



For pupils working below age related expectations.

## **Doubletrees Guide to the English Curriculum**

### **Introduction to *Supporting access for pupils working towards Level 1 of the National Curriculum in English***

It is **strongly** recommended that this Introduction be read and studied **before** embarking on the schemes of work, since vital key information is held here.

#### **INTRODUCTION CONTENT**

- Broad areas to be covered
- Spoken Language
- Intensive Interaction
- Call and Response
- Narrative and Storytelling
- Music, Dance and Play
- Phonics
- General Points
- Recommended Reading
- References

#### **Broad areas to be covered**

This document is rooted in the belief that pupils with Special Educational Needs deserve an education of the highest standard. An education that is mindful of the individuality of each pupil's learning difficulty and recognises the need for a multi-modal approach, supported by a range of multi-sensory activities delivered over an agreed timeframe.

The acquisition of core skills is essential to enhance the lives of special needs children and young people; with English and its component strands claiming centre stage. This document offers a range of tried and tested examples of different genres and texts to teach and develop these skills to pupils consistently working below Level 1 of the National Curriculum. Examples provided have been chosen following consideration of their age appropriateness. The document suggests that:

Non-fiction should cover such areas as:

- Signs, labels, captions
- Information – on different subjects for cross curricular work
- Recounts, including recounting recent real incidents of note that have occurred to the pupil(s)
- Instructions
- Reports
- Letters
- Explanations



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- Visits and events
- Dictionaries
- Posters
- Glossaries/indexes.

Poetry should progress according to key stage, though not necessarily in this strict order, through:

- Nursery rhymes
- Chants
- Action rhymes
- Repetitive patterns
- Predictable structures
- Call and Response
- Poems on similar themes
- Poems about different cultures
- Shape poems
- Humorous verse
- Puns and riddles
- Poems about feelings
- Significant children's poets e.g. Edward Lear.

Fiction genres should be graded according to age appropriateness and cover:

- Stories with patterned language
- Repetitive patterns
- Predictable structure
- Familiar settings
- Narration of personal interest fictions
- Narration of familiar short stories
- Traditional stories – own and other cultures
- Different stories by the same author
- Significant children's authors
- Stories from other cultures
- Language from a range of cultures
- Books/stories on similar themes
- Imaginative texts
- Fantasy worlds
- Myths and legends
- Adventure stories
- Books raising issues.



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For ease of access, the document is divided into the key areas noted in the new National Curriculum documentation of 2013/14. That is:

### **Spoken Language and Communication**

- Speaking, listening, responding, discussing; poetry and drama.

### **Reading**

- Word recognition, decoding/encoding, word structure and spelling.
- Comprehension; understanding and interpreting texts; engaging and responding to texts.

### **Writing**

- Transcription; spelling and handwriting.
- Composition; articulating ideas and structuring them in communication and writing.

### **Spoken Language**

The development and use of communication and language are at the heart of young children's learning. Learning to listen and speak emerges out of non-verbal communication, which includes body language such as facial expression, eye contact, bending the head to listen, hand gesture and taking turns. The ability to communicate gives children the capacity to participate more fully in their society.



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***For children working consistently within the P scales and below age related expectations, learning to communicate effectively and appropriately will probably form the major part of any English curriculum.***

Within this English documentation, we have included reference to a number of techniques that are known to be effective in the raising of speaking and listening skills. These are generally well known in special school settings, though perhaps not so well known in mainstream settings.

- (i) Intensive Interaction
- (ii) Call and Response
- (iii) Narrative and Storytelling.

### **Intensive Interaction**

When working with learners who are at a very early developmental level it is almost impossible to separate out the learning of communicative skills from the actual process of living and to this degree, communication can be seen to be perhaps more than any other area of development, an **almost entirely process based activity. That is, children learn through the process of actually doing it, in much the same way as we learn to dance.** We cannot learn to dance theoretically, we have to do it to learn it. We cannot learn to communicate theoretically, we have to do it to learn it. It is the process of doing it that is key.

