



STEP Academy Trust

English Policy

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Review: July 2018

Introduction

The STEP Academy Trust Board of Directors has agreed this Policy and, as such, it applies to all Academies within the Trust.

We believe that language and English is fundamental to the overall development of every child and their access to the curriculum in all its aspects. We aim to deliver quality teaching of the basic and higher order reading, writing speaking and listening skills to enable children to become confident and successful. We also aim to provide a wide range of opportunities to enable children to write imaginatively and at length across the curriculum, working alongside the International Primary Curriculum.

To be read in conjunction with the following policies: Teaching and Learning, Assessment, Marking and Presentation, EYFS, Maths, Science, Computing, Arts, PE, RE, MfL, SRE and Relationships, RRS and Homework.

Expectations

By the end of Year Six we want all our pupils to be able to:

- read for pleasure and write with confidence, fluency and understanding;
- orchestrate a full range of reading cues (phonic, graphic, syntactic, contextual) to monitor their reading and correct their mistakes;
- read widely and be interested in books for both pleasure and information and evaluate and justify their preferences in a range of fiction/non-fiction/poetry – range of structures and styles;
- through reading and writing, develop their powers of imagination, inventiveness and critical awareness;
- understand the sound and spelling system and use this to read and spell accurately;
- have a fluent, joined script and legible handwriting;
- have an interest in words and their meaning and a varied vocabulary which they are continually developing;
- know, understand and be able to write in a range of genres in fiction and poetry, and understand and be familiar with some of the ways in which narratives are structures through basic literary ideas of setting, character and plot;
- understand, use and be able to write a range of non-fiction texts;
- use GAP (genre, audience, purpose) to ensure that their writing is meaningful;
- plan, draft, revise and edit their own writing; developing skills to peer assess other work and give constructive feedback
- develop their language across all subjects, using and discussing subject-specific vocabulary through talk;
- know how to up-level themselves, using various criterion, such as steps to success and the APP/Criterion Scale/life without levels.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

We believe that communication and language with opportunities to explore reading and writing underpins children's future learning. The practice in the EYFS will follow the DFE guidance entitled **Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage**. The aim is to meet the statement of Early Learning Goals by the end of Reception.

There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational programmes in early years settings. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The *prime* areas, are:

- communication and language;
- physical development; and
- personal, social and emotional development.

There are also four *specific* areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are:

- English;
- mathematics;
- understanding the world;
- expressive arts and design.

For further information, please refer to the Statutory Framework and EYFS planning.

Key Stage 1 & 2

At the beginning of Year 1 and 3, the EYFS/KS1 assessments will enable the planned work to follow a smooth transition between the stages. The teaching of English will include explicitly taught and planned sessions following the STEP English curriculum map; spoken language work such as role play, pair talk, drama and hot seating, discussions and presentations in order to prepare pupils for the writing process.

Reading:

- Word reading work with explicit teaching of phonics and spelling which will be taught by both teachers and fully trained teaching assistants;
- Comprehension work using a range of genres which will develop vocabulary, comprehension and composition skills and the understanding of print;

Writing:

- Transcription work with explicit teaching of word and spelling structure;
- Handwriting and presentation, taught daily and modelled correctly. Rewards will be given, for example, within Achievement assemblies;
- Composition work using rich quality texts to develop vocabulary, grammatical awareness and punctuation skills and to support writing for a range of real purposes and audiences;
- Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation work with explicit teaching of technical terms and opportunities for discussing language and learning about Standard and non-Standard English.
- Cross-curricular work which will promote sustained composition at length, for example, in science experiments.

Reading

The 2014 Curriculum divides reading skills into two dimensions:

- word reading
- comprehension (both listening and reading)

We believe in developing a rich reading culture within each academy, by creating welcoming book areas in classrooms, a well-stocked and ever-increasing school library, which is visited regularly, and raising the profile of reading through a print-rich environment, attractive book displays and promoting the written word at all times. High priority is given to reading throughout all year groups. Children are placed in ability groups for reading (ie: guided reading) and read a wide range of literature across the curriculum (non/fiction). This method of guided reading ensures children are taught a range of reading skills which they practice at school and home.

