



## Literacy Policy

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## **Literacy Policy**

*Highbury School is a community primary school providing for children from ages 4 to 11 who have a range of special educational needs, and whose needs cannot be fully met in a mainstream setting. All children at Highbury have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Highbury also has KS1 and KS2 specialist Satellite Provisions based in two local mainstream primary schools.*

### **Introduction**

Literacy is a core subject within the National Curriculum which means coverage of this area is compulsory. This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the teaching and learning of Literacy (inc. Communication) at Highbury. The skills developed in Literacy provide pupils with tools for effective communication, expressing oneself and understanding the world. Language and communication skills are essential for *all* our pupils, we recognise that the skills developed in Literacy promote learning across the curriculum. We aim for our pupils to be able to express themselves creatively and imaginatively, communicating effectively (both verbally and non-verbally) with others in a range of social situations. This will in turn enable pupils to develop meaningful and positive relationships with all members of the community. The skills developed in Literacy are life-long skills that will support pupils into adulthood, increasing their independence and enabling them to function in the wider world.

### **Highbury Curriculum**

The fundamental principle behind our curriculum design at Highbury is personalisation and the need to ensure that all learning **is relevant, meaningful and functional**. All our classes are organised on a needs and ability led basis. This ensures that the curriculum being taught is appropriate for every child and allows all children to be active participants in their learning. The Highbury Literacy Curriculum also encompasses relevant aspects of the National Curriculum.

Classes will cover the following aspects of Literacy, Language and Communication throughout the year, taught through a personalised learning approach assessed by the class teacher to meet individual needs.

Our Literacy curriculum is split into the following pathways:

- A. Reading:** Comprehension
- B. Reading:** Phonological Awareness
- C. Writing:** Transcription (Pre-writing and Handwriting)
- D. Writing:** Composition
- E. Vocabulary, Grammar & Punctuation**
- F. Phonics & Spellings**
- G. Oracy**

Our communication curriculum covers the following:

- A. Attention & Listening**
- B. Following Instructions**
- C. Concepts**
- D. Speech**
- E. Functional Language Use**
- F. Interest in Interaction**
- G. Pre-Supposition & Shared Knowledge**
- H. Social Play Scale**

For more information on this please refer to the Teaching and Learning Policy and / or the Highbury Curriculum Pathways.

## Aims

At Highbury School we believe that by providing exciting and relevant learning opportunities, all pupils can develop to their full potential. We aim to do this by:

- Promoting enjoyment and enthusiasm for learning new concepts through play, practical activity, outdoor learning, exploration and discussion
- Using a range of multi-sensory teaching styles and resources
- Ensuring all teaching is highly differentiated and personalised to suit individual's need.
- Developing an understanding of the importance of Literacy, language and communication in everyday life and how to apply skills in a meaningful way
- Developing pupil's confidence and competence with letters, sounds and early reading skills
- Encouraging a love of reading and developing the skills to enable learners to use reading functionally
- Supporting the development of fine and gross motor skills to ensure pupils have the stability and focus to become writers
- Providing alternate ways of transcribing ideas, ensuring that all pupils have the opportunity to express themselves
- Giving all pupils learning opportunities to develop listening and oracy skills throughout the day and in a range of contexts at an appropriate level for them
- Equipping learners with the language and skills to communicate their ideas
- Improving pupil's ability to communicate effectively through functional means in a range of contexts

## Teaching and Learning- Overview

The teaching of Literacy will vary across classes at Highbury School due to the changing needs of our pupils. Classes may have a focus on a 'Pre-formal', 'Semi-formal' and 'Formal' curriculum. Some classes or specific pupils may work within more than one pathway, in this case teachers will plan and adapt learning accordingly on an individual needs basis.

All classes across school will follow a 'Total Communication' approach, to support language and Literacy development, including but not limited to:

- Intensive Interaction
- Using facial expression and gesture
- Touch cues
- Objects of reference
- Sign supported English
- Attention Autism- Developing positive learning behaviours
- Symbol Exchange
- PECS
- See and Learn Language and Reading
- Alternative Augmentative Communication (for example core boards, IT devices)
- Social Communication
- Opportunities for inclusion to work alongside role-models



### Pre / Semi-formal inc. EYFS

Pupils in these classes follow the Engagement Steps Framework or the Early Years Curriculum.