There are of course specific skills involved in the art of communicating which we can attempt to teach, such as pressing a BigMack or other simple VOCA (Voice Output Communication Aid) in order to indicate the desire for something, or looking at a preferred object to indicate choice, but the success of this will undoubtedly be entirely dependent on the motivation of the child (to gain the 'something'), the context of the activity (is it familiar enough, rewarding enough, with people s/he knows and trusts enough?) and of course the ability of the pupil to understand cause and effect in a refined manner, and to be at least contingently responsive. **In P level terms, such cause and effect abilities are only likely to start to appear around P2 or P3, but should be established by P4 or P5 at the latest.**

Much has been written about Intensive Interaction and it is strongly recommended that those interested in developing their skills read at least Nind and Hewett's (2001) *A Practical Guide to Intensive Interaction* published by BILD. There is also the Intensive Interaction website at [www.intensiveinteraction.co.uk](http://www.intensiveinteraction.co.uk)

As a brief guide, Intensive Interaction is designed to foster early communication skills and is widely used in the UK across both child and adult services with people often described as pre-verbal, pre-linguistic, pre-intentional and/or difficult to reach, often those with profound or severe learning difficulties and/or autism. It is based on conventional parent/infant models of interaction and largely follows the communication process from birth involving a shared two-way enjoyment. We become the flexible and responsive partners – reinforcing the child's engagement – and the child's ability to understand that s/he can affect the actions of those around them. Meaningful engagement with a more competent partner reinforces understanding.

**The core principles are those of tasklessness, that is, a deliberate lack of agenda or any specific target or objective. Adults follow the child's lead, celebrate any action or vocalisation as an intentional act of communication – whether it is or not – and try (in the long-term) to extend knowledge and understanding of**



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communicative interactions. The adult therefore needs to 'tune in' to the learner and look for communication moments, so that the act of creating the flow (the process) becomes the objective of the session.

Intensive Interaction is fundamental not only as a primary means of fostering meaningful communicative opportunities with those who might otherwise be considered difficult to reach, but also as one of the best exemplars of the process based teaching approach.

As a series of broad brushstroke rules, Intensive Interaction is likely to work best when the interactor:

- allows the learner to take control and for the most part, lead the session;
- is seen by the learner to enjoy the experience of the interaction;
- gives his/her total attention to the learner;
- treats all actions and vocalisations made by the learner as positive attempts to communicate;
- uses as little language as possible – often hello and goodbye are sufficient;
- does not give up too early, either in the session itself or over time – it may take many years to maximise a learner's communicative abilities;
- gives the learner time – pauses, when nothing is apparently happening are really ok;
- use pause – burst – pause sequences during periods of nothing happening to give the learner time and opportunity to respond;
- documents changes – using recording sheets and videoing sessions with a static wide angle lens;
- talks to his/her colleagues and shares experiences in a general plenary involving the learners after every discrete session.

## Call and Response

There are extremely strong arguments for suggesting that for pupils who are working consistently at or below Level 1 of the English National Curriculum, literacy needs to encompass the spoken word **much more** than the written word. Clearly then, teaching pupils storytelling skills and how to master the art of narrative becomes key.

Apart from teachers and TAs reading story books to children, there are a number commercial storytelling packages, such as Chris Fuller's *Bag Books* available at [www.bagbooks.org](http://www.bagbooks.org) and Nick Wonham's *Choose and Tell* stories available at [www.chooseandtellseries.com](http://www.chooseandtellseries.com). You might also want to look at Pete Wells' splendid PowerPoint stories aimed mainly, but not exclusively, at older pupils and freely available at [www.portlandcollege.org](http://www.portlandcollege.org)

Leading the way however, as writers of significant importance in both the theory and practice of the teaching of literacy to those with learning difficulties, are **Nicola Grove and Keith Park**

Park's take on literature is that even the most complex and obtuse can be made accessible to those with learning difficulties if we take care of the rhythm, make it interactive, give it meaning in the affect of our voices and above all, impart emotion.