Targets based upon the APP assessment/Life without levels focuses are taught using literature reflecting each learning intention which can then be applied when reading independently. Children are able to take home a reading book to read to their parent/carer and this is logged in their reading records which are checked on a daily basis. Parents are expected to make a comment in their child's reading record on how their child read.

Whole class reading. This develops listening skills, a love of story and reading for pleasure. This is teacher-led reading with children listening and responding to questions, predictions and vocabulary choices as appropriate to the level of the children. In all year groups, this happens on a weekly basis through sharing a class text.

Shared reading. This immerses children in the pattern of story and features of text types. This happens in English lessons/guided reading when introducing text and prior to writing. The teacher models as an expert reader and draws out the key elements of the content. This can also include the use of tone and expression when reading aloud.

Guided reading. This targets individual children's reading skills. Guided reading takes place in small groups with teacher/support staff input using specific texts. In EYFS and KS1, sets of guided reading books are book banded and stored together. In KS2, sets of books are levelled into abilities within a year group and categorised into genres. These are also stored in the Library. Children answer written questions based upon specific APP focuses/Life without levels in each guided reading session and the achievement of each assessment focus is discussed with the children at the end of the session and is recorded on their own/group's guided reading sheet. Each group reads with an adult once a week. We also include a range of exciting activities, such as listening to audio books, illustrating texts and drama to encourage and support a development of love of reading.

Independent reading. This takes place in school and at home. Books are sent home with a reading record for communication with parents/carers. Throughout the school, books are changed on a weekly basis by Teaching Assistants/class teachers – with feedback given to teachers (if changed by TAs). In KS2, children may also have the opportunity to choose their own chapter book to take home and these are changed regularly and are logged in the reading records.

The reading environment. Within the classroom the reading area/book corner is attractive and inviting with engaging displays to encourage the children to take an interest in reading. The books are clearly accessible and ordered. Books and where applicable, a CD along with story props and puppets enhance the reading environment and process in KS1 and EYFS.

The school library. This provides reference and reading materials for children and all staff. The way this works in each STEP Academy is unique. In some academies we have pupil librarians who carry out a returns service, in others, books are shared within the lesson time by staff. The school encourages all children to join and use their local library and a member of staff of the local library often takes an assembly to promote this.

Writing

The 2014 Curriculum divides writing skills into two dimensions:

- Transcription (spelling and handwriting)
- Composition (articulating ideas in speech and writing)

We recognise that these elements are essential to success and we support the acquisition of these sets of skills through various methods. We recognise that these areas are clearly linked to the other aspects of English learning: speaking, listening and reading. We believe that writing should be a creative and developmental process both at a functional and an imaginative level. In STEP we see the children as writers. All attempts at writing are valued and we know that all children have potential to be successful writers. The compositional and transcriptional skills are taught alongside the creative aspects. Immersion in reading, talk and preparation for writing is essential to the writing development process. It is also important to ensure that cross-curricular opportunities are made within the IPC.

We use **Talk for Writing** as an approach in many of our Academies that goes beyond the development of children's general speaking and listening skills – it allows children to explore the processes involved in being a writer, and extends oral rehearsal so that it becomes a draft for their written pieces. This approach supports the children to move from talk into writing. Talk for Writing includes: Book Talk, Writer Talk, Storytelling and Story making, Word and Language games, Role Play and Drama.

Shared writing. This is modelled by the teacher as the expert writer with contributions from the children and focuses on the statutory and non-statutory requirements for each year group. This is teacher-led writing with children watching and contributing ideas. The emphasis may be on the generation of ideas, grammatical awareness, spelling and phonics, compositional, transcriptional, presentational and text level skills or other key strategies needed in writing. Not all of these can be modelled in one session, but the teacher as the expert writer leads the cumulative writing process.

Guided writing. Each writing lesson, both the class teacher and teaching assistant should be with a guided group or individual child. The guided group should receive focused support which is tailored to their needs based on their relevant targets. This involves the teacher leading modelled writing or a skills-based activity which teaches the children a new technique. This could also include each child being given a specific role, for example adding punctuation or being the dictionary monitor for the group.

Extended writing. Across the STEP Academy Trust, extended writing gives the children the opportunity to write at length. The children use this piece of writing to up-level and improve. Each school will deliver this form of writing in a variety of ways. For further information, please refer to the individual English Handbook for each Academy which will give detailed explanations of this process.