The Engagement Steps Framework is designed to support the learning and assessment of students not yet engaged in subject-specific learning and covers the following areas:

- Responsiveness, curiosity, discovery, anticipation, persistence, initiation, investigation.

The Early Years Curriculum covers the following areas:

- Literacy, Numeracy, Understanding the world, Expressive arts and design, Communication and language, Physical Development, Personal, Social and Emotional Development



Most Literacy in the pre-formal classes is taught through exploratory play, intensive interaction, continuous provision and teaching in 1:1 or small groups. The children's understanding can also be developed through stories, songs, games and focused communication sessions. Literacy in the pre-formal classes tends to heavily focus on functional language, communication and understanding the world around them. The key aim is to develop a means of communication, a love of 'reading' and fine and gross motor skills. The skills children learn are the foundation for future learning in Literacy.

To support with the teaching of Literacy coverage in these classes, the children will follow an adapted long-term plan:

Pre-formal classes will work on an adapted LTP, choosing topics that are relevant for their pupils at an individual level, below are some suggested ideas for adaptations in these classes.		<b>The priority for these classes is functional literacy, therefore classes will cover the ongoing topics / interventions throughout the year:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phonological Awareness / Sounds of Intent</li> <li>• Fine motor development / Early mark-making skills</li> <li>• Social communication sessions / Attention Autism</li> <li>• Vocabulary development / See &amp; Learn</li> <li>• Early book skills / Sensory Stories (Engagement)</li> <li>• Increased awareness of self and environment</li> </ul>		
Pre-formal Literacy	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	
<b>Term 1</b>	<b>Assessment period</b>			
	About me and my peers	About me and my peers	About me and my peers	
<b>Term 2</b>	Letters and Lists Posting and Mark-making  Seasonal Stories Showing preferences for a text, colour-coded sentences, book skills, sensory story	Drama and Role-Play Story re-enactment Story sequencing	Stories from a familiar author / theme Showing preferences for a text, colour-coded sentences, book skills, sensory story	
<b>Term 3</b>	Labels and Captions Labelling possessions Recognising belongings	Non-fiction (Facts) Categorisation, sorting information  Acrostic Poems Initial sound recognition	My Senses  Poetry Rhymes (Phonological awareness)	
<b>Term 4</b>	Following instructions Functional language, sequencing	Stories from different cultures Colour-coded sentences, book skills, sensory story	Character descriptions Exploring 'who?' and vocabulary development	
<b>Term 5</b>	Posters Combining pictures and words, meaningful mark-marking  Poetry Calligrams, patterns on a page	Engaging with Fairy-tales & Familiar Stories Showing preferences for a text, colour-coded sentences, book skills	Following Recipes / Menus Fun with Food, functional use around food, preferences for food	
<b>Term 6</b>	Emails / Text messages Using a keyboard, sending messages, functional language	Weather reports / Post-cards Recognising the weather, sensory story	Invitations Planning for and partaking in events	
	<b>Assessment period</b>			

### Semi-formal / Formal Classes

The Highbury Literacy Curriculum aims to cover all aspects of the National Curriculum, including Reading, Writing and Spoken Language (oracy). Literacy is delivered at Highbury as both a discrete subject and through a cross-curricular approach. Staff teach knowledge, skills and understanding in age-appropriate ways that match and challenge their pupil's abilities. Teaching will be delivered on an individual basis, small groups or whole class groups as appropriate. The frequency and duration of Literacy teaching in classes across school will differ according to individual needs.



*If parent/carers require any further information, the child's class teacher can be the first point of contact.*

Our Semi-formal and Formal long-term plan shows the Literacy coverage over a 3-year period. The curriculum overview has been planned to include a breadth of coverage based on the National Curriculum, including both fiction, non-fiction and poetry, as well as writing for functional purposes.