Park calls for those who can read to take the lead – they do the calling. Initially this will probably be done by the teacher with everyone else doing the responding, that is, repeating the line as called. As children get to know a poem



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or narrative, anyone who can read can do the calling and variations might be put in such as

Call                    *And all should cry*

Response        *Beware! Beware!*

For those who struggle with reading, repeating the lines will aid memory and in turn, an appreciation of the literature.

Pupils may use communication aids such as a BigMack to call or respond to specific words or lines; staff may assist rhythmic movements through encouraging and supporting rocking, stamping, clapping, banging, vocalising, using VOCAs, laying learners on sound boards and enjoying in any way they can, the process of being part of the rhythm of the group. Feelings and emotions can be acted out by staff through facial expression and body responses directly to the learners involved. Call and response can form the essential rock upon which drama and poetry for those with learning and communication difficulties is founded.

Teachers are strongly urged to beg, borrow, steal (or preferably buy) Keith Park's (2010) *Interactive Storytelling* published by Speechmark, which gives call and response 'scripts' ranging from A A Milne to William Shakespeare; all entirely suitable for all abilities and ages. The Tempest has been included for KS3 children in this document, and is designed specifically for use with call and response.

#### Call and Response

- is a simple method of encouraging fun communications;
- relies on the natural poetic rhythm and flow of language;
- accepts that these rhythms are innate;
- each line is kept deliberately short and rhythmic;
- works best when dramatic and conveying feeling and emotion;
- takes the pressure off the individual by conferring it on the group. That is, the whole group does the responding, not the individual child;
- is naturally and automatically including rather than excluding.

#### **Narrative and Storytelling**

Nicola Grove argues very cogently that the art of narrative is a tremendously powerful and central part of our understanding of ourselves as social beings. But the art of narrative, the ability to tell stories, is not automatically given, it has to be learned, and for those with learning and communication difficulties, this can be a long and slow process.

It is nonetheless an essential process, one that is vastly under-rated in a world of the written word, and one that teachers of those working consistently at and below Level 1 in English must address.

**What does a story do?** A story has a beginning, a middle and an end; it has purpose and meaning to both the teller and the listener; it teaches us to listen carefully; it teaches us about structure, and about the natural rhythms and flow of language; it teaches us about emotions – fear, excitement, anxiety, heartbreak, happiness, love - in a safe and secure setting, not only other people's (the characters' in the story line), but also our own.



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**What does a story mean to those with learning and/or communication difficulties?**

Children, young people and adults with learning and/or communication difficulties also start listening to stories from a very young age; they possibly continue to listen throughout their lives; but when do they get to tell stories themselves? And when do they get to tell stories about themselves?

Most often, the severe communication difficulties experienced by these children preclude the art of telling stories, and therefore preclude them from an essential part of becoming a social human being.

If we are to attempt to develop story-telling skills, the emphasis needs to be on very simple, but dramatic stories, initially told by the teacher. Over time, children are encouraged to take in not only the structure and essential elements of that particular story, but also the structure and essential elements of story telling itself. They can then move onto the most important part – telling their own stories.

First of all however, the learner must learn how to tell a story, and that is not as easy as it sounds.

**TASK**

Here are two stories to be going on with, the first courtesy of Nicola Grove, the second from Imray and Hinchcliffe (2014). Can you analyse what makes these really interesting stories and write two more in a similar vein?

