

Literacy and English within Scotland's curriculum

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Introduction

The focus of this thematic inspection emerged from several factors, including international comparisons, recommendations in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) report '[Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future](#)', and national policy priorities.

Included in the OECD recommendations was a curriculum review. It is recommended that Scotland should:

“Develop a systematic approach to curriculum review: Scotland could consider establishing a curriculum review cycle with a planned time frame and specific review agenda, led by the specialist stand-alone agency”.

Additionally, inspection evidence has revealed variability in the quality of how settings and schools within different local authorities deliver Scotland's literacy and English curriculum. This has a direct impact on the learning outcomes of children and young people.

To support the Curriculum Improvement Cycle, His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education announced a national thematic inspection of literacy and English. The purpose was to provide evidence of what was working well and what needed to improve in the curriculum. The findings of this inspection are detailed in this report.

Scotland's national measures of attainment and achievement in reading, writing, and listening and talking, based on the [Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence \(CfE\) Levels \(ACEL\)](#), show steady improvement since academic year 2021-22.

In academic year 2024-25:

- for pupils in primary 1, primary 4 and primary 7 combined, the proportion achieving the expected levels is the highest to date for literacy
- for pupils in S3, the proportions achieving third level or better in literacy are the highest to date
- for the individual literacy organisers (listening and talking; reading; and writing) at primary level, attainment was highest in listening and talking and lowest in writing
- for S3 pupils, attainment across the individual literacy organisers at third level was more consistent
- the attainment gap among primary pupils combined was at its narrowest ever for literacy
- attainment in literacy has improved for pupils from both the most and least deprived areas

As attainment for the most deprived has improved by more than the least deprived, the attainment gap has narrowed, from 20.2 percentage points in 2023-24 to 19.4 percentage points in 2024-25.

The literacy attainment gap among S3 pupils for the proportion achieving third level was at its narrowest ever. For S3, both the most deprived and least deprived areas have seen an increase in the proportion of pupils achieving third level for literacy to the highest since records began in 2016-17. As attainment among pupils in the most deprived areas has risen by more than it has for those in the least deprived areas, the attainment gap has narrowed from 12.7 percentage points in 2023-24 to 10.8 percentage points in 2024-25.

Attainment in [National Qualifications](#) at grades A to C in Higher English in 2024-25 has remained broadly stable compared with 2018/19. However, attainment at grades A to C in Advanced Higher English and National 5 English in 2024/25 is lower than in 2018/19.

International comparisons of Scottish attainment in reading through the [OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment \(PISA\)](#) show that Scotland's reading performance in 2022 was above the OECD average and comparable to many peer countries. The proportion of low-performing readers and top performers had increased since 2018. The PISA report states that socioeconomic background continues to have a significant impact on attainment. Girls continued to outperform boys in reading, and children and young people demonstrated resilience and a strong sense of belonging, despite challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

This report begins with the main findings across all sectors, followed by detailed sectoral evidence. We conclude with recommendations for staff in schools and early learning and childcare (ELC) settings, local authorities, national bodies and the Scottish Government.

We found strengths in each sector. However, aspects of the literacy and English curriculum and the quality of learning and teaching in literacy and English need to continue improving. From our evidence, we have set out what is working well, what needs to improve and the barriers to improvement that settings and schools are facing.

Progression of knowledge and skills in literacy and English

Most practitioners and teachers plan a progressive curriculum in literacy and English and early communication and language, using the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) framework appropriately, for children and young people in settings and schools in Scotland. They track and monitor the progress of most children and young people regularly.

Overall, most children and young people make good progress in their learning in literacy and English. Children's knowledge in literacy and English is improving due to structured and progressive teaching approaches. However, teachers and practitioners need to make better use of progression pathways when tracking and monitoring.

Staff need to improve their planning of listening and talking to ensure that children and young people make progress in their learning. While planned listening and talking activities are often highly relevant and meaningful for children, staff need to ensure that these experiences build clearly on prior skills. They need to support children and young people in understanding the purpose of listening and talking activities and how to tell when they are successful. Children need to be supported to increase their knowledge of the tools for listening and talking.

What is working well

Most teachers in primary schools and English teachers in secondary schools use progression frameworks well when planning children's learning in literacy and English. These are linked to CfE experiences and outcomes and national Benchmarks.

In secondary schools, senior phase courses are planned in line with Qualifications Scotland (QS) requirements. QS was previously known as the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

Most teachers in the special sector use CfE experiences and outcomes or milestones to support learners with complex additional support needs. In early learning and childcare settings, most practitioners use CfE progression frameworks or developmental milestones to plan children's learning. Practitioners in almost all settings plan individual learning targets for all children. In the best examples, these targets are developed in consultation with parents and children. This helps children and parents to be clear about the next steps in learning.

In the secondary sector, all English teachers know that the development of young people's literacy skills is central to their role. Almost all teachers outwith English departments understand that literacy is the responsibility of all. In some secondary schools, some teachers identify opportunities for young people to develop their literacy skills within their curricular areas. However, this is not yet consistent across departments or schools. Teachers in almost all English departments collaborate with colleagues in the school to support literacy across the curriculum. In the strongest examples, this is leading to shared approaches to the development and teaching of literacy across some departments.

Secondary English teachers have a good understanding of the essential knowledge that young people need in order to communicate well, in school and for life beyond school. They plan courses that allow young people to develop a broad understanding of the world and their place in society. Through these courses, young people are increasing their knowledge of literacy techniques and writing conventions.

In the special sector, and for children and young people who require additional support across sectors, staff use a 'team around the child' approach to plan individualised education programmes. This approach includes meeting regularly with multi-agency partners, parents, and children and young people to plan individual targets for literacy and English and communication and language. However, these targets are not of a consistently high standard. Too often, they are not specific enough.

Across sectors, there is a need to ensure that individual targets are well-matched to children and young people's individual needs and are measurable. All staff must ensure that they review plans regularly using the 'team around the child' approach. They must ensure that new targets build on children and young people's prior learning in literacy and English and early communication and language.

In all sectors, senior leaders meet regularly with teachers to track and monitor children's progress in communication and language, literacy and English. This is helping most staff to have a clearer understanding of children's progress.

In primary schools and a few early learning and childcare settings, staff make increasingly effective use of data to identify gaps in children's knowledge and skills and provide targeted support. In secondary schools, teachers in most English departments have their own attainment tracker for all stages and regularly review young people's progress.

In the best examples, teachers use the information in these trackers well to measure young people's progress, plan support and track the effectiveness of such interventions. However, there is considerable variability in the effectiveness of the use of trackers. Senior leaders and leaders of English departments need to consider the usefulness of tracking systems and how these support teachers in planning for young people's progress in learning.

Challenges to address

There is a national expectation that all staff in all settings and schools use progression frameworks linked to CfE experiences and outcomes or developmental milestones to plan children and young people's learning in communication, language, literacy, and English. Although children and young people do progress in their learning, there are still gaps in how consistently knowledge is developed across all aspects of literacy and English.

Staff should ensure that all children and young people are able to make progress through the curriculum. For children and young people who require additional support, and children in early learning and childcare, staff must ensure that targets set in individualised education plans are specific, measurable and achievable within a given timescale.

In secondary schools, most teachers outwith English departments need to strengthen their use of data about children's progress and attainment in literacy and English to support their curriculum planning. This should help to ensure that all young people experience clear progression across all curricular areas.

The relevance of the literacy and English curriculum

Across settings and schools, staff provide a relevant and motivating curriculum, in and beyond the classroom. In outdoor education, children develop their literacy and English skills well, for example, creating safety advice for learning outdoors.

Children and young people engage in literacy and English activities in relevant contexts, such as writing to local services about issues that affect them. These activities motivate children and provide them with a clear purpose to their learning. However, teachers should ensure that children and young people are able to consistently apply skills they have learned during literacy and English lessons. This could help them to apply their learning across the curriculum and link to the world of work.

What is working well

In settings and primary schools, staff consult with children regularly about what they would like to learn. Children and young people across most sectors are asked which texts they would like to read. Reading texts of their choosing helps to make the literacy and English curriculum meaningful and relevant. In primary schools, children often develop their grammar, spelling and punctuation skills through discrete lessons. However, they do not always transfer the skills learned in these lessons to their writing in relevant contexts.

Practitioners in settings are developing literacy-rich environments, indoors and outdoors, in which children play and learn, while developing their listening and talking, reading and writing skills. They provide provocations which make learning meaningful and relevant for children, such as shopping lists in role-play areas and recipe books in mud kitchens. Through this, children are beginning to understand different types of texts through real-life purposes. They are being exposed to a wide range of vocabulary and using words in new contexts.

Children and young people in all sectors benefit from regular visits to the local community, such as shops and care homes. This brings learning opportunities alive for children as they engage in listening and talking through conversation. In primary and secondary schools, children and young people have opportunities to practise and develop their writing skills in learning experiences linked to other curricular areas. For example, they create fact files about local history or write letters to local businesses requesting information or thank you letters following visits. In the best examples in special schools, teachers plan learning which links across the curriculum, taking account of how to make the learning accessible for all.

Across Scotland, practitioners and teachers plan a curriculum in which children and young people are developing skills for life, learning and work. Younger children are developing their listening and talking skills and confidence as they ask questions to find out about people's jobs, such as firefighters and nurses. Older children and young people make presentations to peers and adults or lead initiatives within the school, such as reading groups or promoting the library. This develops their skills of communication and cooperation.

Across Scotland, children and young people benefit from learning about Scots language through texts, stories and songs. This is usually during cultural celebrations, such as Robert Burns' birthday and St Andrew's Day. Children enjoy learning and reciting Scots poems and songs, reading texts written in Scots or learning about Scottish authors. In secondary schools, most young people working at Broad General Education (BGE) often study texts with a Scottish theme or context. Young people in the senior phase study courses which include mandatory Scottish set texts.

