learning: working with children with SEN in Key Stages 1 and 2 (Ref: 1187-2005)  
[http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/inclusion/sll\\_sen/pns\\_sen118705sll.pdf](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/inclusion/sll_sen/pns_sen118705sll.pdf)
- Communicating Matters <http://www.communicatingmatters.com/>
- Excellence and enjoyment  
[http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/literacy/63553/pns\\_excell\\_enjoy037703v2.pdf](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/literacy/63553/pns_excell_enjoy037703v2.pdf)
- New EAL materials (Ref: 0013-2006)
- SEAL materials (Ref: 01378-2005)  
[http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/banda/seal/pns\\_seal137805\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/banda/seal/pns_seal137805_guidance.pdf)