**Story Number 1 – The Robber!**

*One day, I was walking home from school. It was cold and dark and rainy. SUDDENLY, I heard FOOTSTEPS. I looked behind me.....but there was nothing there. I carried on walking home. It was cold and dark and rainy. SUDDENLY, I heard FOOTSTEPS again. I looked behind me.....but there was still nothing there. I carried on walking home. Then the footsteps got LOUDER and FASTER and then a BIG MAN was standing over shouting 'GIVE ME YOUR MONEY!' I gave him all the money I had and he ran off down the road and I never saw him or my money again. That is the end of the story!*

**Story Number 2 – SNOT!**

*One day, about a year ago, I had a TERRIBLE cold. I was sneezing all of the time. AAAAACCCHHHOOOOOO. I went downstairs to have breakfast but I felt a sneeze coming on. AAAAACCCHHHOOOOOO. Oh no! White gloopy snot all in my brothers cornflakes. I felt another sneeze coming on.*

*AAAAACCCHHHOOOOOO. Oh no! Green bits all on my Mum's new dress. My dad was very cross and started telling me off but I felt another sneeze coming on. AAAAACCCHHHOOOOOO. Oh no! White and green snot all in my dad's hair. It was running down his face and everything! Here, said Mum, use a tissue! AAAAACCCHHHOOOOOO. That is the end of my story!*

You may tell these stories as a raconteur would, or you may act them out. Here are the bare bones of 'The Spider in the Sandwich' (another Nicola Grove story) which can be initially acted out by two members of staff using props, and then taken over by one or two pupils. Props, whilst handy for an initial dramatisation of the story, may well both detract and distract from the narrative, so we need to ensure that we don't overuse props as we want to teach the skill and art of narrative rather than performance.

We have deliberately not put a script here because it is REALLY important that these stories are told and not read. This means that the words might occasionally



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change and that's OK because as with all communication, it is the sense of the thing we have to convey, not the accuracy of recall.

*One day.....Janet makes a sandwich.*

*John also wants a sandwich but is too lazy to make it. 'Make me a sandwich' 'No, make your own.'*

*Janet is distracted – a knock on the door, a tap on the window, the phone rings – and John (who has engineered the distraction) takes a bite from the sandwich.*

*'Who ate my sandwich!!' 'Not me.'*

*This is repeated.*

*After the second time, Janet says 'I'm going to make a fresh sandwich and it's just going to be for me' but she secretly puts a spider in the sandwich.*

*When the distraction occurs again, John takes a bite 'OH NO...THAT'S DISGUSTING'*

*The end.*

The general principles of composing a story for the purposes of teaching the arts of narration and story-telling are much the same as any other story for those with learning difficulties

**1. Give it a beginning** – introduce the story with an object cue and/or a musical cue for the story.

**2. It should have meaning to the participants**, though the meaning may be held in the interest and excitement generated, rather than the storyline. You might not have direct experience of a magic carpet, but you can revel in the wonder of it.

**3. Use repetition** – you just cannot get enough!! Use repetition in the story itself through a strap line that's repeated at regular intervals, rather like a short chorus in a song. Use repetition in the delivery of the story – one story might take up an hour a week for at least a half term and quite possibly a whole term. Your learners will not get bored since the repetition is a recognition that learners will probably need very many opportunities to experience the story in order to understand and therefore enjoy it and gain learning from it. Teachers and teaching assistants must be prepared for the amount of repetition necessary and resist the temptation to switch off and just go through the motions – the more you put into it the more they'll get out of it.

**4. Keep the actual story/episode short** – and therefore easily remembered. As a general rule resist the temptation to make the story too complicated; less is often considerably more. Simple is MUCH better than complicated.

**5. Use all and every means of communication** – signing, speaking, action, facial expression. Remember that the best storytellers primarily use their voices to paint the pictures, so use props sparingly, if at all.

**6. Use language selectively.** You may use difficult language, but only if it has relevance to the story. So you could make a story from *The Tempest* and use the actual Shakespearean language as it has that wonderful rhythmic quality which makes poetry such a good base. Use call and response to bring out the rhythm (Park, 2010).

**7. Introduce sequences of dramatic events** and make the sequencing exactly the same every week in order to encourage anticipation of events. The language



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may vary slightly when your pupils are re-telling the story, but the sequence needs to be the same.