Challenges to address

Across all sectors, staff need to ensure that children and young people understand the skills they are developing through their literacy and English curriculum. Teachers need to support children and young people to transfer the skills they have learned in discrete literacy lessons to their wider work. Children and young people would benefit from regular opportunities to discuss the skills they are developing and how these relate to their learning across other curriculum areas, their life and future work. This should help them to make connections between their experiences and the relevance of literacy to their daily lives.

Across the BGE in all sectors, staff need to ensure that children experience progression in their learning of Scots language. They need to ensure that robust information about texts used is passed between stages so that practitioners and teachers build on children's previous knowledge and avoid repetition.

Knowledge and understanding of the literacy and English curriculum

Practitioners and teachers demonstrate good knowledge of the literacy and English curriculum. They use this knowledge to effectively plan engaging activities that support children and young people in developing their literacy skills.

What is working well

The majority of all staff across all sectors engage in high-quality professional learning, which is contributing positively to literacy outcomes. Training delivered by external partners, such as speech and language therapists and national programmes, enhances staff confidence and improves teaching approaches in literacy, English and communication. This is leading to more targeted support for children and young people and a stronger understanding of effective literacy pedagogy.

In some schools, staff have undertaken high-quality professional learning focused on improving learning and teaching. Although this training has not been specific to literacy and English, staff report improvements in pedagogy across all curricular areas. This has led to more high-quality learning experiences in literacy and English for children and young people and is helping to support a high-quality curriculum offer.

Staff across several schools and settings engage in a wide range of professional learning activities to deepen their understanding of the literacy and English curriculum. Across early years settings and primary schools, practitioners and teachers undertake training in specific writing or reading programmes. In doing so, they successfully enhance their knowledge of structured writing or reading approaches and how these support delivery of the literacy and English curriculum.

Practitioners and teachers are developing their knowledge of the languages, dialects and literature of Scotland. As a result, the study of Scots language is a feature in the curriculum of most settings. This is very often linked to cultural studies and events such as Burns Night. Children and young people are encouraged to explore written and spoken Scots texts. This is supporting them to engage with the language and create their own texts.

The participation of teachers and practitioners in literacy-based moderation activities, both within schools and with colleagues in other settings, has increased. This is having a positive impact on practitioner and teacher confidence in assessing children and young people's progress and attainment. Across a few settings, staff engage in cross-sector moderation between nursery and primary, and primary and secondary. This supports a shared understanding of progression across Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels.

Challenges to address

Some secondary teachers, other than English teachers, do not have a secure understanding of how they can support young people to develop literacy skills in their curricular area. Local authorities and senior leaders need to plan how to best support all staff in secondary schools to develop their knowledge of the literacy curriculum. Embedding this knowledge will help to improve outcomes for young people in all aspects of the curriculum.

While planned moderation activities are becoming more frequent, these events are often a verification of assessment judgements. Senior leaders across all sectors need to ensure that the full moderation cycle becomes an integral part of curriculum planning for effective learning and teaching. Transition arrangements between primary and secondary schools often include activities that are identified as moderation events. Typically, these events involve secondary teachers working with primary colleagues to develop a shared understanding of attainment levels.

To ensure improvement, senior leaders should extend these activities to include secondary teachers from all curricular areas. This will support teachers to understand what children and young people's prior attainment levels mean. They will then be able to apply this knowledge to meet the needs of all learners. There is also scope for practitioners to moderate outwith their own setting, including working with P1 teachers. This will support the development of a shared understanding of progression across early level.

Planning the literacy and English curriculum

Across all sectors, staff plan engaging programmes of learning that support the delivery of the literacy and English curriculum. Most teachers and practitioners have a secure understanding of how to plan courses that will enable children and young people to be effective communicators.

What is working well

In early years settings, practitioners are making better use of frameworks to assist in curricular planning for literacy and English learning and to identify appropriate and identifiable next steps in learning. In almost all primary schools and English departments, teachers make effective use of planning frameworks to ensure coverage of literacy skills. These are often linked with the national Benchmarks and allow for planned progression of literacy skills development. Where possible, primary teachers work effectively with colleagues to plan learning. This is supporting more consistent approaches to learning and teaching across the school. Staff use local authority progression frameworks effectively, where these are available, to plan an appropriate literacy and English curriculum.

The most effective English departments have recently reviewed the literacy and English curriculum in S1 to S3. In these schools, collaboration across departments is leading to a greater understanding of how their curricular area and the literacy curriculum complement each other. As a result, teachers have a shared understanding of how young people can and should apply their literacy skills in all areas of the curriculum. In many schools, staff prioritise the development of aspects of literacy, including it as a priority on improvement plans. This is supporting more consistency in the planning and delivery of the literacy and English curriculum.

Challenges to address

There are good examples of engaging transitions programmes between early learning and childcare and primary, and primary and secondary. However, staff need to include more detailed and focused information at those transition points. This will help practitioners and teachers to avoid repeating topics and resources. Repetition can lead to a lack of challenge and interest from children and young people.

In secondary schools, transition planning should involve a wider number of subject specialists. This will support teachers in planning courses that meet the literacy needs of all learners. Senior leaders need to consider how best to work with practitioners and teachers on developing a shared understanding of planning for a high-quality curriculum. Children and young people will benefit from planning that focuses on the next steps in literacy learning for individuals, rather than cohorts and groups of learning.

Teaching of the literacy and English curriculum

Across all sectors, practitioners and teachers have a firm understanding of the literacy and English experiences and outcomes. They plan engaging lessons and activities that support the development of literacy skills. Children and young people enjoy literacy and English lessons and activities.

What is working well

Practitioners, primary teachers and some English teachers are developing children and young people's love of reading well. Children and young people are encouraged to engage with a wide variety of texts. Practitioners and teachers plan well-considered lessons and activities to develop children and young people's skills in decoding different types of texts.

Across all sectors, lessons and activities focus on developing children and young people's literacy skills. In most primary schools, there are clear progression frameworks that teachers use well to plan learning and teaching that support children to develop increasingly complex literacy skills. In secondary settings, English teachers have created positive environments for learning and teaching. In the strongest departments, young people are asked which types of learning activities they enjoy most. This is leading to young people feeling more engaged and interested in their learning.

Practitioners and teachers are making increasingly effective use of digital learning resources to support children and young people's literacy development. In almost all settings and schools, digital tools such as phonics apps, interactive storytelling platforms and speech-to-text software support children and young people to develop reading fluency, comprehension and writing confidence.

Teachers are becoming more confident in using learning applications and are developing their knowledge and skills of how digital tools can support literacy progression. Across all sectors, there is a clear understanding of the need to balance the use of digital and non-digital resources.

High-quality questioning has been identified as a priority for improvement in several settings and schools. As a result of this, practitioners and teachers are making good use of questioning to check for understanding. Through this, they extend children and young people's vocabulary and encourage engagement with texts. In the strongest examples, questioning is used to prompt inference and personal responses. This encourages children and young people to be reflective and to think more deeply about their learning.

Challenges to address

In early settings, practitioners should consider how they can support children to make connections with what they are learning and the wider world. Children should be supported to identify where they can apply their developing literacy skills to real-life contexts for learning, life and work.

In primary schools, teachers should work with children to help them identify ways in which they can be successful in their learning. Involving children in discussions focusing on what successful learning looks like should ensure that they understand each step in the learning process. By identifying the steps to success at the outset, children have ownership of their learning and clear criteria to support self-assessment and identify their next steps.

In secondary schools, some teachers, other than English teachers, need to have a stronger understanding of how to support and develop young people's literacy skills in their curricular areas. Teachers need to have a greater understanding of how young people's literacy attainment impacts their ability to access texts and resources. This, in turn, limits some young people's engagement in their learning and can negatively impact on their progress across the curriculum.

Assessment and feedback of the literacy and English curriculum

What is working well

Across schools, practitioners and teachers use a wide range of formative and summative assessments to assess children and young people's progress in reading and writing. They discuss the results of assessments at tracking meetings and use this information well to influence their planning. In many early learning and childcare settings, staff observe children closely and use their observations of children's learning to plan next steps. In some schools, teachers use pre and post-assessments to successfully measure the progress children are making because of targeted literacy interventions.

In most settings and schools, practitioners and teachers are increasingly confident in using progression pathways and national Benchmarks to assess children's learning. Moderation activities within schools help staff develop a shared understanding of standards, particularly in writing. In primary and secondary schools, children and young people self-assess and reflect on their learning. This is helping them to understand what they are learning and what they need to do next.

Challenges to address

In most settings and schools, there is a need for senior and middle leaders to develop further staff's understanding of high-quality formative assessment. This includes co-creating success criteria with children and young people.

In some schools, the steps to success are too broad, making it difficult for children and young people to understand how well they are doing. Staff should improve the quality and consistency of written and oral feedback so that it clearly supports children's learning in literacy and English. In many schools, the monitoring and tracking of progress in listening and talking is not yet robust enough. Enhancing assessment in this area will support a more balanced and accurate picture of children and young people's progress across all aspects of literacy.

In most secondary schools, assessment and moderation of attainment in literacy is limited to English departments. There is scope for teachers, across the curriculum, to gather evidence for the assessment of literacy. Teachers should ensure that assessment approaches in literacy and English allow children and young people to apply their learning in new and unfamiliar contexts. Staff in all schools and settings need to engage more regularly in moderation activities beyond their own schools or settings to improve the consistency of assessment judgements and ensure alignment with national standards.

Children and young people's views of the ethos and environment for learning

Children and young people shared their experiences of learning literacy and English in their schools and settings. They enjoy learning literacy and English through real-life contexts that are relevant and have a real purpose. Children and young people value the positive and supportive environments in which they learn.

What is working well

Children and young people express positive views about the ethos and environments in which they learn literacy and English. Across sectors, there is a strong, nurturing ethos that supports children's learning in literacy and English. Practitioners and teachers establish positive relationships and create spaces where children and young people feel safe, respected and confident to express themselves.