Big Writing. (Where Talk for Writing is not used, at present)... Throughout the school, children need opportunities to develop their confidence and practise their writing skills at a more extended level. Big Writing focuses on four key aspects of quality writing: Vocabulary, Connectives, Openers and Punctuation. It is essential that these strands run throughout all writing sessions (in and outside of Literacy) and are not left for just the extended writing sessions. This is an on-going process. One way of doing this could be to focus on one area of VCOP each day across the week as a starter.

Writing Environment. The classroom environment the children are in plays a vital role in order to enthuse and excite them during the writing process. For further information, please refer to the individual English Handbook for each Academy which will give details of the fundamental aspects required in a classroom.

Phonics

The teaching of phonics ensures that young children will be well-placed to read and spell words with fluency and confidence. Each academy within the STEP Trust will follow their own programme. For example, Letters and Sounds, Read Write Inc, or Sounds-Write.

Phonics is taught on a daily basis in EYFS, KS1 and where needed in KS2. The children are grouped according to their ability for the teaching. In Year 1 most children begin to read and write one grapheme for each of the 44 phonemes. They blend and segment CVC (consonant – vowel –consonant), CCVC and CVCC words for reading and spelling and use their phonic knowledge when trying to read and write more complex words. In Year 2 children are taught to read 150 of the most frequently occurring words in English and are taught to spell many of them. In Year 1, teaching will be adapted to enable all children to reach the required level of attainment in the National Year 1 Phonics Screening Check. Any children who do not attain the expected National Level will have further support in Year 2, and will retake the test at the appropriate time when they are in Year 2.

In KS2, children are assessed on their phonetic knowledge and key children are supported based on these results in a small group with trained teachers or teaching assistants. Phonics is also taught in Guided Reading sessions. It is taught with rigour and pace to engage the children.

Spelling

The 2014 Curriculum provides a statutory Appendix 1 which gives an overview of the specific features that should be included for each year group when teaching spelling.

Children’s phonological awareness and spelling strategies are continually assessed and inform teaching. Dedicated time is allocated for teaching and investigating spelling. The government documents: ‘Spelling Bank’ and ‘Support for Spelling,’ can be used in KS2 as a guide. Spellings are set on a weekly basis and are differentiated for the different abilities. The strategy ‘Look, Cover, Write, Check’ is a good way of helping the children to learn their spellings. These words are relevant to the subject matter being learnt in class. There is also a word of the week which is learnt by all the children which is also included on a display in the classroom. Word banks, displays and dictionaries can be used to support children’s spelling at the point of writing.

Handwriting

Handwriting and letter formation is explicitly taught throughout the school using the Nelson font. The correct way of forming letters is modelled by the teacher. Children have a separate handwriting book and 5-10 minutes a day is spent practicing letter formation. This could be done by using phonics and spelling rules as a focus. Children need to have adult intervention when writing to ensure correct formation is practised. Good presentation is emphasised at all times and through all forms of writing. This is also celebrated through the use of a hand-writer of the week display. Support is given to those with poor pencil grip through triangular pencils and pencil grips. Left-handed writers should be sat on the left hand side of the table. Line guides and tramlines are also readily available. Please refer to STEP’s Marking and Presentation Policy.

Spoken Language

The 2014 National Curriculum states that pupils should be ‘taught to speak clearly and convey ideas confidently in Standard English’ (p10). They should:

- Justify ideas with reasons
- Ask questions to check understanding
- Develop vocabulary and build knowledge
- Negotiate
- Evaluate and build on the ideas of others
- Select the appropriate register for effective communication
- Give well-structured descriptions and explanations
- Speculate, hypothesise and explore ideas
- Organise their ideas prior to writing

These oral skills are directly taught, modelled and encouraged in whole class and small group settings. Opportunities across the whole curriculum are planned for and developed. Children play an active part in presentations, topic talks, group discussions, debates and drama activities on a weekly basis. There is progression in the skills taught and assessment of significant achievements in speaking and listening. Children are expected to talk clearly, in full sentences which are grammatically accurate, and at a volume appropriate for the audience. For our children to be effective writers, they must also be effective speakers, which is why we put such a high importance on oracy.

Homework

For further information, please refer to the STEP Homework Policy which will give details of the expectations for each year group.