Literacy (Semi-formal and formal)	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
	Phonics Assessment period		
Term 1	Passports / Fact-files (About Me) Rules Filling in Forms	Diaries / Recounts Fact-files Poetry 1	Passports / Fact files Rules Cards
Term 2	Letters and Lists Seasonal Stories	Scripts Speech bubbles Songs & Lyrics	Stories from a familiar author / theme
Term 3	Comic Strips Speech Bubbles Captions & Labels	Non-chronological Reports Poetry 2	Poetry 5, 6, 7 My Senses
Term 4	Explanations & Instructions Sequencing	Stories from different cultures Letters	Character descriptions (Vocabulary development) <u>Non-chronological</u> reports
Term 5	Poetry Adverts Posters	<u>Fairy-tales</u> & Familiar Stories	Recipes / Menus Instructions
Term 6	Newspaper Reports Emails / Text messages	Weather reports <u>Post-cards</u>	Invitations Emails / Text messages
	Phonics Assessment period		

Poetry 1) Writing based on the senses  
 Poetry 2) Acrostic poems  
 Poetry 3) Patterns on a page (Concrete poem)  
 Poetry 4) Calligrams  
 Poetry 5) Rhyme  
 Poetry 6) Alliteration  
 Poetry 7) Metaphors/Similes

## Teaching and Learning Approaches

Below highlights *some* of our key approaches to Literacy, Language and Communication used across school:

### Teaching of Reading

Throughout their timetable children will access regular and systematic teaching of synthetic phonics following the Read Write Inc scheme, focused interventions, See & Learn programme and Highbury's own, 'Funky Phonics' adapted programme. To encourage a love of reading, our 'Reading Together' initiative was developed. The session(s) are a collaborative approach timetabled regularly to ensure that all pupils are 'immersed' in reading, aimed at an appropriate level for them. Every class in school has a reading area that is designed to engage children in reading. Class teachers are expected to plan these areas carefully to ensure that all children can access them to independently (where possible), select a book. Reading areas are expected to reflect best practice in terms of choice of texts, number of texts and concrete objects to support comprehension.

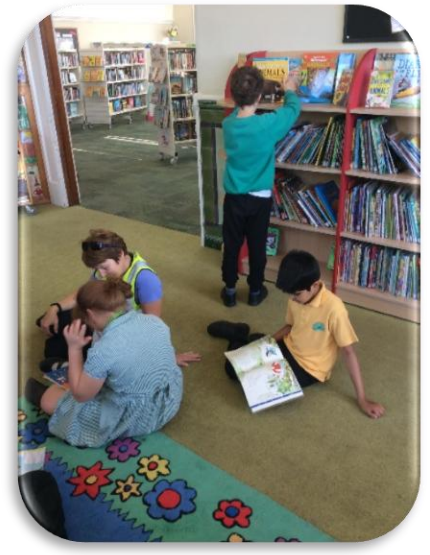
Sensory stories feature in many classes across the school and are an important way for teachers to plan a multi-sensory approach that supports engagement and understanding. Teachers are expected to use stories as a key vehicle for teaching literacy and understand the value of repetition.

For more information on how Reading is taught across the school, please refer to the school website:

<https://highburyschool.co.uk/our-school/curriculum/reading/>

### Library Partnership

Highbury School set up a partnership with Rastrick Library in September 2022 where pupils in semi-formal and formal classes are able to access a wider range of resources and materials in an immersive setting for reading, as well as taking responsibility for looking after books. After a successful trial, the library is now available to Highbury School every Thursday afternoon for different classes to attend and have further opportunities for reading.



### Highbury Library

Highbury has developed its own library on the school grounds to support a love of reading and to teach children how to handle books carefully and with respect. The library is used by all children in school and the design has been informed by the DFE reading report.

At the start of the week books are provided for early readers who are learning to decode text. These are accompanied by core boards and relevant artefacts to support understanding and engagement.

At the end of the week, these books are swapped with interactive books and board books for children who are at the early stages of reading and learning how to turn pages, how to hold a book and to make the connection that print carries meaning.

## **Standardised Assessments**

**Phonics Screening-** Where appropriate, some children in Year One will be screened using the National Assessment materials in the required timescale. If the children in Year One fail the screening they will be retested when they are in Year Two. This data will be submitted to the Local Authority. The screening test will also be used across school as a means of standardised testing for our older pupils.

Some more formal classes will choose to do additional standardised assessments to support their teaching and learning process e.g.