Most children and young people we spoke to were able to provide examples of how they apply their literacy and English skills through other curricular areas, mainly social subjects and the wider life of the school. Children and young people appreciate when their learning in literacy and English connects naturally across the curriculum. They enjoy learning through real-life contexts and play-based learning, and when they are actively involved in their learning. They feel more connected to the purpose of their learning when they develop and practise literacy and English skills through topics or project work.

Classrooms and outdoor areas in settings and primary schools are typically well-resourced with books, mark-making tools and visual supports. Children and young people enjoy these literacy-rich environments and can provide examples of how this impacts positively on their learning.

Challenges to address

Across schools and settings, there are inconsistencies in how literacy is embedded in different curricular areas. Teachers should ensure that learners understand how they are developing literacy and English skills and how they transfer these skills across the curriculum and into life and work. In secondary schools, young people are not always clear on how their literacy work across their subjects contributes to their overall literacy development.

Children and young people's interest and engagement in the literacy and English curriculum

What is working well

Children and young people are most engaged when the literacy and English curriculum is delivered through meaningful and relevant contexts. Across all sectors, role-play, storytelling, visits to local libraries and community projects spark curiosity and deepen learning. In early years, children enjoy developing their literacy skills through play, mark-making, storytelling and literacy activities integrated into daily routines.

Primary pupils enjoy writing tasks that have a clear purpose and audience, such as writing letters to authors or creating posters. Young people in secondary schools value opportunities to explore contemporary issues through texts and media.

Digital tools play a significant role in enhancing engagement with the literacy and English curriculum. Children and young people enjoy using digital tools, such as bar matrix codes, interactive whiteboards and assistive technologies. They report that these improve their engagement and enhance their work. Children, including those with literacy-specific difficulties, report that tools like speech-to-text and immersive readers help them access literacy tasks more effectively, boosting confidence and outcomes.

Children and young people are most engaged when the literacy curriculum is meaningful, offers choice and develops creativity. Activities such as 'Book of the Week', creating presentations, using digital tools for quizzes, and outdoor learning are particularly well-received.

Older pupils value opportunities for 'free writing'. When they are able to choose texts or topics, they report that they are more engaged and feel a stronger sense of ownership. This strengthens their independence and develops increased confidence in their literacy skill development.

In secondary schools, most young people in the senior phase are aware of the progress they are making through the English curriculum. They engage in learning conversations with their teachers. They feel that these conversations help them identify their next steps for learning.

Across broad general education (BGE), a minority of young people are confident in stating the level at which they are working. In primary schools, children value the feedback they receive from their teachers and, in some schools, from their peers. Children and young people feel that teachers know them well as individuals and that this and the feedback they receive help them improve their work.

In primary schools, children speak enthusiastically about reading and show genuine enjoyment in reading. They report a love of reading for pleasure and value being able to visit inviting library spaces and engage in regular reading events. They enjoy texts that are relevant, accessible and diverse.

Many schools offer children and young people opportunities to develop their literacy and English skills through pupil voice groups. Children and young people are engaged and motivated by their involvement in these groups. They show high levels of interest when these groups focus on developing the literacy skills of others. For instance, some schools have reading ambassadors who organise peer-led initiatives and improve library spaces.

Children and young people shared that this is developing a positive reading culture. They also recognise how these groups enhance their own literacy skills. For example, their listening and talking skills are developed through their teamwork and presentations to the wider school community.

Challenges to address

Some children and young people feel that aspects of their literacy and English curriculum can be disconnected from their interests. They would welcome more genuine engagement with their teachers in planning the literacy and English curriculum and in influencing how it is delivered, especially in writing activities. While many enjoy structured programmes, they also seek greater opportunities for creativity and individuality in listening and talking, reading and writing.

In upper primary and secondary schools, children and young people would benefit from clearer connections between the literacy and English curriculum and the skills they are developing for learning, life and work. They need to know that reading builds critical thinking and writing supports communication. This would help children and young people understand the subject's relevance and encourage greater engagement.

In primary and secondary schools, teachers should ensure that all children are fully aware of the progress they are making through the literacy and English curriculum. They need to know their next steps and how to progress in their learning. Feedback to children and young people needs to be high-quality, specific and related to the steps to success. Children would benefit from being fully involved in setting and evaluating their own literacy and English targets. This should allow them to take more responsibility for their learning and help them become more independent and self-motivated.

All schools and settings should increase opportunities for children to lead school improvements in literacy and English. This should lead to literacy initiatives that are engaging and relevant to children and young people. They can learn from each other and model positive attitudes towards reading and writing.

Literacy and English in early learning and childcare

Progression

Practitioners in early learning and childcare settings have a strong focus on developing a curriculum that supports children in developing their communication and language skills. Staff develop nurturing, respectful relationships with children that help them to confidently communicate their needs and wants to practitioners. Staff know and understand the individual communication and language needs of children in their settings.

Practitioners in early learning and childcare settings support children successfully in developing their early communication and language skills. Increasingly, practitioners use helpful progression frameworks to plan children's learning. These frameworks are linked to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) early level literacy and English experiences and outcomes or developmental milestone pathways. This is helping practitioners develop a better understanding of children's progress in early communication and language. Most practitioners effectively plan a wide range of adult-led, adult-initiated and child-led learning in early communication and language.

Practitioners observe children's learning and record significant learning in floor books and individual learning journals. However, practitioners need to identify more clearly the early communication and language skills that children are developing and record these more consistently. This should help them identify clear skills-based next steps in learning early communication and language for all children. It could also help practitioners to make more robust professional judgements about children's progress in early communication and language. Staff need to ensure that all children are given appropriate challenge in their learning of early communication and language, particularly those children who experience a third year in nursery due to parents choosing to defer entry to primary school.

Practitioners in the majority of settings track and monitor children's progress through CfE literacy and English progression pathways or early communication and language developmental milestones. Senior leaders and practitioners meet regularly to discuss and track individual children's progress.

In a few settings, staff identify children with gaps in their learning and provide targeted support. Often, this targeted support focuses on developing children's vocabulary or sentence structure. However, this targeted support is not yet a widespread practice. In a few settings, there is a need to improve practitioners' skills in analysing information about children's progress. This should help them to plan better to support all children to make the best possible progress.

Within settings, practitioners discuss observations of children's learning in early communication and language regularly. However, there is a need for strategically planned moderation of children's learning in communication and language within settings and outwith settings.

Practitioners and teachers in P1 need to meet more regularly to moderate and discuss progression across early CfE level. This should help staff working across early level have a shared understanding of children's progression in early communication and language.

Listening and talking

Practitioners make effective use of play environments to develop children's communication, listening and talking skills. They provide a wide range of provocations that inspire children to discuss and explain their learning. For example, children explain in detail to adults what they have constructed with a range of natural materials.

As children play and learn, practitioners interact carefully with them to engage them in conversations by commenting and asking questions. This supports the development of children's listening and talking skills.

However, these interactions are not of a consistently high quality across and within settings. In a few settings, practitioners need to ask more open-ended questions.

This should support children in developing their vocabulary as they explain their thinking. Children enjoy contributing to storytelling sessions and retelling well-known stories in their play. They successfully predict what will happen next or how characters are feeling in a story.

Children are encouraged to talk with practitioners and each other about what they already know and what they would like to learn next. Through these activities, children develop important listening and talking skills such as turn-taking, asking relevant questions and listening to the responses of others.

Children enjoy developing their listening and talking skills as they communicate with members of their community during outings. They ask relevant questions and listen carefully to adult responses. Children develop their communication and language skills well as they use natural and open-ended resources to extend their learning.

Reading

In most settings, practitioners are developing motivating play environments, both indoors and outdoors. They support children well to develop a love of reading. They provide a wide range of non-fiction and fiction books, which children enjoy accessing on their own, with peers or with adults.

There are many strong examples of practitioners supporting families to develop their child's communication and language skills at home. In a few settings, practitioners include parents in activities to develop children's vocabulary through reading. They model storytelling sessions for parents and provide book bags for families to take home regularly. These often contain books, games and clear prompt sheets to support parents when sharing a book with their child.

Settings work with local library staff to provide workshops for parents about using book bags and how to share a story effectively with a child. This is an important strength in settings' work as it helps parents to develop key skills in storytelling and sharing a story with their child. It also enables parents to support their child's communication and language development when sharing books at home. It is important that senior leaders in schools build on this effective practice to help all parents continue to support their child's literacy and English learning as they progress through their education. Most children benefit from opportunities to develop reading skills in all areas of the nursery. For instance, children 'read recipes' to support them as they play in mud kitchens, which helps them read with purpose, beyond reading stories.

Children particularly enjoy singing songs and rhymes about areas of interest or to support developing numeracy skills. Across settings, children would benefit from further opportunities to share songs and rhymes more regularly to help them develop their knowledge and understanding of rhyme.

Children enjoy settling down in quiet corners to access the range of fiction and non-fiction texts. Where books are provided throughout the setting, children benefit from accessing texts relevant to that area. One setting we visited had books about diggers and cranes in the construction area, which children enjoyed accessing to support their play. Practitioners encourage children to retell stories and make predictions about texts. Often children are observed re-enacting stories in their role-play or play with puppets or small world characters.

Practitioners must ensure that all children have opportunities to develop their reading across the curriculum through literacy-rich environments. They need to ensure that children have access to a wide range of texts throughout the nursery and across the curriculum.

Writing

Almost all practitioners plan a few provocations to promote early writing skills throughout the curriculum. They provide a range of learning activities and provocations for children to practise these skills, both indoors and outdoors. However, these are not of a consistently high quality or quantity in most settings. In a few settings, children enjoy using their emergent writing skills to label resources or 'write' stories.

Practitioners in a few settings are particularly successful in using floor books to record children's ideas and thoughts about what they are learning and what they would like to learn next. Children enjoy 'writing' their thoughts in these books using their mark-making and emergent writing skills. This gives children a relevant and meaningful context for mark-making and writing.

