

Frank Barnes School for Deaf Children

English Policy

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Frank Barnes
School for Deaf Children

1. Rationale

At Frank Barnes School we are committed to establishing bilingual education; the outcome of our bilingual education should be that our children attain levels of competence and proficiency in British Sign Language (B.S.L.) and written English sufficient for their needs as a child and as an adult. Our Language and Communication Policy details our current practice.

Central to this educational philosophy is the recognition of the status, role and contribution of B.S.L. and deaf people in the education of our children. We recognise that for the majority of our children B.S.L. is their preferred and dominant language so it is used to access the curriculum and to teach English. English is therefore learned as a second language. While we aim for fluency in written English, expectations for spoken English necessarily vary for each individual child. The teaching and learning of spoken and written English as a second language is a long term and ongoing development.

Our children are entitled to a broad and balanced curriculum. As outlined in our Teaching and Learning, Curriculum and Assessment Policies we are committed to meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum and the statutory assessments, where appropriate. Our aim is to provide an English curriculum that meets the needs of our children whilst fulfilling these statutory requirements.

2. Educational Philosophy at Frank Barnes School

- We recognise the importance of high levels of confidence and self-esteem so the children view themselves as successful learners of English
- We have high expectations of the children's achievements and aim for them to achieve national levels of attainment in written English
- We follow the English National Curriculum
- We recognise and value the importance of B.S.L and English equally
- We recognise the interdependence between B.S.L. and English and encourage the transfer of skills between them
- We aim for our children to achieve fluency in B.S.L. and written English
- We teach written English as a second language using B.S.L.
- We complete detailed English assessment and target setting for individual children
- We recognise that the development of spoken English is appropriate for some children
- We provide regular Speech and Language Therapy focussing on language and communication skills including spoken English as appropriate
- We provide twice weekly Live English sessions that develop the children's strategies for communicating in the hearing community

- We maximise the children's listening skills to support the development of spoken English by ensuring consistent, effective and appropriate use of amplification
- We recognise that Sign Supported English may be appropriate for modelling spoken and written English, listening practise, Live English, use of voice/speech practise and lip-reading practise.

3. Aims

Our pupils should:

- Acquire age-appropriate pragmatic skills in BSL reflecting the Spoken Language expectations in the Programmes of Study for the English National Curriculum (see BSL curriculum)
- Be confident and competent using and appreciating imaginative, expressive and informative language
- Adapt to different circumstances and contexts with independence and confidence
- Switch between registers and languages to suit different audiences, purposes and contexts
- Talk explicitly about language and communication
- Read and write with confidence, fluency and understanding at age appropriate levels
- Be able to use a full range of reading cues (graphic, syntactic, contextual) to monitor their reading and correct their own mistakes
- Understand the spelling system and use this to read and spell accurately
- Maximise their potential to understand the sound system and use of phonic cues
- Have fluent and legible handwriting
- Have an interest in words and their meanings and a growing vocabulary
- 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 structured through basic literacy ideas of setting, character and plot.
- Understand be able to use a wide range of non-fiction texts
- Plan, draft revise and edit their own writing
- Have a suitable technical vocabulary through which to understand and discuss their reading and writing
- Be interested in books, read with enjoyment, and evaluate and justify their preferences
- Through reading and writing, develop their powers of imagination, inventiveness and critical awareness.

4. English in the National Curriculum

The Programmes of Study for English are laid out clearly here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study>

The programmes of study include aims and expectations in the following areas:

- Spoken language
- Reading
- Writing
- Spelling, vocabulary, grammar, punctuation and glossary

5. The English Curriculum at Frank Barnes School

We recognise that teaching the different elements of English achieved through an integrated approach. This necessitates class teachers and speech and language therapists working collaboratively to deliver the English curriculum in a way that is meaningful and accessible, taking into account the varying linguistic abilities and knowledge of our pupils. We also have mixed-age , mixed-year groups, so teachers use the appropriate National Curriculum Year group that the majority of pupils are working at, and differentiate accordingly.

5.1 Spoken Language / BSL

The English National Curriculum reflects our children's language and communication skills in B.S.L. rather than 'Spoken Language'. The Programmes of Study are interpreted so they are meaningful for our educational context. For example, we consider:

- 'Speaking' to mean 'signing'
- 'Listening' to mean 'attending'
- 'Standard English' and 'Language Variation' to mean the children's ability to code switch between B.S.L. and Sign Supported English (S.S.E.)/spoken English and to use regional signs within B.S.L.

5.2 Reading and Writing

To meet the requirements of the Reading and Writing Programmes of Study we aim to follow the teaching objectives for Reception to Year 6 as detailed in the National Literacy Strategy. As above, it is necessary to select appropriate objectives for our educational context and the needs of our children.

7. Teaching and Learning

7.1 Language and Communication

The children's understanding and use of B.S.L. is fundamental to their social, emotional and cognitive development. We recognise that a richness and variety of language and communication opportunities is very important, and that our deaf adult B.S.L. users provide crucial language models for our children. Our Language and Communication Policy details our current practice.