- SATS
- Reading Age
- Spelling Age
- Writing Speed
- British Picture Vocabulary Scale

## **Colour-coded Sentences**

A number of pupils in school, are able to read fluently but struggle with comprehension. Across the school day, teachers will use colour-coded symbols to support with processing words and symbols. Colour coding can also be used to support children with forming sentences across all subjects.

***For more information on Colour coded sentences please see Appendix 1.***



## **Blanks Level of Questioning**

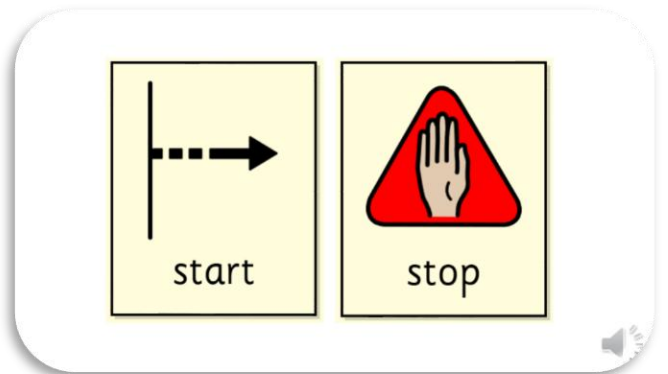
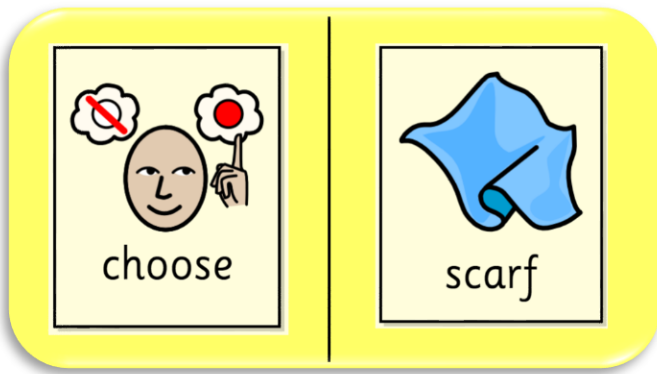
To enhance the different levels of comprehension taught at Highbury, teachers use Blanks Level of Questioning to ask appropriate questions relevant to the pupils' development of comprehension skills. This is a cross-curricular approach and can be used throughout the school day. This supports pupils to progress through 4 stages of understanding including naming, describing, retelling and justifying.

***For more information on the Sounds of Intent programme please see Appendix 2.***

## **Sounds of Intent**

Originally a **model of musical development that was set out to see how we all engage with music;** Sounds of Intent is now being used as a communication teaching tool across Highbury School. It supports and works from the processes of sound awareness, to using music for communication and supporting the teaching of new concepts. Sounds of intent is mainly used as a communication tool in pre-formal classes but it is also an important aspect for all our pupils to support their phonological awareness development.

***For more information on the Sounds of Intent programme please see Appendix 3.***



**PECS / Symbol Exchange**

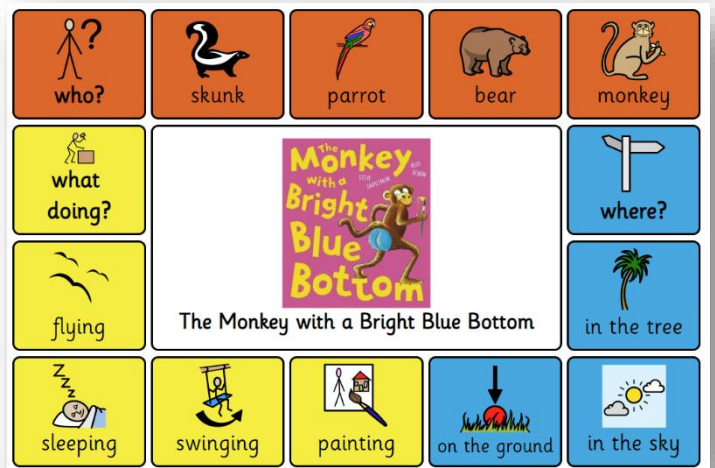
Within our total communication approach, some pupils at Highbury use PECS as an alternative means of communicating their wants and needs. To use PECS, pupils are expected to exchange a symbol to request an item or activity. Pupils using PECS will have their own book which is accessible at all times throughout the day. In the initial stages, pupils will be explicitly taught how to exchange symbols and use their PECS book. Following this, PECS will be taught on an individual needs basis throughout the day to support pupils' development in this area.