Practitioners need to improve how children are supported in developing their emergent and pre-writing skills. They need to provide more mark-making and writing resources throughout settings for children to access. Practitioners are beginning to focus on the development of children's mark-making and writing skills. A minority of practitioners have a sound understanding of the skills children need before they can write, such as hand-eye coordination or gross motor skills.

Most children enjoy developing their gross motor skills as they run, jump, balance and climb outdoors. They develop their fine motor skills through activities such as threading or manipulating playdough.

Children enjoy developing their mark-making, emergent writing and motor skills on interactive whiteboards and digital tablets. Consequently, most experiences are planned to ensure that children develop their fine motor skills, gross motor skills, and hand-eye coordination across the curriculum successfully.

Digital learning

Most settings have digital technology devices that children can engage with. However, the availability of digital devices within settings varies greatly. Where devices are available, children enjoy developing their mark-making and emergent writing skills on interactive whiteboards and digital tablets. They develop their vocabulary effectively as they use programmable toys. In a few settings, practitioners support children well in updating their online learning profiles. This allows children to share their learning timeously and regularly with their families. Children are confident in using matrix barcodes to access online books and literacy games. Across Scotland, practitioners are aware of limiting children's 'screen-time' throughout the day. They balance this time well with other activities. However, in a few settings, practitioners need to include more high-quality learning opportunities through digital technology.

Scots language

Across Scotland, children benefit from a curriculum that includes learning about Scotland's culture. This work occurs mostly during cultural celebrations, such as St Andrew's Day and Robert Burns' birthday.

Children enjoy singing Scottish songs and rhymes and listening to stories written in the Scots dialect. Practitioners often plan this work as part of a context for learning. They now need to link this learning specifically to the early level literacy and English curriculum.

Practitioners need to share clear details at times of transition to primary school about which stories, songs and rhymes have been covered in early learning and childcare settings. This should help teachers in P1 to build on children's prior learning and avoid repetition.

The literacy and English curriculum through relevant contexts

Practitioners have a strong focus on planning a curriculum for children that is highly relevant to the context in which they live and learn. They recognise that children learn best when they are interested in and motivated by their learning. Across settings, children benefit from regular visits to their local environment, such as local shops, parks and care homes. Children enjoy developing their listening and talking skills when they communicate with members of their community during these outings. They ask relevant questions and listen carefully to adult responses. Practitioners support children to identify and 'read' environmental texts, such as road signs and shop names, when out in the community. This helps children understand the importance of the written word.

Practitioners in almost all settings help children to develop their communication and language skills well as they contribute to the life of the setting. Children use visual charts and tables to record and share their findings, for example, as they risk assess outdoor areas for play.

Meeting children's needs

Practitioners in almost all settings plan individual communication and language learning targets for all children. In most settings, these targets are not yet routinely developed in consultation with parents and children. Practitioners must ensure that they include children and parents in reviewing and setting targets for learning. This should help children and parents to be clear about children's next steps in learning.

Most practitioners have a strong focus on supporting children who require additional support or have English as an additional language (EAL) to develop their vocabulary and sentence structure. However, professional learning on communication strategies for all practitioners would support them to work more effectively with children who require additional support or have English as an additional language. In a minority of settings, practitioners meet with parents and colleagues from other agencies to plan individualised education plans for children who require support with their learning. They need to ensure that all targets set for children are specific, measurable and achievable within a given timescale.

Professional learning

In a minority of settings, practitioners engage regularly with training that helps them to meet the communication and language needs of children attending the setting. This includes professional learning about storytelling, vocabulary development, sign language and sentence structuring. In a few settings, practitioners engaged with professional learning about assisting families with EAL. This is helping them to engage families with EAL in the life and work of the setting.

Practitioners across Scotland need to engage with high-quality professional learning more often. This should help them to develop their skills in providing a curriculum that supports children well to develop their early communication and language skills.

Senior leaders should ensure that practitioners engage with professional learning to develop their skills in asking high-quality questions and using high-quality comments in all their interactions with children.

Speech and language therapy colleagues provide useful training for practitioners in the majority of settings on strategies to support children who require it. Practitioners use these strategies well in whole setting activities and small group interventions. A minority of the settings we visited are successful in supporting parents with these strategies to help their children at home. In a minority of settings, practitioners make effective use of signing and visuals to help children who require support with language to communicate with each other. In a minority of settings,

children are learning to sign using, for example, British Sign Language. This is supporting them when interacting with their peers.

Literacy and English in primary schools

Progression

Teachers use local authority or school progression frameworks well to plan the literacy and English curriculum. These align to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) experiences and outcomes and national Benchmarks. As a result, staff demonstrate an increasing confidence in their understanding of the use of national Benchmarks. Teachers help children at all stages to make consistent progress in literacy and English. They work together well to ensure that children's learning through the curriculum is consistent and progressive. They use structured programmes for teaching phonics, grammar, spelling and handwriting.

Where practice is highly effective, teachers refer to prior learning and give children feedback linked to the agreed steps to success. This supports children to see the progress they are making and their next steps in learning.

In a few schools, teachers facilitate purposeful transition meetings to pass attainment and progress information on to the new teacher. This ensures that staff gain knowledge about children and build successfully on their prior learning.

Teachers use a range of assessments to support children's progress. These include formative, summative and standardised assessments,

including National Standardised Assessments (NSA) for reading and writing.

In schools where senior leaders have implemented an assessment calendar, staff assessments are consistent and effective. They support staff in monitoring children's progress and identify gaps in learning. Most teachers take part in moderation with colleagues, primarily focused on writing. This helps to develop a shared understanding of progress and achievement and improves the consistency of teacher judgements.

Senior leaders need to ensure that teachers have regular opportunities to moderate across schools and to build confidence in assessing all areas of literacy, not just writing. They should plan high-quality assessments that support children to demonstrate application and skills in new and unfamiliar contexts.

Listening and talking

Teachers plan to develop children's listening and talking skills through discussions, debates and presentations. These activities support communication and language development in meaningful contexts.

However, in the majority of schools, teachers need to plan the development and assessment of listening and talking skills more explicitly. This should ensure that all children make better progress.

Teachers model effective talking skills by giving clear explanations and using questioning well to check children's understanding and, in some cases, to extend thinking. Teachers should plan and ask questions that encourage children's higher-order thinking skills more regularly. By using

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strategies that encourage deeper engagement and purposeful dialogue, teachers should strengthen children's listening and talking skills further. These strategies are not yet embedded across schools. Senior leaders and staff need to monitor and track progress in listening and talking more robustly. Strengthening this will ensure a more balanced understanding of progress across all areas of literacy.

Reading

Teachers plan a range of reading activities to develop reading fluency and comprehension skills. These include class novels, group reading sessions and opportunities for children to engage in independent reading. Most children enjoy these opportunities to read for pleasure. In the early stages, teachers use approaches like 'Book of the Week' to promote enjoyment and comprehension, with follow-up activities that reinforce vocabulary and fine motor skills. In reading, children access online programmes and digital libraries that promote independent reading and reading for pleasure.

Teachers plan effectively for learning that links reading and writing. For example, children use reading skills to take notes and then use these notes to author reports. This helps children understand how reading and writing connect and deepen their comprehension.

Older children often read for research and apply their reading skills in writing tasks, presentations and debates. Children are able to become more articulate in discussing texts, using higher-order questioning strategies to deepen their understanding. Staff have created literacy-

rich environments, including inviting library spaces and whole-school reading initiatives, which help build a strong reading culture.

Children enjoy playing literacy games on digital devices and literacy quizzes that support their learning in reading.

Writing

In most schools, teachers plan writing lessons through real-life contexts and across a range of genres. They mostly plan discrete learning activities that teach grammar, spelling and punctuation. Most children develop grammar, handwriting and punctuation skills through these lessons. Teachers need to ensure that children consistently transfer these skills into their extended writing. This should support them in improving the fluency, presentation and handwriting of all their writing. Children enjoy ‘free writing’, which they say encourages creativity and sustains their interest.

Staff use displays such as ‘What a Good One Looks Like’ (WAGOLL) and Vocabulary, Connectives, Openers, Punctuation (VCOP) to model high-quality writing. Children use these visual supports to improve their work. In most classrooms, teachers explain clearly the purpose of children’s writing and help them understand how to be successful. In a few schools, children co-create success criteria, which supports them to understand better how they can be successful in their learning. Children are supported to be more independent and reflective learners by this approach. This is not common practice, and more schools need to use this approach.

Teachers often provide children with verbal and written feedback on their writing. Children find this helpful when it is specific to the steps to success and supports improvement. However, the steps to success are often too broad and focus on the completion of tasks. As a result, children find it difficult to assess their progress and identify their next steps in writing.

Teachers should ensure that success criteria are measurable, child-friendly and linked clearly to the literacy skills being developed. Children value opportunities to engage in both peer and self-assessment. These approaches help them understand their next steps in learning. Children, particularly at early level, are not always expected to act on feedback or edit their work. To enhance literacy outcomes, teachers should encourage children to regularly set and revisit their targets and use feedback to improve future written work.

Digital learning

Teachers use digital technology effectively to enhance children's learning within the literacy and English curriculum. Children enjoy using technology to create digital books and presentations. They use tablets and laptops to plan, draft, edit and publish texts. This develops their creativity, writing and presentation skills. In a few schools, children use artificial intelligence to improve their writing. Through this, they get immediate feedback on their text or are able to generate images from their stories.

Children use digital tools to enhance their listening and talking skills. They create podcasts, record spoken performances such as puppet shows and news reports, and use text-to-speech tools to support communication. A few children use email and multimedia texts to link literacy skills to the real world.