Assessment

Assessments are used to inform planning and to target teaching to the needs of the children as well as to track progress using a variety of different ways and under the new 'Life Without Levels'. This could be through Shaded Boxes, GL Assessments, OTrack or SIMS. The English and Assessment Coordinators monitor this data to check that they are meaningful, relevant, are showing progress, are matching the policy and planning and are being used for the evaluation of teaching and learning. Assessments are moderated as part of SMT and in staff meetings.

Writing. The children complete half termly writing samples. Non/Narrative samples are related to work completed in the English curriculum map topics covered that half term and also throughout the curriculum. This is so that it has a purpose and frame of reference for the children, encouraging them to use all their prior knowledge to the best of their ability. We use a variety of assessment tools to assess writing (see above).

Reading. Our academies at present are following the DfE's guidance of Life Without Levels, following the new NC. In time this will align to be the same throughout STEP. See individual websites for further information. Eg: some academies will still use APP sheets during guided reading to assess progress.

Marking. Daily marking of children's writing is also completed by the teacher, providing a positive comment that is specifically linked to the Learning Objective, and a developmental comment, where necessary in order to move children on in their writing. Teachers use green highlighters to let the children know what went well and an orange/pink highlighter to show where perhaps they might improve (see Marking Policy).

Targets. Individual targets are set based on assessments and are discussed with children so that they are clear how they can make progress across the next half term. Extended Writing or the use of Big Writing is a prime opportunity for addressing pupil's targets and for children to self-assess in relation to these.

AfL. It is important for the children to be involved in the assessment process. This takes place through the use of marking, self-assessment, peer-assessment and up-levering using level descriptors in 'child-friendly speak'. For further information, please refer to the STEP Assessment Policy.

ICT Information and Communication Technology is used to enhance the learning experience and support effective teaching. All classes have access to computers, laptops, netbooks or ipads. There are a range of programs installed on all computers to support the teaching and acquisition of literacy skills and for presentation of work. Every classroom also has an Interactive Whiteboard. ICT supports children who would otherwise struggle to get their work on paper. It can also be used to support the presentation and editing of the work.

Extra-Curricular Activities and Themed Weeks It is important to organise extra-curricular activities for the children to take part in to develop their English skills even further and the promotion of reading and writing in the school.

Book Week. This usually takes place in the spring term, in combination with World Book Day, when we organise events to promote reading and writing across the whole school. Children participate in a range of activities which could include ideas such as book reviews, drama tasks, story writing, shared reading across the year groups, character analysis and visiting workshops or performances. A dress up day occurs where prizes are awarded.

Book Fair. This is held either within Book Week or at another point throughout the year. This is always popular with children, parents/carers and staff and the money raised can be used towards replenishing the School Library.

Competitions. This will differ between the academies within the STEP Academy Trust. Competitions could be held within school or sent off as part of external companies. They could include works for story writing, poetry, spelling bees, readathons or debating.

Workshops and Performances. These again could be held within school, making use of the staff you have or inviting external companies in to work with the children. They could include a range of works across all areas of English.

INTRODUCTION

Applegarth Academy follows the Success for All literacy strategy from year 1 through to Year 6, with the Kinder Roots strategy delivered to our Nursery & Reception classes. Data shows that children join Applegarth Academy with very low attainment in all subjects but especially in literacy and language. While at Applegarth Academy children will achieve well through the enriched provision we offer through the Success for All Strategy and the Accelerated Reader Strategy. Our belief is that barriers are but challenges to be overcome, enabling our children to achieve their full potential whilst at Applegarth Academy. The staff and Governors agree that we need to introduce a specialist strategy of literacy that will give our children the type of teaching and learning that would increase their learning and allow them to achieve to their potential in literacy.

SFA Facilitator: The Literacy leader acts as the SFA facilitator. The role of the facilitator is to observe and teach alongside class teachers, ensuring that the SFA principles are taught and adhered to in all classes.

A Co-operative Approach to Learning: The Success for All Strategy is based on extensive research into the way that children learn to read and write. The curriculum is driven by co-operative learning, which is embedded throughout the strategy and focuses on individual pupil accountability, common goals and recognition of group success. This emphasis on partner and group sharing, and the opportunities that children are given to work with peers, enables them to master basic reading skills, whilst encouraging them to develop into active, thoughtful learners.

