

Telephone Conversation Literacy: 3 November 2020

Purpose

Due to Covid-19 restrictions at the moment visiting school is prohibited. It is essential in our role as governors that we keep up to date with current practice. With this in mind I had a telephone conversation with the lead teacher for literacy across school, Hannah Webster. The focus was to discover how many of the actions in the SIP were being addressed.

Hannah agreed that this year has been very challenging, but she believed systems that had been put in place were working well. The children appeared to be happy to return to school. Teachers have been sensitive to any anxieties and have done many PHSE sessions to overcome any fears. There have also not been any significant issues regarding behaviour. Hannah feels the children are eager to learn and it is now time to move on.

To structure our conversation I studied the Literacy section of the SIP. Literacy has a number of strands which tend to overlap. For the sake of clarity I have considered each one in more detail.

Assessments

There have been no formal assessments completed in the Autumn term this year. More data will be available after tests are given in January 2021. I will refer to specific monitoring and assessing in each section below.

Reading

Hannah stated that children read according to graded book bands and she felt that most children were maintaining an adequate level of progress. To further fine tune this school is now using an assessment tool called Assessing Fluency in Reading from Foundation to Y6 in order to identify any gaps.

Children are continuing to have shared reading sessions in class which involve the teacher focussing on differentiated guided reading groups throughout the week. This enables the teacher to help children who need support and also to cater for greater depth children.

Daily story time is enjoyed by all children throughout school.

Comprehension

Hannah has already done a practice test with her Y6 class in October this year in order to assess where the children are in relation to SATS 2021. The KS2 classes all follow the same method for teaching comprehension where they teach different elements of the subject for example inference, context etc for two weeks before assessing in the third week. This builds up a formative assessment for each child in class and highlights any misunderstandings that may need to be addressed.

Hannah has already monitored the delivery of this method of teaching in years 3, 4 and 5 this Autumn term. Following these outcomes she has been able to support each teacher, especially the ones new to a different year group with advice and help with planning and also support for greater depth children. If children are not at a level in order to access the text in class they are given more phonics lessons in order to aid their learning ability.

Phonics

School follows a standard phonics scheme. Two phonics lessons are scheduled every day in KS1. Where children have gaps in KS2 extra support is given. This is often done by teaching assistants.

Y1 children have to take a national phonics test in May every year. It is anticipated that this will happen again in 2021. This did not happen in 2020 as a result of lockdown. Due to this Miss May is currently assessing all of her Y2 class who were not able to take the test in Y1 and formally submitting their results. It is usual practice that if children fail the test in Y1 then they re sit in Y2. Consequently some children who are now in Y3 (who failed in Y1) did not have the opportunity to re sit the test in Y2. They may do the test again to give a result but this does not have to be formally submitted. It will however give an indication if further work is required.

EYFS

The last Ofsted inspection highlighted the fact that children in early years could not remember sounds that letters represent. It advised that teachers and teaching assistants should have appropriate support to develop their skills.

Katie Tupling is the Early Learning Lead. She visits KS1 Classes and supports with phonics, while Hannah mainly concentrates on KS2 comprehension lessons. Both Katie and Hannah are connected to the Early Reading English Hub which is run from St Wilfred's School in Sheffield. They receive a termly visit from there to support and develop a team of expert reading teachers from Foundation to KS1 in our school. Jo Davenport, JMat's Teaching and Learning Consultant, is also working with Hannah, Jade, Frances and Katie to support and develop a team of expert reading teachers from Foundation to KS1.

Writing

The new handwriting scheme was due to be implemented this Autumn. Hannah has so far carried out an informal inspection of children's books but not a formal one yet.

As you can glean from the different sections above, the assessment of children's learning has been done differently in each of the literacy areas. Hannah has acquired the majority of her knowledge through speaking informally to teachers on an ongoing basis. More specific data will be available in January 2021 and also specific data will be shown relating to the progress of Pupil Premium children. Hannah's opinion is that there appears to

be no significant detrimental learning impact on Pupil Premium children since September.

Home Learning

Hannah stated that the home learning policy is currently being updated. At the moment if a bubble is isolating then there is a daily class Zoom registration where tasks and email instructions are given. If only one child is isolating then five days work is emailed to that child.

Parents

Parents are able to ring school at any time if they have any issues or questions. Hannah believes only a few have done so and parents appear to be happy with school arrangements.

Conclusion

I would like to thank Miss Webster for her time. It is apparent that Hannah is passionate about her subject. I questioned Hannah closely and as a result made copious notes from our discussions in which she gave a detailed account of the current position of literacy across all the age ranges. I certainly feel I now have a clearer understanding of the practice of teaching and learning of literacy in our school. I eagerly await the opportunity to physically visit school again and see everyone face to face.

Janet West

4 November 2020