These opportunities allow children to build reading and writing skills in meaningful contexts. Teachers use interactive whiteboards and multimedia resources well to support their teaching and model writing strategies. They enhance children's literacy and English learning by using various digital platforms and a wide range of applications. These include online spelling games, interactive quizzes and the use of search engines for research, which engage and motivate children. A few teachers express concern about the use of digital technology and its impact on children's concentration, handwriting and fine motor skills, particularly in the early years. In a few establishments, staff plan hands-on activities to develop children's skills in mark-making and dexterity.

Scots language

Senior leaders and teachers ensure that children regularly learn about Scotland's culture, identity and language through the literacy and English curriculum. Teachers plan engaging activities such as poetry recitals, Scots language storytelling and visits from Scottish authors. Many schools include Scots language and cultural themes in interdisciplinary learning (IDL) and annual events like St Andrew's Day and Burns Night celebrations. Children enjoy reading Scottish texts, performing in competitions and exploring local dialects.

In some schools, staff work with local partners to deepen children's understanding of Scottish heritage. This includes visits to local sites or learning local traditions, such as knitting. In the best practice, teachers align these cultural experiences with the literacy curriculum, ensuring progression from P1 to P7.

However, this is not yet common practice. Senior leaders need to embed this work more consistently across all classes and ensure progression in planning and learning. Children are enthusiastic and confident when sharing their learning in this area, showing strong engagement with Scotland's cultural heritage.

The literacy and English curriculum through relevant contexts

Teachers use real-life and local contexts well to deliver the literacy and English curriculum. They plan activities that link listening and talking, reading and writing to meaningful experiences such as writing letters to local businesses, interviewing visitors or recounting school events. Children apply their skills during outdoor learning, school trips and community projects. Teachers plan topics and use texts that reflect children's interests and backgrounds.

Children use their literacy skills in meaningful ways regularly, such as presenting to others, writing reports and taking part in debates. As a result, they are engaged and motivated in their learning. However, in some schools, these real-life links are not yet applied consistently.

In schools with strong practice, senior leaders and staff have developed a clear curriculum rationale that has a focus on developing children's literacy and English skills through relevant contexts. Most teachers involve children in choosing topics, which increases children's engagement and helps them see the purpose of their learning. Children are most engaged in literacy and English when they have opportunities to influence what and how they learn. Teachers plan activities that build literacy skills for learning, life and work. Children develop effective communication and cooperation skills by giving presentations, taking part in debates and completing application forms for leadership roles. This increases their confidence and self-esteem. They work regularly in pairs and groups, learning to cooperate and contribute effectively with each other.

In many schools, children have opportunities to develop as confident individuals, effective contributors, responsible citizens and successful learners through participation in pupil groups. They take on leadership roles such as reading ambassadors or digital leaders, and they organise and participate in community events. In schools with strong practice, teachers make explicit the purpose and relevance of learning. This includes reference to skill development. All teachers need to ensure that children are aware of the literacy and English skills they are developing through their learning and their wider school roles. They need to help children make links between the skills they are developing and how these connect to their future lives and work.

Across Scotland, primary teachers make strong connections between literacy and other areas of the curriculum. They support children well in developing their literacy and English skills through IDL. Children value the opportunities they get to develop their literacy skills through contextualised learning, outdoor and play activities. Most children can identify the connections between learning in literacy and English and their project work confidently. Teachers do not always identify specific literacy skills during planning. They should continue to make these links more explicit and consistent, ensuring that children understand how literacy supports their learning across all curricular areas.

Meeting children's needs

Teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to ensuring that all children successfully access the literacy and English curriculum. Most teachers plan differentiated tasks for different groups of children. Children use a range of supports, such as writing frames, reading materials and assistive technologies, to access learning and make progress. For example, they use digital tools, such as screen readers, to support independence and engagement. Senior leaders and teachers meet regularly to review children's progress. They use a range of data to identify next steps for children and plan interventions. As a result, in many schools, children benefit from targeted support in listening and talking, reading and writing, including one-to-one help and small group interventions. In schools with strong practice, teaching and support staff provide timely interventions that have clear, measurable and achievable targets. However, this is not yet widespread practice.

Teachers provide challenges for some children in literacy and English through extension tasks such as advanced reading materials or complex writing prompts. However, this is not consistent across schools. To better support all children to reach their full potential, teachers need to plan literacy activities that consistently provide appropriate challenge and stretch those children who can achieve more. They should encourage deeper comprehension, more sophisticated use of language and greater independence in listening and talking, reading and writing. Staff support children who have specific literacy challenges well. They identify needs early and provide targeted interventions. These include phonics programmes, spelling support and oral language activities. These help children make good progress.

Children who have English as an Additional Language (EAL) benefit from vocabulary teaching, dual-language resources and peer support.

Teachers work closely with support for learning staff and external partners, including speech and language therapists and educational psychologists, to plan and review support. In some schools, senior leaders track the impact of interventions carefully and adjust support as needed. However, in a few cases, support could be more regular or better targeted to ensure that all children continue to make good progress.

Leadership and professional learning

In primary schools, senior leaders take clear steps to help staff understand what progress through the literacy and English curriculum looks like. In many schools, staff prioritise the development of aspects of literacy, including it as a priority on improvement plans.

In high-performing schools, senior leaders use research to develop literacy policies. These clarify expectations and promote a shared approach to literacy across the curriculum.

A few schools have literacy leads or champions who support staff and share effective practice. They ensure that staff are aware of current research and approaches to support children. This results in a more consistent approach to the learning and teaching of the literacy and English curriculum across the school. Senior leaders carry out quality assurance processes to monitor the impact of learning and teaching approaches and children's experiences. As part of this, they observe children's learning in literacy and English and review children's work in jotters. Senior leaders meet regularly with teachers to review children's progress and plan next steps.

They make effective use of progression pathways, tracking systems and national Benchmarks to support this professional dialogue.

In the schools visited, teachers demonstrate a commitment to improving their knowledge and skills to teach the literacy and English curriculum. They participate in a range of professional learning to support their delivery of the literacy and English curriculum. Many teachers engage in training delivered by local authority staff and external agencies such as speech and language therapists and the EAL service. As a result of this training, teachers implement strategies that are improving children's literacy and communication skills.

In a few schools, teachers participate in a national writing programme. Through this, they are able to implement an improvement methodology and small tests of change. This is leading to improvements in attainment and an increase in children's confidence in writing.

Teachers report that they see an increase in the number of children who require additional support and children with EAL. Teachers access training and adapt their approaches to support them in meeting the diverse needs of all children. As a result, children with EAL benefit from targeted vocabulary and tailored strategies to ensure that they are able to access the curriculum. This is improving their language development and engagement. Teachers who receive training in dyslexia-friendly approaches create inclusive learning environments, implement practical classroom strategies and develop children's phonological awareness. These strategies promote structured, multi-sensory approaches that not only support dyslexic students but also benefit all children. As a result, they reduce barriers to learning successfully.

More staff in more schools need to engage in training on dyslexia to better meet the needs of children. In schools where practice is well developed, staff apply professional learning consistently and share their learning across the staff team.

Senior leaders should support staff to evaluate the impact of their learning and continue to build a shared understanding of effective literacy teaching. In a few schools, teachers plan effective play-based activities for children to develop their literacy skills.

Across schools, staff should continue to engage with national practice guidance to develop their approaches to developing literacy skills through play. They should develop their understanding of the relevance of play and help to plan for quality interactions, spaces and experiences. This should help to ensure that children are able to access and lead high-quality play that consolidates and extends their learning in literacy and English.

Literacy and English in secondary schools

Progression

Most departments make good use of attainment data from cluster primary schools. This allows for courses to be planned around the needs of all young people from an early stage in S1. Most English departments have their own attainment tracker for all stages in addition to whole school tracking approaches. English departments have regular reviews of learners' progress. Almost all schools share information regarding literacy levels and attainment as part of whole school tracking tools.

Outwith English departments, teachers' use of this information is inconsistent. In some schools, teachers from other curricular areas use this information to plan courses at appropriate levels. An increasing number of young people are transitioning to mainstream secondary school while working at CfE first and second levels. However, there is no clear understanding of how attainment levels link with young people's ability to access course materials and resources.

Teachers need to have a greater understanding of what achievement of a literacy level means and how this will impact course planning and pupil progression. By developing a clearer understanding of this, young people will benefit from a curriculum that better matches their needs and supports them to achieve more.

In almost all schools, English teachers use curriculum plans in Broad General Education (BGE) that reflect progressions pathways linked to CfE experiences and outcomes. Most pathways are aligned with national Benchmarks.

In all schools, senior phase courses are planned around the requirements of Qualifications Scotland (QS) courses. English departments plan their curriculum in the senior phase to meet the needs of learners and offer them appropriate and progressive pathways. Almost all English departments plan their BGE curriculum to align with CfE experiences and outcomes while also reflecting skills that will support young people to be well-equipped for QS courses.

All secondary schools visited offer English qualifications at National 4 (N4) level to Higher. Most offer Advanced Higher English either in school or through a consortium arrangement. The majority offer other communication-based courses from the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework, such as Communications and Literature.

Some schools offer the Scottish Studies qualification. This is leading to positive links across different subject areas as colleagues collaborate on planning courses and verifying assessment judgements.

In all schools, English teachers have responsibility for providing levels of attainment in literacy. There are occasional examples of evidence being sought from areas such as social subjects for confirmation of levels of attainment in writing. In a few schools, senior leaders have identified that refreshing their school's approach to literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing as a responsibility of all is a key priority. Senior leaders anticipate that it could lead to a broader evidence base for literacy attainment.

Listening and talking

English departments plan a variety of listening and talking activities throughout the curriculum. Almost all English teachers plan engaging talk activities on a day-to-day basis. Almost all English teachers are skilled in using questioning to assess understanding and to provoke deeper thinking and discussion about topics, texts and real-life issues. Teachers in almost all other curricular areas include talk activities such as group discussion and presentations regularly. In a minority of schools, teachers other than English teachers have a firm understanding of what is meant by progression in talk.

