

Literacy learning walk – prompts

A National Literacy Trust membership resource

How to use this resource

If you are a newly appointed literacy leader or coordinator, conducting a learning walk is a good way to collect qualitative evidence of the range and quality of literacy teaching across the whole school. It will help you identify what good practice there is in subject areas and whether additional training and support may be needed. It will help you set the priorities for your development plan.

It is recommended that you enlist the support of several other colleagues in order to get a range of views and cover a range of subject lessons. Why not ask the Head of English (if that is not already your role!), the SEND leader, the EAL coordinator, an external English or Literacy consultant and one of your leadership team to join you. If you work in pairs, you'll have lots to discuss afterwards.

Plan to do the learning walk for at least two or three hours on one day. Make sure all staff are aware of your intentions in advance and give them a copy of the prompts so they know what you are looking for.

Ensure that you 'drop in' to a range of lessons across the whole curriculum, even if that means tramping out onto the sports pitches in the middle of winter. You'll need 15 to 20 minutes in each lesson to get an idea of what literacy teaching or tasks are planned and have time to look at displays and pupil work as you go round.

Record whatever you see and hear on the following prompt sheets. They are organised with speaking and listening, reading and writing separately, although it may be hard for you to separate these when recording the evidence. You might also want to develop your own tick lists to match specific school priorities.

Arrange time at the end of *the same day* to feedback with all the staff who did the learning walk with you. Discussing findings shortly after will help you recall more and the reflection time is essential. Make notes on what your colleagues have found so that you have baseline evidence that you can return to later in the year.

Once you have collated your findings, you'll then be able to feedback to the whole staff and start writing your literacy development plan. You can also use our Annual Literacy School Review to help you.

Literacy learning walk prompts

Teacher/s _____ Subject _____ Year/Class _____

Speaking and listening		
Literacy objective	Examples	Evidence
<p>1. Teaching pupils how to present their ideas in speech.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher verbally models what a positive or negative contribution would sound like. • Teacher uses open-ended questioning with ‘thinking time’ to encourage complex extended responses, and challenges limited responses. • Teaching delivery and classroom displays highlight words or phrases, e.g. <i>firstly</i>, <i>secondly</i> to support pupils sequence speech. • Pupils are aware of how to use voice and gesture to enhance message. 	
<p>2. Promoting active listening for learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify language features that signify different stages in a talk, speech or video clip before listening. • Teaching note-taking methods (e.g. use of key words, mind maps, symbols) before listening to speech, video clip, etc. • Follow-up tasks that depend on focused listening, e.g. writing or sequencing instructions so that responses can be evaluated by others. 	
<p>3 Teaching strategies to promote exploratory talk and group discussion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicitly teach language of cooperation, agreement and disagreement. • Teaching how to initiate, sustain, direct, redirect and conclude a discussion. • Using different pupil groupings (e.g. envoy, snowballing or jigsaw) and different roles, e.g. reporter, clarifier to ensure all can participate in discussion. • Allocating challenging roles to able students and explicitly teach them useful linguistic techniques. 	
<p>Differentiation for EAL or SEND learners: key visuals, additional resources, use of additional adult</p>		

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Reading		
Literacy objective	Example	Evidence
1. Promote close reading through active reading strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading techniques for finding specific information (e.g. skimming, scanning). • Use of DARTs activities to develop engagement and interaction with texts, e.g. sequencing, cloze. • Reading aloud and pausing to ask pupils to summarise or paraphrase the key arguments of what has been read. • Pupils asked to identify information or evidence to support points. 	
2. Shared and guided reading to develop inference and deduction in challenging texts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher modelling of how to read via texts displayed on IWB. • Roles used in reciprocal reading groups (e.g. summariser, clarifier, predictor) • Use of different groupings (e.g. jigsaw, snowball), so pupils discuss texts and their meanings. • All viewing and reading materials are clearly accessible through selection of font, colour, size, layout, etc. 	
3. Promoting learning through independent reading.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to dictionaries and thesauruses to increase students' independence. • Explicit teaching of steps pupils can take when reading alone before asking for help. • Explicit teaching of how to use the library/internet for research. • Maintenance of glossaries, word banks and reading logs. 	
4. Identifying the features of different text types clarifying these to pupils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying purpose/audience of texts in subject areas. • Comparing features of different texts e.g. an article from a scientific journal with a news article on the same topic. • Displays of typical subject-based text types. 	
Differentiation for EAL or SEND learners: key visuals, additional resources, use of additional adult		

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Writing		
Literacy objective	Example	Evidence
1. Using writing as a tool for thought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit teaching of thinking, speaking and planning skills before writing. • Pupils record initial ideas on mini white boards. • Mind maps and concepts maps used for planning. • Graphic organisers used for note making. 	
2. Setting writing tasks with clearly defined purposes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching identifies intended audience, purpose, language and structure for all formal written tasks. • New genres are introduced through use and analysis of model texts. • Shared, guided writing is evident (e.g. dictogloss). 	
3. Structuring and organising writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicitly teaching how to organise ideas into paragraphs, structure essays, etc. • Displaying and using discourse markers to introduce, link or contrast ideas within sentences and across paragraphs. • Teaching proof reading, editing, redrafting and presentational skills. 	
4. Developing clear expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject-specific vocabulary clearly identified within lessons and recorded by pupils, and use of key terms is part of the success criteria in lessons. • Tier 2 academic vocabulary (e.g. command words) is highlighted across all subjects. • Opportunities are provided during lessons for students to edit and improve their writing. • Teacher models spelling strategies to help pupils learn subject vocabulary. • Teacher provides feedback on spelling and grammar. 	
Differentiation for EAL or SEND learners: key visuals, additional resources, use of additional adult		