**Communication Boards**

Working in partnership with the Speech and Language team, adults support pupils with a total communication approach by using 'core boards' and 'activity boards'. Communication boards are used as a narrative tool to support pupils' communication and are a flexible, transportable AAC device. Adults will use these boards as a 'voice' for the pupil, using the symbols on the boards to comment on their behaviour or activity.

Activity boards are made specifically for different topics and can be focused on lesson-specific vocabulary or used generically across school. Where appropriate, activity boards will be colour-coded using the colourful semantics programme colours (*Appendix 1*).



### **Teaching Literacy through Outdoor Experiences (Garden School)**

Highbury has the benefit of an extensive Garden School. The Garden School provides an excellent vehicle for learning and a great opportunity to teach most aspects of the curriculum in the natural environment, including Literacy. All children enjoy working outdoors and those that may find learning in the classroom more difficult are motivated to participate and learn new concepts. Although some activities are set by teachers, work in the Garden School is often child-initiated and/or child-led. All aspects of Literacy can be taught through outdoor learning including activities such as: Immersive story-telling, responding to and following instructions, communication through problem-solving and ascertaining new vocabulary.

Here are some examples of Literacy being taught through Garden School:



Reading maps to find locations based on the story of, 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt'



Exploratory mark-making



Immersive storytelling- The Three Little Pigs

### **Reading Lead Practitioner**

The lead practitioner is Rachel Orme and her role in school is to ensure that reading is taught to a high standard across the school. She is responsible for the monitoring of reading and supports teachers and phonics champions to ensure they feel skilled and confident in the delivery of reading.

### **Phonics Champions**

Every class in school has a designated phonics champion. Whilst the planning and teaching of reading is the teacher's responsibility, the phonics champion's role is to support the delivery of phonics across the day. Phonics champions meet with the reading lead practitioner every month to receive training and support.

### **Monitoring and Reporting on progress**

At Highbury School there are high expectations of every pupil. Staff work hard to offer a curriculum which allows for personalisation and an opportunity to assess pupil's progress in a holistic way. Assessment is ongoing and built into the teaching and learning process for all pupils. It is a valuable tool for informing staff of the next steps in learning.

Children's summative targets are set in September and monitored throughout the academic year. Children who are following a subject specific programme of work are assessed against progression steps via our assessment tool, B Squared B-Squared, is updated by class teachers each term and pupil progress meetings are held (attended by the class teacher, head teacher and data manager). Regular moderation meetings also take place which enable teachers to confirm their assessment judgements with other teaching staff. These meetings enable staff to share knowledge and expertise in order to overcome any specific barriers their pupils may have. Children also work towards their EHC targets, these are outcomes set to support the development of key areas of need and these will most likely include an element of literacy. Progress against these is also tracked through our data meetings and is reported to parents / carers and other professionals through the EHCP review process.

In Literacy, children are set learning objectives by the class teacher. These are then assessed by all staff using the school feedback system (BOP). The BOP score informs the teacher of the child's learning behaviour, understanding of the objective and how much adult prompt was required. Pupil progress is recorded in a variety of ways at Highbury including observations, written work, videos, and photos. Children's books are monitored regularly by the Literacy subject lead and Senior Leadership Team.

Specific progress towards attainment in Reading is tracked by class teachers and Phonics leads continuously during the year and is evaluated by the Literacy, Language and Communication lead and reading lead practitioner.. It is a priority to us that all pupils make good progress in reading, and we recognise that this will look different for every pupil.

*For more information, please see the school Assessment policy (available on the school website).*

### **Equal Opportunities**

The teaching of Literacy will be in accordance with Highbury School's Equality Objectives. We aim to provide equal access to Literacy for those children with Special Educational Needs through highly personalised learning and approaches.

### **Professional Development**


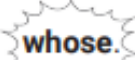
Highbury School firmly believes that continuing professional development for all staff features highly in the school improvement plans to aid the development of Literacy for all pupils. All practitioners receive regular CPD opportunities in the delivery of the teaching approaches mentioned in this policy. All aspects of Literacy at Highbury school are monitored by the Literacy, Language and Communication lead, where training needs are identified, appropriate support will be provided.