Young people discuss the importance of talking skills and how these link to their lives beyond education and their future employment plans positively. English teachers should consider how to link courses and programmes for listening and talking to the world beyond school. Often, curriculum plans include opportunities for listening and talking activities, but there is a lack of rigour in understanding their purpose. Young people are enthusiastic about opportunities to talk across the curriculum.

Teachers, however, are not confident that they can support young people to develop talking skills.

Reading

When planning the reading curriculum, often English teachers consult with young people regarding the types of texts and topics they would like to study. Consultation takes a variety of forms, from formal consultations to ad hoc discussions with classes. Where this is happening well, young people report that they are more engaged in their learning and that it is relevant to their interests. They particularly enjoy studying topics and texts about where they live.

In a few schools, reading across the curriculum has been prioritised. One of the ways that schools have addressed this is by encouraging staff to share what they are reading. This helps young people to see that everyone is a reader and that everyone has different genres they enjoy. This practice is not widespread, and senior leaders should consider how to support young people to see reading as a life skill. This positively impacts young people's learning and supports them throughout their lives.

Most English departments have developed the use of media texts such as films and podcasts in recent years. Young people welcome the inclusion of media texts. They feel that the texts are more accessible for a wider audience and are more likely to be of greater interest to them.

Most schools include topics and texts that have a Scottish theme or context. In the BGE, this is often a themed study of poetry or shorter stories. Courses for young people in the senior phase studying National 5 and Higher English include the study of a mandatory Scottish set text. The list of set texts has recently been revised, and teachers are considering the impact this will have on future courses.

There are examples of interesting cross-curricular studies linked to local areas. Productive links to local businesses can lead to learning about the history of the local area, historical figures and how Scotland's culture influences products. Young people benefit from these links as they identify how important their local area is to the wider community.

Most English departments have a variety of approaches to encourage young people to read for enjoyment. Typically, this includes encouraging young people to try reading different genres. Staff are also offering an increased use of different platforms, such as audiobooks and electronic texts. Most English departments have very productive links with school librarians, often involving the librarian as part of discussions regarding new and interesting texts. Teachers and librarians raised concerns regarding the reduction in school library provisions and the closing of local libraries. As a way of addressing this, school librarians are also encouraging young people to access texts for free via local library app services where these are available.

Writing

Almost all English departments have created clear and helpful progressive frameworks. English teachers are secure in their understanding of what progression looks like across and within levels.

There are a few examples of good literacy frameworks in other curricular areas, such as subject-specific vocabulary and approaches to creating texts, including science reports, evaluation essays in social subjects and extended essays in art and design.

Writing projects often form elements of transition work across clusters. A few clusters have developed a full moderation cycle based on a common topic, and this is supporting young people's transition to secondary well. Many schools need to work on a shared understanding of approaches to writing across clusters.

Almost all English departments plan their BGE writing curriculum to ensure young people experience writing in a variety of genres. A few departments work well with teachers across other curricular areas to develop a common framework for writing extended pieces, such as reports and critical writing. Young people are able to easily identify the links between different curricular areas.

Digital learning

Most English departments use digital technology effectively. They increasingly use online learning applications and share resources digitally. This supports young people well, as they can access resources at any time.

Young people can use tools such as text-to-speech software or translation applications to help them access resources. This enables more young people to access longer written texts and supports their reading skills. The use of tools such as grammar and spelling checkers supports young people to edit written responses and encourages them to actively re-read their work. Technology is also used well to support learners in summative assessments and exams. However, access to digital devices for learning varies across the country. Access to reliable internet in schools is variable and this can, at times, impact teachers' planning. A number of schools have recently refreshed their policy on mobile phone usage. Local authorities and schools should continue to monitor the impact of revised policies.

Scots language

Almost all English departments include a study of the Scots language, texts or writers as an integral part of their curriculum. Young people respond positively to this element of their English curriculum, especially when it relates to contexts they are familiar with. Most English departments plan their studies of Scots around topics and texts that allow for progression through the BGE.

All young people in the senior phase studying National Qualifications Framework level 5 and Higher courses study a text from the QS reading list. The study of the Scots language in the BGE also supports young people's writing in the senior phase. English teachers should consider how best to plan the study of Scots into their curriculum as an integral part of all courses rather than an added part.

In the Higher English course report of September 2025, the principal assessor commented that, “A small number of candidates chose to write in Scots, for example, Shetlandic, Doric, and West Coast Scots. This choice often enhanced candidates’ writing”.

Almost all teachers outwith English departments understand that literacy is the responsibility of all. In some schools, teachers have audited courses and identified where young people have opportunities to demonstrate their literacy skills. This approach is most common in subject areas such as social subjects and modern languages.

Where there is strong practice in this approach, teachers feel more confident when supporting young people in literacy activities, especially extended written responses such as science reports and social subjects projects. However, few teachers understand how they can support the development of young people’s literacy skills outwith English departments.

A few schools have timetabled a period each week that is focused on developing young people’s literacy skills, often with a focus on reading and writing skills. This is predominantly for young people in S1 and S2 and is delivered by English teachers. The impact and effectiveness of this additional period are not always clear. Senior leaders and those staff with responsibility for literacy must carefully monitor and evaluate the outcome of this dedicated time. There is a risk that this does not have the intended positive impact on young people’s literacy skills.

The literacy and English curriculum through relevant contexts

A few English departments consult with young people about topics and texts that are of interest to them. When young people are involved in identifying topics they would like to learn about, they have a greater sense of ownership and enjoyment of their learning.

The majority of schools have strong links with local organisations and employers. Often these links involve young people meeting with visitors, discovering what is involved in local industries and working with charity organisations to raise funds and volunteer. These projects all require young people to use their literacy skills in real-life contexts. Young people benefit from planned activities and develop skills needed for learning, life and work.

However, senior leaders do not always link these activities with the whole-school literacy curriculum. As a result, there is a lack of understanding of how this learning can contribute to developing literacy across different contexts for learners.

Meeting young people's needs

Almost all English teachers have engaged in moderation activities within their own department. A minority have engaged in moderation activities outwith their department with colleagues from other schools, including cluster primary colleagues. These have mostly focused on the verification of levels in the BGE.

Senior leaders in most schools have identified more moderation activities are a priority. In most schools, there were productive links with cluster schools in the years leading up to the Covid-19 pandemic. Circumstances have meant that these links stopped working well for several sessions and are now in the process of being re-established. In the schools with well-established links, teachers are working together to develop course plans that link learning in the upper stages of primary and the start of secondary. These plans are mostly based on literacy and numeracy courses.

Across the curriculum, the pace of learning can be too slow. This is more acute across the BGE phase. Young people are often engaged in the same activities across lessons and work at the same pace, regardless of each individual's needs. Young people who complete tasks and activities ahead of their peers are often given more of the same type of activity to do. They would benefit from extension tasks that would deepen their learning. Strong transition processes are in place in most schools and this ensures that attainment is shared effectively across schools.

In the majority of schools, this includes important information for those young people who have an additional support need. For some schools with a higher number of placing requests, this process can be challenging. Schools have developed ways of sharing this information with all staff.

Most English teachers make good use of information regarding an individual's additional support needs and plan for appropriate support. The quality of this support varies but almost all English teachers consider the accessibility of the texts and supports they use, such as scaffolding for extended writing. There is considerable variety in teachers' understanding of this information and how it should impact on planning to meet learners' needs. Most BGE classes are mixed ability, but in almost all classes, all young people access the same resources and texts. Teachers need to consider how accessible texts are for all young people and adapt as appropriate.

In many schools, the relationships between young people and English teachers are highly positive. Young people value the feedback English teachers provide, both in written and verbal forms. Learner conversations are an increasingly regular feature of English lessons and these are very popular with young people. It helps them to feel known as individuals and that feedback is personal to them. It also helps to build trusting relationships, so young people feel confident expressing their views more openly in English lessons than in other subjects.

Young people in the senior phase reflect that the individual approach to feedback supports them well as they prepare for exams. Teachers in other subjects provide regular, helpful feedback that supports young people to identify their next steps in learning. Learner conversations are also starting to be used by teachers of other subjects such as modern languages and social subjects to provide feedback. This practice is stronger in the senior phase.

In schools where the BGE curriculum has recently been reviewed, approaches to developing appropriate and helpful feedback have been a focus. Young people report that they find this type of feedback helpful.

Leadership and professional learning

Almost all English departments work collaboratively with other departments across their own school or work with English departments in other schools. Across schools, this is leading to a greater understanding of what literacy levels of attainment mean. It also supports non-English specialists to feel more secure in their understanding of their literacy responsibilities. When English teachers work effectively with English teachers from other schools, this leads to a greater sharing of resources and approaches to learning and teaching. Staff who also work as exam markers often share their learning from these experiences. Young people benefit from this sharing of good practice as they study for QS qualifications.

Teachers across all subjects use a variety of assessment approaches to measure progress and attainment. There is a reliance on formal assessments to confirm attainment levels. There are almost no examples of teachers from curricular areas other than English contributing to the assessment of CfE levels. Teachers across all subject areas are developing the use of questioning as an effective assessment tool. This is often identified as an area for development in schools.

In a few schools, teachers from all curricular areas are working well together to develop common approaches to supporting the use of literacy skills. For example, across most curricular areas, young people deliver presentations linked to their learning.

Teachers use a variety of teaching approaches that support young people in using literacy skills, such as listening and talking in groups. This is an area of the curriculum where young people can easily identify where they are using their literacy skills effectively. They can apply skills such as report writing and research in different contexts. Teachers would benefit from professional learning that supports their understanding of how they can develop young people's literacy skills.

In most schools, there has been a clear focus on improving the quality of learning and teaching. In these schools, a considerable amount of professional development time has focused on pedagogy and what approaches are best suited to deliver a good lesson. As a result of this work, most schools have adopted a preferred lesson structure. This is leading to a more consistent classroom experience for young people. Some schools have focused on the quality of a teacher's questioning to promote deeper learning and as a formative assessment tool.

