

# ECT Mentor session

Module 2: Engaging pupils in learning

Week 3: Literacy and learning

## Session Elements



collaborative  
learning



discuss with a  
mentor

## Learning Intentions for this session

### Your mentee will learn that:

**3.10** Every teacher can improve pupils' literacy, including by explicitly teaching reading, writing and oral language skills specific to individual disciplines.

### Your mentee will learn how to:

#### Develop pupils' literacy by:

- 3o.** Teaching unfamiliar vocabulary explicitly and planning for pupils to be repeatedly exposed to high-utility and high-frequency vocabulary in what is taught.
- 3p.** Modelling reading comprehension by asking questions, making predictions, and summarising when reading.
- 3q.** Promoting reading for pleasure (e.g. by using a range of whole class reading approaches and regularly reading high-quality texts to children).
- 3r.** Modelling and requiring high-quality oral language, recognising that spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing (e.g. requiring pupils to respond to questions in full sentences, making use of relevant

technical vocabulary).

## Introduction

In the self-directed study session, through observation and/or discussion with a colleague, your mentee has explored their understanding and development needs in relation to literacy subject and pedagogical knowledge. This session asks you to explore with your mentee their practice in relation to developing pupils' literacy within their phase or subject.

You should read the same Research and Practice Summary that your mentee has. It might be most useful to focus on those aspects of literacy which are pertinent to your mentee's phase or subject area, but emphasise that every teacher can improve pupils' literacy, including by explicitly teaching reading, writing and oral language skills specific to individual disciplines

## Research and Practice Summary

### Every teacher is a teacher of literacy

As you read this summary, it helps to consider your own pupils in your school. You could also think about two other real teachers. Imogen teaches Year 3 in a primary school in Greater Manchester. Tom is a teacher for children with language and communication needs in a special school in north London.

Children who have good written and spoken literacy skills are able to engage with their school's curriculum and experience success as a result. For these reasons, developing pupils' literacy is perhaps the most important aspect of education for schools to focus on.

The development of early literacy is especially important. This involves the development of two capabilities: word reading and language comprehension. Using systematic, synthetic phonics is the most effective way of developing decoding, which supports word reading. A wide range of approaches, including high quality discussion, will develop pupils' language capabilities.

Once pupils have mastered phonics and are able to accurately decode, the

emphasis should shift towards developing reading fluency. Pupils at this stage in their development can be identified by listening to them read. They will be able to read accurately, but they will be slow and their reading will not sound like speech and may sound disjointed. Developing reading fluency is usually a priority for pupils in KS2 and for a smaller number of pupils in KS3. Developing reading fluency requires extensive practice, but teachers can support this by modelling fluent reading, providing feedback on fluency and providing opportunities for repeated reading with a focus on developing fluency.

In the past, it has been argued that teaching literacy skills is limited to English lessons. This is false. All subjects and teachers have the opportunity and responsibility to develop pupils' literacy capabilities. This does not mean teaching English during other subjects. Rather, it involves the development of disciplinary literacy, which is the development of reading, writing and oral language skills specific to each discipline.



To improve your pupils' literacy, you should:

- explicitly teach the reading, writing and oral language skills specific to the discipline or phase you work in (this includes writing in different genres, reading for interpretation, speaking collaboratively)
- deliberately plan the teaching of unfamiliar vocabulary (e.g. by playing word games, matching words with definitions, displaying key vocabulary on the wall)
- regularly expose your pupils to vocabulary which is high-utility and high-frequency, and give them repeated practice (e.g. by using keyword tablemats, and by modelling the vocabulary in your expositions)
- model for your pupils how they can plan, draft and edit different types of writing, specific to your subject or phase (e.g. by 'live-writing' a model answer on the whiteboard, or using a visualiser to 'live-model' the editing process)

**Reading comprehension** is a complex process, involving word reading and language understanding. Word reading involves decoding or breaking down parts of

a word by phoneme and blending these together to read the whole word. Reading comprehension means being able to read a section or an entire piece of text and understand its meaning. To make sense of a text, the reader draws on background knowledge, vocabulary, grammatical understanding and their ability to make inferences about meaning based on these.