### **Review**






This policy was reviewed and updated in July 2024 by Debbie Sweet, Sarah Gumbs and Sarah Nelson.

## Appendix 1- Colour-coded sentences

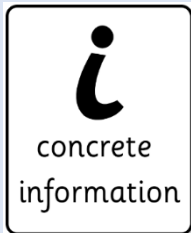
The agreed colours to be used when teaching comprehension skills, as well as in Literacy lessons are as follows. These colours may also be used on 'Activity Boards' or key vocabulary symbols if appropriate across the curriculum:

- Orange words tell us **who**.
- Yellow words tell us what they are **doing**.
- Green words tell us **what**.
- Blue words tell us **where**.
- Pink words tell us **to who(m)**.
- Brown words tell us **when**.
- Black words tell us **how**.
- Purple words tell us **why** (and **join things up**).
- Cloud words tell us **what it is**  **like**.
- Star words tell us  **whose**.

### Further Information:

	Question/Name	Colour/Shape
adjective/concept	what like?	
adverb (time)	when?	brown
adverb (manner)	how?	black
cause and effect	why?	
conjunction	joining up word	
auxiliary verb	little doing word	
possessive pronouns	whose?	

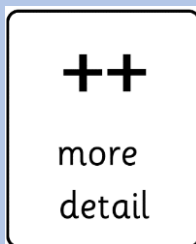
## Level 1



Looking at things in front of them, usually answered with one word or a gesture:

Matching an object	Find one like this
Find an object by sound	Show me what you heard
Find an object by touch	Show me what you touched
Name an object heard	What did you hear?
Name an object touched	What did you touch?
Name an object seen	What is this
Copy a simple sentence	Say this...
Remember an object / information	What did you see?

## Level 2



Talk about things in front of them in terms of what it does or its appearance:

Looking for an object by function	Find one that can...
Describe a picture	What is happening?
Remember things named	What things... (fly)? etc.
Remember simple information	Who? What? Where?
Finishing a sentence	You cut with a...
Concepts: Naming parts	This is the...
Concepts: Responding to 2 ideas	Find one that is... and...
Concepts: Knowing differences	How are these different?
Concepts: Give an example	Name something that is a...

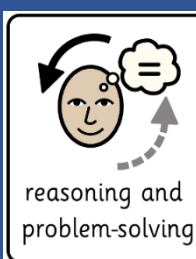
## Level 3



Learning to tell stories, make predictions and define words. They must know the facts before giving an answer:

Finding an object by using information	Find one to use with this... (visual/verbal)
Describing what happens next in a sequence	What will happen next? (Using images)
Saying what a person will say / think	What could he say? What is he thinking?
Following a set of directions	Do this, then this
Putting pictures in order	Make these into...
Giving a set of directions	Tell me how to...
Making a general comment	What happened?
Telling a simple story from a set of pictures	Tell this story
Concepts: Finding and describing similarities	How are these the same?
Concepts: Finding a set of objects by their negatives	Find ones that are not...
Concepts: Give an example by excluding an object	Name something that is not...
Concepts: Give an example by excluding a group	Name something that can... but is not a...
Concepts: Defining a word	What is a...?
Unusual imitation	Say this...

## Level 4



Making inferences and deduction. Talking about cause and effect using past experiences and information beyond what they can see or hear:

Predicting: Changes in position / structure	Where will...? What will happen if...?
Justifying and explaining a prediction	Why will...?
Justifying a decision- explain the reason	Why do you...? Why would you...?
Identifying the cause(s) of an event	What made it happen?
Thinking of an explaining a solution	What could you do?
Thinking of a solution from a different point of view	What could he/she do?
Explaining how to reach a goal (e.g. cooking)	What could we use to help?
Explaining why (e.g. using a pan)	Why should we use that?
Explaining the construction of objects	Why is... made of that?

**Appendix 3- Sounds of Intent**

The below diagram shows the Sounds of Intent framework, working towards musical maturity. The early stages of the framework are used to develop Phonological Awareness skills across the school, then transferring these skills to timetabled music sessions. A cross-curricular approach is used to support development in Literacy and Oracy.