Why use Co-operative Learning?

Research has shown that using co-operative learning techniques with children:

- Promotes learning and academic achievement;
- Increases retention
- Enhances satisfaction with their learning experience
- Helps develop skills in oral communication
- Develops social skills
- Promotes self-esteem
- Helps to promote positive race relations

Research into Co-operative Learning: Co-operative learning has been proven to enhance children's capacity to learn and consolidate new ideas across the primary curriculum. In the vast majority of research studies co-operative learning has been shown to be more effective than traditional methods in raising the levels of motivation and achievement of children as well as resulting in positive social outcomes. Researchers such as Robert Slavin and David and Roger Johnson have shown that using co-operative learning strategies has a positive impact on achievement. Children who learn co-operatively tend to be more highly motivated to learn because of increase self-esteem. They also have greater on-task behaviour; score higher on achievement and problem solving tests and tend to get along better with class mates of different racial, ethnic and social backgrounds.

Our SFA Curriculum: Nursery to Year Six

- Provides teachers with a complete literacy strategy.
- Supports teachers with training and coaching.
- Uses proven research strategies and best practices for teaching literacy.
- Engages children with co-operative learning strategies
- Accelerates the learning of all children
- Improves classroom management and attendance

- Emphasises development of oral languages, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension

There are 5 main parts to the strategy, all of which have been adopted by the school.

Foundation Stage – There are two foundation stage strategies that provide young children with an experimental and child-central curriculum, which gives them the necessary foundation for success in KS1. **KS1 - The SFA Roots Strategy** in year 1 gives children the building blocks to become successful readers and writers. Using a systematic, synthetic phonics strategy, which has been endorsed by the Rose Review, children gain confidence in their ability to apply their knowledge to the reading. **KS2 -The SFA Wings Strategy** exposes children to carefully selected literature covering all different genres to develop their skills as effective readers and writers. The aim of the Wings strategy is that by the end of year 6 children have a love of reading and are able to question and clarify their understanding of any text.

Year 6 Literacy Skills Consolidation Package – This strategy has been developed to consolidate and extend children’s prior learning, enabling them to demonstrate their skills during national testing. The Year Six Teaching Package consists of ten units that covers five important text genres and develops children’s ability to articulate their thinking about text through a focus on key literacy, presentational and functional devices. The package also includes detailed guidance on teaching five genres of writing (recount, non-chronological report, persuasion, balanced report and story).

Conflict Resolution/Getting Along Together The Getting Along Together strategy aims to ensure that every child is equipped to deal with sources of potential conflict, thus defusing it before it is allowed to escalate. Working alongside peers, listening and applying problem solving strategies to obstacles are skills that deserve to be taught if we value children’s ability to co-operate and full engage in the learning process. The Success for ALL Getting Along Together package is a series of scripted lessons designed to support the co-operative learning process.

Assessment KS1 and KS2 children are initially assessed during the implementation of the strategy. They are taught in ability groups within their key stage. Assessments are then carried out approximately every eight weeks and children stay in or move up groups according to the progress they have made. This allows all children to progress at their own pace. It is also evident that children who join our school with little or no English can join the lower ability groups, access good quality teaching of basic English skills but move up groups quickly as they need often finding their ‘true’ working level within one or two assessed periods.

‘Real Books’ In Roots (up to Curriculum 1a) children are encouraged to learn to read using both ‘readers’ and ‘real’ books. However, from Wings 1 all literacy lessons are based on reading ‘real’ books rather than ‘readers’ and this helps to develop a love of reading for books within children and also supports those reluctant readers who need exciting, enjoyable books as well as readable books.

Support from Success For All – Training and Development for Staff
Continuous training in the use of co-operative learning strategies in the classroom.
Continuous training in all five component parts.
The curriculum materials to support the teaching of all parts of the SFA literacy strategy.
Support at the end of the telephone/email 5 days per week.
Trainer visits to observe lessons, support/advise in lessons.
Trainer visits to support facilitator with teaching points and/or assessments and/or analysis of assessments.
SFA Conference every two years where facilitators, literacy co-ordinators and head teachers of schools teaching the SFA strategy from around the country meet.