To help you to develop your pupils' reading comprehension, you should:

- teach the skills of predicting, questioning, clarifying and summarising text (e.g. through live modelling, or by allotting different 'reading for...' roles in group reading)
- 'think out loud' when reading to help pupils to internalise strategies to help when reading independently
- support pupil engagement and reading for pleasure (e.g. by reading with the whole class high-quality texts that you or they have chosen)

### **Imogen teaches Reading Comprehension, Year 3**

Imogen is working with a group of Year 3 pupils on reading comprehension, building on strategies she has previously introduced. She has split the group into 4, each with a defined role. Tahir is the questioner: he will generate comprehension questions from the page of text to ask to the rest of the group. Poppy is the summariser: she will sum up each paragraph/ page for the rest of the group précising the text. Sam is the clarifier: he will identify any vocabulary that needs to be defined. And Sarika is the predictor: her role is to predict the next action in the story. The pupils are all familiar with their roles, as this is a strategy that has been modelled for them regularly and the roles are swapped around; Imogen's role is to listen and provide direction if they struggle with any aspects. Today, Imogen is going to read the text aloud as the pupils take their roles; in this way, she will model how a fluent reader uses volume, tone, expression and modulation when they read – recognising that spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing.

This is likely to be effective because the pupils are familiar with this form of

collaborative learning; Imogen has already spent time establishing and reinforcing routines, such as taking turns. The lesson develops the pupils' skills in questioning, summarising, clarifying and predicting texts - collectively known as reading comprehension strategies. By allowing her pupils to practise these four key reading skills that all good readers use automatically as they read and understand texts, Imogen supports pupils' ability to comprehend texts independently in the future. Because this is a habitual part of Imogen's teaching, her pupils are now familiar with all of the roles, although they may still find some harder than others. An expert reading aloud is an excellent way to assist comprehension as it conveys meaning through expression.

**Oral language** skills (or classroom talk) refers to the use of vocabulary and the quality of discussion by pupils as well as teachers. Encouraging pupils to use specific vocabulary and terminology during discussion in class helps to normalise and embed new words and improve the development of deep understanding. It broadens pupils' vocabulary and helps them to articulate high-level ideas. Spoken language underpins both reading and writing development. Because modelling and requiring high-quality pupil talk underpins the development of reading and writing, it positively affects academic attainment across the curriculum and children's social and emotional development.



To help develop quality oral language, you should:

- carefully consider how ground rules and pupil reflection can help build a supportive environment for talk (e.g. circle time is a good opportunity for developing such rules)-- a useful rule to consider is the expectation that pupils respond in full sentences and use subject-specific vocabulary for certain activities
- also improve your pupils' skills in listening (e.g. by framing discussion where each person must respond to the previous speaker before making their own point)



## Teaching vocabulary in a special school, in Tom's own words

“Some of my pupils are at the earliest stages of learning to talk. It's important for them to have basic vocabulary to get their needs met, such as being able to ask for 'more' or 'help' or 'toilet'. At dinner time, when Charlie wants more food, he may try to reach across the table and take some from another plate. I try to pre-empt this and say, 'Oh, Charlie wants more', showing him the 'more' sign (Makaton). I help him make the sign with his hands and encourage him to say 'more' before giving him another spoonful.”

For all children, learning to use words and signs to communicate is an important part of schooling. Certain key words, like those Tom mentioned, are prioritised to help pupils convey their wants and needs to others and reduce the need for them to use other behaviours to get what they want.

It is important in any context that key words that relate to core concepts are reinforced in different situations with different members of staff so that children learn the meaning and power of these words and the importance of mastering them. For many children, using a visual symbol or sign alongside a spoken word will be beneficial in reinforcing meaning and aiding understanding.

## Mentor Meeting Activities

Throughout the session, try to refer explicitly to the Learning Intentions, and encourage your mentee to record key points in their Learning Log. Tailor your use of the Theory to Practice activities below in response to the Review and Plan sections of this session.

### Review and Plan 5 mins

Your mentee should begin by sharing their reflections on learning from the self-directed session.

Clarify the learning intentions for this session with your mentee. These are extensive, so please focus in on an aspect of key importance to your mentee's development needs, identified through reflective discussion together.

## Theory to Practice 40 mins



### 1. Discuss with Mentor

Your mentee observed or had a discussion with a colleague who has some expertise in literacy. Review with them how the observation or discussion went and help them to draw out important learning for themselves. If they have not managed to do it yet, you should help them to arrange the observation or discussion and make sure it happens.

To support you in having a focused discussion, you might frame it this way with your mentee:

'I believe you have observed/ met a colleague who has expertise in literacy. How far did they address: a) explicitly teaching unfamiliar and high-utility vocabulary; b) modelling reading comprehension by asking questions, making predictions, and summarising; c) promoting reading for pleasure; d) modelling and requiring high-quality oral language. What is the single-most important thing that you learned from this? What would you need to do to apply what you have learned in your own teaching? What support from me, or others, might you need?'