Almost all English teachers are skilled in the use of questioning to check for understanding. Some make very effective use of questioning to provoke deeper learning and thinking about areas of the curriculum. There is scope for teachers to work together to identify ways to use questioning to link learning across different curricular areas.

Almost all English teachers provide clear explanations and make explicit links with prior learning. This approach is seen across other areas of the curriculum, but there is a need for a more consistent approach to support all young people.

Almost all English teachers actively engage in professional dialogue and reading to enhance classroom experiences for young people and to develop their own knowledge and pedagogy. A significant number of English teachers are QS markers. These teachers use their experience as markers to share understanding of national standards with colleagues.

Literacy and English in special schools

In special schools, staff establish strong, nurturing relationships with children and young people. They know this is crucial to supporting children and young people to communicate with confidence. Staff know and understand the individual needs of the children and young people they are teaching very well. This includes having a sound knowledge of the communication and language needs of all children.

Teachers plan individualised education programmes to meet the needs of all learners. These plans include targets for literacy, English, communication and language, when required. Teachers take a 'team around the child' approach and plan these individualised education programmes in collaboration with multi-agency partners and parents.

Staff make effective use of CfE progression frameworks at early level, including foundation milestones, to plan progressive programmes. They need to ensure that the delivery of learning and the content of these plans is more responsive to take account of the progress children are making. Teachers plan appropriate opportunities for children and young people to develop their skills in literacy, English, communication and language across the curriculum and in real-life, relevant contexts.

In the best examples, teachers plan learning that makes links across the curriculum, taking account of how to make it accessible to all. For example, they consider and use each child or young person's preferred method of communication, such as signing or using assistive technology.

For children working at early developmental milestones, most teachers make professional judgements about children and young people's progress based on observations and evaluation of progress against individual targets in individual plans. For children working at early level and beyond, staff assess their progress using a range of formative and summative assessments. This assessment is often linked to CfE benchmarks or is embedded in reading and writing programmes, such as phonics programmes. At the senior phase, young people work towards and complete a range of literacy and English and national qualifications. Teachers need to further refine approaches to moderation to help them develop a shared understanding of children and young people's progress and achievement.

Listening and talking, reading and writing

Teachers have a strong focus on supporting children to develop appropriate communication skills. In the primary special sector, daily activities such as morning routines provide planned opportunities for children to develop literacy skills, such as reading timetables and self-registering. At the senior phase, programmes and courses have a strong focus on developing communication life skills. This can include, for example, teaching important literacy, English, communication and language skills, such as writing shopping lists and communicating with staff to purchase goods. Young people are supported to recognise and read signs and engage with the local community.

In the best practice, staff are highly skilled in using a range of effective approaches to support children and young people to communicate. In these schools, staff, children and young people use signing, symbols or augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) aids.

In a few establishments, staff have created communication-rich environments for children and young people to learn in. Within these environments, children and young people communicate with staff and their peers using a range of strategies, including spoken language, signs, gestures and AAC. However, staff need to ensure the quality and consistency of these methods so that all children and young people can interact meaningfully in all aspects of school life.

Teachers develop clear, individualised plans for children and young people which reflect their literacy, English and communication needs well. They plan learning for each child or young person to develop listening, talking, reading and writing skills in individual activities or through whole-class contexts, such as 'friendship'. For example, children learn to read, write, or sign each other's names.

Teachers at all stages have a strong focus on developing children and young people's literacy, English, communication and language skills in real-life contexts and daily routines, such as registration and lunch routines. The development of communication and language skills permeates the curriculum. Teachers use a range of approaches well to support and develop children and young people's skills, taking account of each individual's needs. For example, children and young people listen to stories and watch videos before creating their own texts.

Digital learning

In special schools, staff make effective use of digital devices, including AAC, to support children and young people in communicating and learning.

When digital technology is used very well, children share their thinking and respond to ideas and experiences in their learning. Children and young people use technology that is suited to their individual needs to support them when writing. For example, a few children and young people develop writing skills using accessible, large print and adapted keyboards.

Staff monitor children and young people's screen time closely to prevent them from becoming overstimulated or over-reliant on technology. However, the quality and quantity of digital technology available across schools and enhanced provisions are too varied.

Scots language

Children and young people participate in whole school events to celebrate Scotland's rich cultural heritage, such as Burns Night and St Andrew's Day. This helps them experience aspects of the Scots language, including poetry and songs. It will be important for teachers to consider how they can ensure that children experience progressive learning around the Scots language.

Professional learning

In special settings, staff continue to engage with professional learning related to communication and language, such as British Sign Language or assistive digital technology. This includes training provided by speech and language therapy colleagues. Most support staff engage in purposeful professional learning about meeting the welfare needs of children and young people.

They would benefit from further learning about meeting individual communication and language learning needs.

Strengths and areas for improvement in literacy and English

This thematic inspection of literacy and English identified both significant strengths and areas for improvement.

Listening and talking

In most settings, practitioners have a strong focus on developing children's listening and talking skills. Some practitioners hold high-quality interactions that support children to take turns in conversations and explain their experiences, thoughts and feelings. However, the quality of interactions is inconsistent across and within settings. Practitioners need to improve the quality of all interactions they have with children. They need to ensure that they ask questions and make comments in all interactions that develop children's thinking and extend their learning. In many settings, practitioners support children well to develop their vocabulary through 'word of the week' initiatives. A few settings share this learning with families. This supports families, including those with English as an additional language, in learning alongside their child.

Across schools, staff support children to develop listening and talking skills through pupil voice groups, debates, presentations and collaborative learning. Practitioners and primary teachers use dialogic teaching and structured talk programmes to build vocabulary, confidence and communication skills.

These skills are often developed through interdisciplinary learning (IDL) and leadership roles, helping children connect their learning to real-life contexts. English teachers plan group and individual talk activities well.

There are inconsistencies in the ways other secondary teachers plan listening and talking activities progressively across the curriculum. Across schools and settings, listening and talking skills are assessed less consistently than reading and writing. Staff need to strengthen planning, assessment and moderation in this area, and provide more opportunities for reflection and skill development, ensuring that children understand their progress.

In special schools, teachers have a strong focus on supporting children and young people's communication skills. Many teachers plan clear communication targets for children and young people in individual learning plans. Staff support children and young people to develop vocabulary and sentence structure to help them communicate with others. For children with more complex needs, many staff make effective use of signing, visual prompts and assistive technology.

Reading

Across sectors, reading is well-integrated into curriculum planning through structured progression pathways aligned with CfE experiences and outcomes. In ELC settings, practitioners help children develop a love of reading. They provide attractive book areas which contain a range of fiction and non-fiction texts.

Young children enjoy engaging with books, listening to stories read to them by adults and retelling familiar stories in their play. In many settings, practitioners encourage family engagement in reading by providing story sacks containing books and related resources for families to use at home.

Teachers in primary schools use phonics programmes, reflective reading strategies and thematic approaches like 'Book of the Week' to build comprehension and engagement. They plan novel studies, group reading sessions and comprehension tasks to develop children's reading skills. Reading is often embedded in IDL and linked effectively with writing activities. This allows children to apply reading skills in real-life contexts, such as research projects and presentations. Children in primary schools have regular opportunities to read for pleasure in inviting library spaces. Staff use digital tools and libraries to support access and motivation.

In secondary schools, reading for pleasure is an area identified as needing an increased focus. English teachers encourage young people to engage with a variety of texts. In a few schools, English teachers work well with school librarians to develop creative and interesting ways to engage young people in reading. There is an increasing number of schools where librarians have been moved from schools to community libraries. It is important that more English departments consider how to develop young people's love of reading and embed reading for pleasure as a lifelong habit. Some schools and settings need to ensure diversity in texts.

In special schools, teachers embed reading skills into daily routines, such as lunch menus and self-registration, to support children and young people in making the link between reading and life skills.

Writing

In the strongest settings, practitioners provide children with resources to develop mark-making and emergent writing in all areas of the playroom and outdoor environment. However, in many settings, practitioners need to ensure that they provide a wider range of resources and opportunities for children to use for mark-making and emerging writing in a wide range of relevant and meaningful contexts.

Practitioners and teachers in early stages increasingly provide literacy-rich environments with examples of the written word, such as clear labels for resources. They support young children well in making connections between the written word and reading, such as reading shop names when out in the community. Many children develop their skills when they 'write' during their play, for example writing labels for their construction or lists of items that float and sink.

In primary schools, teachers plan learning through structured programmes that support progression in grammar, punctuation and genre. In secondary schools, the development of writing skills is often an integral part of thematic study in English lessons. Teachers in other subjects do not typically include planning for writing as part of their curriculum.

Many primary and secondary teachers use collaboratively developed genre grids and planning frameworks to ensure that children and young people experience a variety of writing styles. They model high-quality writing. This supports children in improving the quality of their writing. Teachers plan writing activities through real-life contexts, such as letters to local businesses or reports on community events, which enhances relevance and engagement. Teachers across all sectors engage in moderation activities. This improves consistency and teacher confidence.

In primary schools, teachers need to ensure that children consistently transfer their technical writing skills into their extended writing. Children show high levels of engagement in writing when they have the chance to influence how and what they learn. They particularly value activities such as 'free writing'.

In special schools, many children and young people make effective use of assistive technology, such as speech-to-text, to support them when writing.

Strengths within the literacy and English curriculum

Positive, nurturing relationships between staff and learners play an important role in supporting literacy and English learning. Practitioners and teachers create safe, welcoming environments where children and young people feel respected and confident in expressing their ideas. In most settings and primary schools, staff create literacy-rich environments that provide children with the support they need to develop confidence in reading, writing and communication.

