

2015 OFSTED and LITERACY: Implications

Pupils' literacy competence underpins judgements in all four areas:

- effectiveness of leadership and management
- quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- personal development, behaviour and welfare
- outcomes for children and learners

A true and wide interpretation of literacy is essential if the school is to achieve well in all of these areas. Literacy must be interpreted as effective communication in reading, writing and speaking and listening.

OFSTED: *"Literacy includes the key skills of reading, writing and oral communication that enable pupils to access different areas of the curriculum".*

These skills, to varying degrees, are the focus of high quality teaching across all subjects on the curriculum in order to achieve positive outcomes for pupils and evidence of strong leadership:

- English GCSE outcomes
- success in all examinations requires exam literacy
- confident, resilient, enquiring pupils who show a desire for learning can only do so where talk, discussion and debate are a frequent part of their learning process
- a community where respect and tolerance expected of positive citizens needs effective communication between both adults and pupils and between pupils themselves- these skills and qualities are first exemplified through interactions in the classroom

OFSTED *"Inspectors will consider the impact of the teaching of literacy and the outcomes across the range of the school's provision."*

Leadership

Literacy can be evidenced in many ways and all staff need to be clear of the opportunities so that the literacy they build into their lessons both supports the English curriculum but also ensures engagement and progress in their own subject area. The school's Literacy Policy should therefore reflect this and should be:

- linked with teaching and learning
- a natural part of all teachers' pedagogy
- evident through observation and discussion with pupils
- evident in the marking of pupils' work

All these are significant **evidence bases** for OFSTED judgements

OFSTED expectations/evidence gathering for judgements linked to literacy

Pupils' Work/Marking

- Ofsted recognises that marking and feedback to pupils, both written and oral, are important aspects of assessment. However, Ofsted does not expect to see any specific frequency, type or volume of marking and feedback; these are for the school to decide ***through its assessment policy. Marking and feedback should be consistent with that policy***, which may cater for different subjects and different age groups of pupils in different ways, in order to be effective and efficient in promoting learning.
- ***If it is necessary for inspectors to identify marking as an area for improvement for a school, they will pay careful attention to the way recommendations are written*** to ensure that these do not drive unnecessary workload for teachers.
- scrutiny of pupils' work, with particular attention to:
pupils' effort and success in completing their work, both in and outside lessons, so that they can progress and enjoy learning across the curriculum

IMPLICATION! Is literacy a part of the school's marking policy and if so is it evident in practice and is it effective for all subjects? Is there evidence of attention to literacy in exercise books across the curriculum

Teaching and Learning and its monitoring

- Ofsted **will** usually expect to see evidence of the *monitoring of teaching and learning*
- Inspectors must spend as much time as possible gathering evidence about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in lessons and other learning activities, to collect a range of evidence about the typicality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school. Inspectors will scrutinise pupils' work, talk to pupils about their work, gauging both their understanding and their engagement in learning, and obtain pupils' perceptions of the typical quality of teaching in a range of subjects.
- Inspectors will evaluate evidence relating to the achievement of specific groups of pupils and individuals, including disadvantaged pupils, the most able pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. They will give specific attention to the quality of learning within mainstream lessons and on-site separate provision and evidence of learning in off-site alternative provision.

IMPLICATION! Is literacy a feature of the school's teaching and learning policy? Does literacy feature as part of the school's lesson observations? Does the school and classroom environment suggest literacy is a focus for the school?

Observing teaching, learning and assessment

Inspectors will visit lessons to gather evidence about teaching, learning and assessment and will consider this first-hand evidence alongside documentary evidence about the quality of teaching and views from leaders, governors, staff, pupils and parents.

Inspectors may engage in:

- joining a class or specific group of pupils as they go from lesson to lesson, to assess their experience of a school day or part of a school day. In this way, the experience, progress and learning of these pupils can be judged within the context of other pupils' experience, such as their behaviour, their attitudes to learning and their access to the curriculum

IMPLICATION! Literacy may be a thread for observation/literacy must support the pupils' access to the curriculum

- joint observations of teaching and learning carried out with the headteacher and/or senior staff.

IMPLICATION! Are school leaders aware of how literacy is embedded appropriately for different subjects so that they can highlight good practice for inspectors if necessary?

- how information at transition points between schools is used effectively so that teachers plan to meet pupils' needs in all lessons from the outset – this is particularly important between the early years and Key Stage 1 and between Key Stages 2 and 3

IMPLICATION! How are the literacy needs of all pupils established on entry and then adequately met across the curriculum?

Use of Pupil Premium Funding

- information on the school's website, including its statement on the *use of the pupil premium*
- how effectively leaders use additional funding, including the pupil premium, and measure its impact on outcomes for pupils, and how effectively governors hold them to account for this
- how leaders and governors have spent the pupil premium, their rationale for this spending and its intended impact
- any differences made to the learning and progress of disadvantaged pupils as shown by outcomes data and inspection evidence.