### 2. Collaborative planning

Work together with the mentee to plan a lesson or sequence of lessons which seek to develop a specific area of literacy pertinent to their subject or phase.

For example, the mentee may have focused their self-study on the role of oral language in literacy development. They might have observed how a teacher has supported a positive climate for constructive dialogue, perhaps through the use of ground rules or sentence stems to scaffold pupil talk.

The examples provided in the self-study session are shown below.

Support their reflections and plan together how they will apply their learning to their own practice over the next few lessons

| Learning intentions   | Possible foci for observation or discussion  |
|---|--|
| 3m. Demonstrating a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics, particularly if teaching early reading and spelling.                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What approach to teaching systematic synthetic phonics works best for you in your class?<br/>E.g. Teacher modelling of segmenting and blending orally and in writing.</li> <li>- How is systematic synthetic phonics used to support the teaching of spelling?<br/>E.g. Explicit use of phonics to support the teaching of spelling</li> </ul>  |
| 3n. Supporting younger pupils to become fluent readers and to write fluently and legibly  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How is handwriting taught? Is a specific programme used to teach handwriting systematically?<br/>E.g. Review children's writing outcomes together and consider progression in handwriting.</li> <li>- How are parents/carers involved in supporting younger pupils' reading?<br/>E.g. School support for parents/carers, such as workshops to develop their understanding of approaches to teaching early reading.</li> </ul> |
| 3o. Teaching unfamiliar vocabulary explicitly and planning for pupils to be repeatedly exposed to high-utility and high-frequency vocabulary in what is taught. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is vocabulary pre-taught to support understanding for all?<br/>E.g. Teaching vocabulary to specific groups of pupils prior to the lesson to support understanding for all.</li> <li>- How is key technical vocabulary taught and understood in context?<br/>E.g. Use of images to support comprehension (Visuals on Interactive White Board or wall displays)</li> </ul>  |
| 3p. Modelling reading comprehension by asking questions, making predictions, and summarising when reading.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How does the teacher support pupils to summarise a text?<br/>E.g. Modelling identifying key events. (So far, we have read that...)</li> <li>- How does the teacher model asking questions of the text?<br/>E.g. Using question prompts to respond to the text (What do you like/ dislike about...? Why do you think...? What does this remind you of?)</li> </ul>   |
| 3q. Promoting reading for pleasure (e.g. by using a   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How does the teacher engage pupils in reading a wide range of high-quality texts?</li> </ul>  |

| Learning intentions  | Possible foci for observation or discussion  |
|--|--|
| <p>range of whole class reading approaches and regularly reading high-quality texts to children).</p>  | <p>E.g. Developing their own knowledge of children's literature and sharing their own interests with pupils.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How does the school promote reading for pleasure? E.g. Through the development of reading buddies, book clubs, reading cafes with parents and pupils.</li> </ul>   |
| <p>3r. Modelling and requiring high-quality oral language, recognising that spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing (e.g. requiring pupils to respond to questions in full sentences, making use of relevant technical vocabulary).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How does the teacher encourage pupils to build on one another's responses? E.g. Use of ground rules to support the creation of a positive climate for constructive dialogue. (I like what X said about this, and I would add... I understand the point that Y made, but I think...)</li> <li>- To what extent do they use sentence stems to scaffold pupils' oral responses? E.g. Use of key phrases to support pupils' responses to talk partner questions (I agree with... because...; I understand what you are saying, but have you considered...?).</li> </ul> |
| <p>3s. Teaching different forms of writing by modelling, planning, drafting and editing.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How does the teacher support pupils to plan for writing? E.g. Use of planning frames to help structure different forms of writing. At what point does the teacher remove these scaffolds?</li> <li>- How are pupils supported to edit and improve their writing? E.g. How are the success criteria shared? Is editing time built into the writing process? Do they use peer- or self-assessment during drafting and editing?</li> </ul>   |

## Next Steps 5 mins

Agree with your mentee how they will now put their learning from this week's session(s) into practice in their teaching. Help your mentee to clarify:

1. the action(s) they will take and how these action(s) are expected to contribute to improving their workload and wellbeing
2. what success will 'look like' in relation to these action(s)
3. how they will evaluate their success in taking these action(s)

Note the date of your next mentor meeting, when you will check on your mentee's progress