We also understand that simply providing contexts to communicate is not sufficient and that the direct teaching of the skills involved is important. This is currently achieved through Deaf Studies Curriculum and our BSL Curriculum) and individual and group Speech and Language Therapy.

Speech and language therapy focus on the appropriate area of language for the individual child. Children must have a firm language base in B.S.L. as a prerequisite to learning spoken English skills.

As a result of explicit teaching the children develop meta-linguistic skills and once learned these communication skills are reinforced in new contexts and practised across the curriculum. For example, when the children have been taught about the key components of a group discussion, they can draw on these in other problem-solving activities; in this way, communication underpins learning and thinking.

We also recognise that the children must understand the importance of language and communication, so they see it as a major aspect of their educational achievement, integral to learning and vital to their life chances.

In summary, the development of spoken English skills are achieved through:

7.1.1 Following Spoken English Without the Support of Sign

Lip reading involves the recognition and understanding of lip patterns. It includes the recognition of single sounds, words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs and reinforces receptive language and spelling skills.

7.1.2 Listening Skills

Effective listening skills are generally a prerequisite to learning spoken English. It involves developing good hearing aid or cochlear implant use and skills in listening to environment sounds and spoken language.

7.1.3 Speech Skills

While spoken English as a primary mode of communication is not appropriate for our children, we aim to maximise the children's individual potential for speech sound production as appropriate. All our children need to communicate in the hearing world so therefore need to develop the following skills:

- an awareness of when it is appropriate to use their voice
- use of an appropriate volume of voice
- use of an acceptable pitch of voice
- production of some accurate lip patterns
- production of some correct syllable numbers

7.1.4 Live English

The aim of Live English is to develop the children's ability to communicate with hearing people using a variety strategies. For some children this will include developing their speaking and listening skills in English. This is achieved through the development of skills in:

- Voice production
- Speech skills
- Listening skills
- English vocabulary and grammar in order to be able to request, comment, refuse, give opinions, ask for and give information, describe etc.
- Conversation and interaction skills in English

Live English is taught once a week to classes in Key Stages 1 and 2. This is delivered collaboratively between the class teacher and the speech and language therapist. The aim is for the class teacher and support staff to reinforce the learning and skills during the week.

7.2 Literacy

In Years 1 to 6 reading and writing is taught daily between 9.30 – 10.30 am.

At Frank Barnes we are committed to a daily English lessons because:

- our children are learning English as a second language
- our children miss out on the incidental English language experience which promotes the language acquisition of hearing children
- our children have expected gaps in their understanding of vocabulary, syntax, semantics, nuances of expression etc
- teaching reading through B.S.L. takes longer than through spoken English
- the high priority we give to the teaching of literacy
- the key role of reading in most aspects of learning

7.2.1 Guided Reading

Guided Reading is completed one-to-one or in paired/small groups and a minimum of two to three times a week.

We use PM Books and Big Cat Collins scheme for Guided Reading books. This is to enable the children to independently select their next book. All the books read are recorded by the adult on the appropriate record sheet and a brief assessment is recorded.

Our reading schemes is appropriate for our pupils as they are learning English as a second language, and very much benefit from the continuity and structure of a reading scheme when they are developing early reading skills. As the children become more confident, independent readers, they then need to generalise their skills to a variety of 'real' texts.

We recognise that learning to read is a complex process particularly for our children who are learning English as a second language through the written form and are often unable to understand and use phonic skills effectively. We use **Visual Phonics by Hand** as a teaching tool to develop phonological awareness, and to develop strategies that are more accessible and meaningful for our pupils.

In the Early Years and at Key Stage 1 sign graphics are used as a strategy to bridge the gap between BSL and written English, for example, on environmental labels, displays, worksheets etc. At the early stages of reading when our children expect one-to-one correspondence of a sign with a word, sign graphics are valuable for teaching that a phrase may be read or signed using one sign accompanied by the appropriate facial expression. The small English grammatical fillers are generally only signed if they are not included in a phrase; from the early stages we encourage the children to sign simple phrases in context using B.S.L., for example, 'looked up', 'put his coat on' etc. New vocabulary or phrases are recorded on cards or in their sight vocabulary books, so the children can manipulate them and engage in independent learning. The children learn that B.S.L. and English are separate languages.

At the early stages of reading our children are expectedly dependent on the use of picture and graphic cues to decode new vocabulary; they generally require much explicit teaching and support to make effective use of context and grammatical knowledge. As the children become more confident, independent readers we aim for them to be able scan ahead so they can sign the sentence or piece of text meaningfully, self-correcting as necessary.

At every stage of reading our children require explicit teaching of commonly used phrases and modelling of how they are signed in context, for example, 'pulled a face', 'saw red' etc. and recorded in a personalised sight vocabulary book in which new vocabulary and phrases are recorded, taught and practised.

Appreciation, meaning and contextual understanding is also central to every stage of the reading process; for example, much time is spent recalling, discussing, predicting and checking comprehension of the characters, setting, plot etc. so that the children have a firm understanding of the story. Similarly understanding of grammatical features of the text are checked and discussed, for example, pronouns.