IMPLICATION! Frequently, PP pupils have literacy issues: how are these diagnosed/who is responsible for delivery of any literacy input? Can these decisions be justified?

Self Evaluation

Inspectors will request that the following information is available at the start of the inspection:

- a summary of any school self-evaluation or equivalent
- the current school improvement plan or equivalent, including any strategic planning that sets out the longer term vision for the school

IMPLICATION! Is literacy reflected in the school's development plan?

Discussions/Meetings

- Other evidence gathered by inspectors will include discussions with pupils and staff, listening to pupils read (with particular focus on hearing lower-attaining pupils read) and looking at examples of pupils' work to seek out evidence for progression in knowledge, understanding and skills.
- pupils' views about the work they have undertaken, what they have learned from it and their experience of teaching and learning over time

IMPLICATION! Are pupils aware of the key role of literacy in their learning? Do they have the confidence to articulate to an inspector their views/is this a part of the school's literacy culture?

Quality Judgements

Outstanding leadership

"The school's actions have secured *substantial improvement in progress for disadvantaged pupils*. Progress is rising across the curriculum, including in *English and mathematics*."

Inadequate Leadership

Leaders are not doing enough to tackle poor teaching, learning and assessment, which significantly impairs the progress of pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, disabled or have special educational needs. Leaders are not aware of, or are not taking effective action to stem, the decline in the progress of disadvantaged pupils.

The unbalanced and poorly taught curriculum fails to meet the needs of pupils or particular groups of pupils.

Outstanding Quality of Teaching and Learning

- English, mathematics and the skills necessary to function as an economically active member of British society are promoted through teaching and learning.
- Teachers provide pupils with incisive feedback, in line with the school's assessment policy, about what pupils can do to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills. The pupils use this feedback effectively.
- *Teachers embed reading, writing and communication and, where appropriate, mathematics exceptionally well across the curriculum*, equipping all pupils with the necessary skills to make progress. For younger children in particular, phonics teaching is highly effective in enabling them to tackle unfamiliar words.
- Pupils love the challenge of learning and are resilient to failure. They are *curious, interested learners who seek out and use new information to develop, consolidate and deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills. They thrive in lessons* and also regularly take up opportunities to learn through extra-curricular activities.
- *Pupils are eager to know how to improve their learning*. They capitalise on opportunities to use feedback, written or oral, to improve.

IMPLICATION! Clear implications for pedagogy of literacy in this criteria

Inadequate

Pupils cannot communicate, read, write or apply mathematics as well as they should, so they do not make sufficient progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills because they are unable to access the curriculum.

Outstanding in Outcomes for Pupils

Throughout each year group and across the curriculum, including in English and mathematics, current pupils make substantial and sustained progress, developing excellent knowledge, understanding and skills, considering their different starting points.

Pupils are typically **able to articulate their knowledge** and understanding clearly in an age-appropriate way.

They can hold thoughtful conversations about them with each other and adults.

Pupils read widely and often across subjects to a high standard, with fluency and comprehension appropriate to their age. Pupils in Year 1 achieve highly in the national phonics check.

From each different starting point, the proportions of **pupils making and exceeding expected progress in English and in mathematics are high compared with national figures**. The progress of disadvantaged pupils matches or is improving towards that of other pupils nationally.

IMPLICATION! A whole school reading culture underpins the success here

Inadequate

From their different starting points, the proportions of pupils in different year groups making or exceeding expected progress in English or in mathematics are consistently low and show little or no improvement.

For disadvantaged pupils, the proportions making or exceeding expected progress from their different starting points in English or in mathematics are consistently well below those of other pupils nationally and show little or no improvement.

There are wide gaps in the progress and/or attainment of different groups and these are not improving.

IMPLICATION! No mention of reading here- the missing ingredient?

Sub-section of "Outcomes for Pupils" completely focussed on Literacy

Inspecting the impact of the teaching of literacy including reading

Literacy includes the key skills of reading, writing and oral communication that enable pupils to access different areas of the curriculum.

Inspectors will consider the impact of the teaching of literacy and the outcomes across the range of the school's provision. They will consider the extent to which the school intervenes to provide support for improving pupils' literacy, especially those pupils at risk of underachieving.

During the inspections of infant, junior, primary and middle schools, inspectors must listen to children reading. They should place a particular focus on hearing lower-attaining pupils read and should discuss their reading with them. This is to find out how effectively the school is teaching reading and to assess whether the pupils are equipped with the phonic strategies needed to tackle unfamiliar words. There may be occasions when inspectors need to hear lower-attaining pupils read in Years 7 and 8 in secondary schools.

Inspectors should decide which pupils they will listen to read, taking into account the school's progress information and published data on reading and other information such as lesson observations. Inspectors should hear children read from books that are appropriate to their age, including from previously unseen books. When listening to younger children read, inspectors may use the national phonics check material to help them make their judgements about the impact of phonics teaching. Wherever possible, inspectors should listen to children reading within a classroom or in an open area with which pupils are familiar.