Across Scotland, staff are increasingly using progression pathways or developmental milestones to support literacy and English learning. Practitioners and teachers use frameworks aligned with CfE and national Benchmarks or developmental milestones well to plan learning. This ensures that learning for most children and young people builds on their prior knowledge. This supports progress from early years through to secondary education. Staff in all sectors successfully use real-life contexts to engage children and young people in their literacy and English learning.

Children and young people benefit from literacy experiences linked to their local environment and community. Activities such as writing letters to local businesses, interviewing visitors and preparing and delivering presentations motivate and engage children and young people. These activities help children and young people see the relevance of literacy and English to their daily lives.

Staff in many schools and settings provide children and young people with engaging activities linked to Scottish culture and language. These are particularly effective when planned in a progressive way and when they are relevant to how children live.

Teachers and practitioners use digital resources effectively to enhance and support literacy and English learning across all sectors. They use digital platforms and applications, such as interactive quizzes and games, to engage and motivate learners. Children and young people use a range of digital tools to improve their creativity and independence.

Many children and young people, including those with specific literacy challenges, use tools such as speech-to-text and reading supports to access their literacy tasks and communicate with others successfully.

Staff engagement in professional learning is having a positive impact on literacy and English outcomes. Staff across sectors engage in training from external partners, including speech and language therapists and national programmes. This is leading to improved pedagogy, targeted interventions and increased confidence in teaching literacy.

Areas for improvement within the literacy and English curriculum

While practitioners and teachers use progression pathways or developmental milestones to plan listening and talking, most do not yet teach specific skills or assess listening and talking well enough.

Practitioners and teachers need to plan explicit teaching of listening and talking skills. They need to plan assessments of children and young people's application of these skills more regularly and robustly in a wide range of new and relevant contexts.

Across sectors, teachers and practitioners need to use a wider range of questioning when they interact with children and young people. They should ensure that they ask questions that require children and young people to use higher-order thinking skills when they respond and that develop listening and talking skills further. Although many teachers share the purpose of learning and whether they are successful with children and young people, this is not always clear enough.

Teachers need to ensure that learning intentions are specific to the literacy skills being developed to help all children and young people understand the purpose of their learning. Children and young people should also know the skills for life, learning and work which they are developing as they engage in literacy experiences. Children and young people would benefit from more regular, high-quality feedback from teachers. Teachers should ensure they provide clear, specific feedback that helps children and young people to improve their work.

In secondary schools, senior leaders need to ensure that young people have opportunities to develop and apply their literacy and English skills across the curriculum. All secondary teachers need to develop an understanding of expectations in literacy and English across all curriculum areas. There is scope for evidence of attainment in literacy to be gathered from curricular areas other than English.

While many practitioners and teachers support children and young people in developing a love of reading for enjoyment through attractive, well-stocked library spaces, many English teachers in secondary schools express concerns about young people's engagement in reading for pleasure. All staff should continue to build on the best practice of making effective use of local and school libraries and online applications to help children and young people access a range of high-quality, relevant and diverse texts.

Challenges to system improvement

Across primary, secondary and special sectors, the number of children and young people identified in the annual [pupil census \(gov.scot\)](https://gov.scot/pupil-census) as having a literacy-related additional support need is increasing:

- The number of children and young people identified with dyslexia rose from 3.4% in 2020 to 5% in 2024.
- The number of children and young people identified with a language or speech disorder rose from 2.6% in 2020 to 2.9% in 2024.
- The number of children and young people identified with English as an additional language rose from 2.6% in 2020 to 2.9% in 2024.

Practitioners and teachers need to continue to improve their approaches in order to appropriately and fully support children and meet their needs. Across all sectors, practitioners and teachers are concerned about keeping up to date with developments in technology, such as the use of artificial intelligence. There are disparities across the country regarding children and young people's access to one-to-one devices.

In secondary schools, the number of young people who read regularly for pleasure has decreased. There are a number of societal reasons for this, including increased use of digital devices and the ease and availability of online information. This issue has been exacerbated by the reduction in the number of school librarians, the pressure on budgets to refresh book stocks and the closure of local libraries.

Across all sectors, staff report a lack of time for professional learning activities in supporting literacy and English development, including moderation. This is impacting staff's ability to improve the curriculum, implement and embed new approaches and respond to the increase in children and young people with an additional support need. In some areas, staffing is a challenge. Some schools report being without teachers for extended periods due to recruitment issues and a shortage of suitably qualified temporary staff.

Recommendations for literacy and English

This report offers valuable insights and practical support to everyone involved in the design of literacy and English programmes and in the teaching and learning of literacy and English. We encourage educators at all levels to reflect carefully on the findings and consider how they might inform and enhance practice. Improving literacy and English education across Scotland is the responsibility of all involved in education. It will require a shared commitment and collaborative effort. For this reason, our recommendations are for schools and settings, local authorities, national bodies, and the Scottish Government to:

- work together in driving the essential improvements
- plan progressive programmes and courses in literacy and English that fully support children and young people's learning and skill development
- find meaningful ways to engage children and young people in leading their own learning in literacy and English

To support this, they should be involved in decision-making about what and how they learn:

- All staff must ensure that children and young people are explicitly taught listening and talking skills and that these are progressively developed.
- All teachers in secondary establishments must embed literacy as a responsibility for all. To do so, they must understand each young person's abilities and areas for development in literacy.
- Continue to enhance practitioners' and teachers' skills in supporting children and young people who require additional support with their literacy, and language and communication skills through high-quality professional learning.
- Promote reading for enjoyment by ensuring children and young people have access to a wide range of high-quality texts that reflect the diverse world they live in and suit their age and stage.
- Continue to improve approaches to assessment at all stages and build on existing good moderation practice.

Appendix 1: methodology

During the initial planning stages of the thematic, HM Inspectors (HMI) established stakeholder forums. Through these, the views and opinions of senior leaders, teachers, practitioners, children and young people were sought. HMI used the feedback from these sessions to influence the scope and methodology of the thematic. HMI recruited qualified and experienced colleagues as subject-specialist Associate Assessors (AAs), to support the literacy inspection visits.

Inspectors and AAs visited 51 settings and schools in the ELC, primary, secondary and special sectors during the academic year 2024/25. The settings and schools were selected by HMIE to represent different contexts and demographics. A list of the settings and schools visited can be found in [Appendix 2](#). In addition to the 51 visits, this report draws on broader inspection evidence from the same period.

Literacy and English is one of 8 curricular areas in Scotland's CfE and covers both experiences and outcomes in listening and talking, reading and writing. The focus of the inspection visits was to explore the following areas:

- How well the English and literacy curriculum supports progression, relevance and a balance of knowledge and skills
- The quality of teaching in literacy and English in Scotland

Before the inspection visits, we asked headteachers of schools and heads of ELC settings to identify and share existing documents, such as

improvement plans, standards and quality reports and literacy and English curriculum information.

During the inspection visits, inspectors and AAs spoke with children and young people, teachers and practitioners. They observed learning experiences, reviewed documentation and discussed approaches to learning and teaching in literacy and English. They shared verbal feedback with relevant staff at the end of each visit. This was followed up with a brief individual report.

Appendix 2: settings and schools visited

HM Inspectors would like to thank children and young people, practitioners and staff and senior leaders for their engagement during this thematic inspection.

Early learning and childcare settings

Innerleithen Family Learning Centre, North Lanarkshire Council
Just Be Kids Nursery, Glasgow City Council
Killermont Early Years Centre, East Dunbartonshire Council
Liberton Nursery School, The City of Edinburgh Council
Rowantree Primary School Early Years Centre, Dundee City Council
Sandyford Day Nursery, Glasgow City Council
St Anne's Early Learning and Childcare Class, Renfrewshire Council
St Cuthbert's Primary School Nursery Class, South Lanarkshire Council
St Mary's RC Primary School Nursery Class, East Lothian Council
Southdale Primary School Nursery Class, West Lothian Council

Primary schools

Burravoe Primary School, Shetland Islands Council
Cumbrae Primary School, North Ayrshire Council
Cleington Primary School, Dundee City Council
Eoligarry Primary School, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Midmar School, Aberdeenshire Council
Port Charlotte Primary School, Argyll & Bute Council
St Mary's Primary School (Lanark), South Lanarkshire Council
St Paul's Primary School, Renfrewshire Council
West Linton Primary School, Scottish Borders Council

All-through schools

Moffat Academy, Dumfries and Galloway Council

Primary schools and early learning and childcare settings

Baljaffray Primary School and ELC, East Dunbartonshire Council
Holy Family RC Primary School and ELC, Aberdeen City Council
Inch View Primary School and ELC, Perth and Kinross Council
Inverkipp Primary School and ELC, Inverclyde Council
Inverlochry Primary School and ELC, Highland Council
Ladyloan Primary School and ELC, Angus Council
Mauricewood Primary School and ELC, Midlothian Council
Orphir Community School and ELC, Orkney Islands Council
Our Lady and St Joseph's Primary School and ELC, North Lanarkshire Council
St Eunan's Primary School and ELC, West Dunbartonshire Council
St Peter's RC Primary School and ELC, The City of Edinburgh Council

Secondary schools

Auchmuty High School, Fife Council
Berwickshire High School, Scottish Borders Council
Eastwood High School, East Renfrewshire Council
Fraserburgh Academy, Aberdeenshire Council
Hillhead High School, Glasgow City Council
Kilmarnock Academy, East Ayrshire Council
Larbert High School, Falkirk Council
Largs Academy, North Ayrshire Council
Lornshill Academy, Clackmannanshire Council
McLaren High School, Stirling Council
Oban High School, Argyll & Bute Council
Prestwick Academy, South Ayrshire Council
Speyside High School, Moray Council
Tain Royal Academy, Highland Council
Trinity Academy, The City of Edinburgh Council

Special schools

Castleview School, Stirling Council

Drummond School, Highland Council
Hollybrook Academy, Glasgow City Council
Oaklands School, The City of Edinburgh Council
Pinewood School, West Lothian Council

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