7.2.2 BSL Stories

The children receive regular B.S.L. stories delivered by our staff as often as possible, especially in the Early Years. We aim for the children to experience and enjoy a wide range of age appropriate stories. Staff also lead the weekly B.S.L. story assembly (differentiated in by level) to give our pupils a range of story genre and enjoyment of 'listening' to stories in their first language.

7.2.3 Writing

In the Early Years we aim to encourage emergent writing; on entering Reception our children are less likely to produce scribble writing due to their awareness of print and visual acuity for letter and word shapes. The child is able to communicate the meaning of their picture or their emergent writing for the adult to transcribe. The adult transcribes the child's explanation using B.S.L. syntax; it is not translated into English.

As the children begin to use whole words in their emergent writing, they are supported by the use of an individual, alphabetical word file; at this stage the aim of the file is to promote independent spelling and writing. When the children request new vocabulary it is recorded by the adult; each item of vocabulary is accompanied by an illustration or a sign graphic enabling it to be accessed independently having been given the initial letter.

Throughout Key Stage 1 we aim for the children to become motivated, confident and independent writers. At this stage of development their writing generally reflects B.S.L. syntax. This is respected and valued; their writing is not translated in to English.

When the children are confident producing lengthier pieces of independent writing making effective use of their word file, we believe they are ready to learn the rules of written English. While grammatical features and punctuation may emerge in the children's independent writing at an earlier stage, we aim for the use of differentiated colour-coded word files and scaffolding sheets to support the children's acquisition of written English to be introduced by Year 2.

Our **Literacy Toolkit** includes colour-coded word files support the children's learning of word classes and English syntax; understanding and knowledge of the basic word classes results in the development of meta-linguistic skills, thereby enabling our children to discuss their written English explicitly.

When recording new vocabulary on the colour-coded sheets, it is the adult's responsibility to establish the context. The colours are:

- Nouns – Yellow
- Verbs – Purple
- Adjectives – Blue
- Pronouns – Red
- Adverbs – Green
- Prepositions – Orange
- Co-ordinators – Pale Green

The purple verb sheets are divided into 'tense' columns; the children's attention is drawn to the repeated pattern of the verb stem, while new tenses are introduced and recorded according to their developmental level.

Scaffolding sheets are designed to support the children with understanding and using English syntax. They provide a structure for the children thereby promoting confidence and independent writing. Scaffolding sheets are used for the initial draft; the adult then marks and/or supports the children with self-correcting their writing.

Initially the scaffolding sheets concentrate on simple declarative sentence construction at clause level, which having been consolidated, is proceeded by the increasing detail at phrase and word level. Complex sentences are introduced at a later stage. Differentiated scaffolding sheets are produced to support our children with the writing English sentences relevant to the curriculum content being taught.

Scaffolding sheets are also used across the curriculum to support their writing in different subjects, providing a structure to enable the pupils work independently and concentrate on the content of their writing.

7.2.4 Word Level Work / Visual Phonics

When children read and write they use a range of strategies to decode and spell words. If our children are to develop the full range of reading and writing strategies then our teaching needs to address the development of effective word level skills.

Visual Phonics by Hand is a **tool** to enable children to develop their phonological awareness and develop their word decoding strategies. It teaches children about the alphabet, letter names, phonemes (speech sounds and lip patterns) and graphemes (spelling choices), which helps children understand the relationship between the 44 phonemes of spoken English and the 26 letters of the alphabet. The visual phonic cues are based on the BSL alphabet, making it meaningful and accessible.

The '**Phoneme-Grapheme Principle**' states that the 44 speech sounds of spoken English may be represented by different letters and different combinations of letters. The cues are designed to teach pupils the different spelling choices for the different

speech sounds, e.g. teaching that the visual phonic cue for 'f' can be spelled as "f as fish"; "ff as in coffee"; "ph as in graph"; "gh as in cough", etc.

Understanding and applying this principle is central to effective word level strategies. Children need to know this relationship because reading involves blending graphemes into phonemes (e.g. f-i-sh = fish), and spelling involves segmenting phonemes into graphemes (e.g. coffee – c-o-ff-ee).

Research evidence demonstrates that signing Deaf children do develop reading and spelling skills through understanding the relationship between lip patterns and graphemes.

Used as a **tool** to support the teaching and learning of word level skills, Visual Phonics is appropriate for our context. It involves explicit teaching of phonemes and graphemes and the relationship between them; this supports our children to develop the necessary meta-linguistic skills for understanding and using a second language. We recognise that not all pupils will benefit from or even use visual phonics to support their writing skills, but use a variety of other strategies, e.g. visual memory for word recall or spelling.

7.2.5 Spelling Programme

In addition to the above word level work the children follow the Frank Barnes Spelling Programme; it includes nine graded levels, each containing ten sets of words. Each set is made up of a semantic field of common vocabulary, for example, pets, colours, food and common spelling patterns, for example, 'oo' 'ai' 'ea' etc. Each level is colour-coded to promote child independence and accompanied by a self-assessment sheet so the children can record their own progress.

Spellings are practised and learned using a 'Look – Fingerspell – Cover – Write – Check' approach. It is expected that the majority of our children will learn a minimum of one set a week. Children receive stickers for the sets learned and a certificate for a completed level.