**8. Make it exciting and dynamic.** Give it emotional content with at least one major high point in the story.

**9. Build in (and allow) as much audience participation as possible.** Staff supporting the session should act as 'secondary' story tellers – repeating the lines on a one to one basis, giving the story personal meaning to each learner, scaffolding understanding and generally hamming it up as much as they can! If you're working with a large group (say more than six learners) you might be best to have your staff seated between learners at regular intervals.

**10. Give it an ending** which is clear and supported by as many cues as possible – verbal cue, touch cue, music cue etc.

Once devised, the same story should be repeated weekly for **at least** half a term (and probably longer) so that learners have a real opportunity to become familiar with it and so practice their sequencing, turn taking, anticipatory and memory skills – all essential base elements of communication.

There is no reason why older pupils should not be involved in narrative and story-telling. They don't need to be childish – you can make them age appropriate.

### Things to do with the stories

- Tell one story at a time. The story must engage the learners and if it doesn't, drop it and tell another.
- Note how the best stories are short, simple and involve lots of repetition. Look at what makes *The Gruffalo* and *The Bear Hunt* such great stories. These are essentially the same short scenario repeated several times and building up to a crescendo.
- When you've told the story at the beginning of the session, encourage each pupil to tell the story themselves by sitting in the story teller's chair. This is a 'special' chair that confirms the authority and control of the person leading and should be given the appropriate amount of reverence by all. You'll need to help them a lot at first, but you can act as the 'response' to their 'call' by mirroring (scaffolding) what they say and encouraging everyone else in the group to do the same. Using this call and response method has a number of important functions:
  - i. It confirms that the narrator is leading the speaking, rather than competing for a voice
  - ii. It confirms that the narrator has successfully communicated what they want to communicate
  - iii. It allows for major errors to be rectified as you go along (minor errors should be ignored as long as the core of the story is the same)
  - iv. It allows for 'affect' to be instilled (and thereby modeled) by the adult who is acting as the primary response
  - v. It confirms that the audience has understood
  - vi. It confirms that the audience is listening
  - vii. It slows the process down and gives the narrator a chance to gather their thoughts
  - viii. It sets out a clear sequence of events
  - ix. It gives an opportunity for gentle prompts if the narrator has forgotten the next line
  - x. It gives the narrator the chance to go 'off piste', especially as they get more skilled, and still take the audience with them.



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- Repeat this format with the same story for several weeks, perhaps breaking up the sessions by making a picture book or power point or videoing scenes with your pupils as the actors.
- The aim here is to teach pupils that stories have a structure (beginning and middle and end); high points; a conclusion; an audience. This latter point is really important since the best storytellers take their audience with them and include them as part of the story.
- Non-verbal pupils can sign, or hold up pictures/symbols, or use. If using a VOCA (Voice Output Communication Aid) try and get a child of roughly the same age and gender to record the voice. Staff and more able pupils can still 'respond' to their 'call'.
- As your pupils start to improve their story telling skills, they can start to make up their own stories about real events that relate to them. They can in other words, tell their own stories about their own lives.
- Once you've firmly established the basic storytelling skills through short, exciting, dramatic fictions, talk to learner's families (during parents evenings etc.) about special events and stories that the family might relate at home.
- Take ownership of the everyday stories that are normally kept in the staffroom.
- Encourage staff to write down the events that happen to your pupils, especially if they carry emotion – funny, scary, dramatic etc.
- Start a *Storytelling Box* to keep in the staff room where stories can be posted
- Involve the learners as much as possible in the writing of their own stories.
- Storyboard the stories into short books using real characters as much as possible. If you can support this with photographs, so much the better.
- Share your performances at assemblies so that they become owned by the whole 'culture'.
- Most of all – have fun being literate!

### **Music, Dance and Play**

Music, dance and of course, play also have a key and central role in language development for young children and we mustn't be afraid to use these as an essential part of our literacy programme, whatever the age of the pupil. Rhymes and songs are particularly important and enjoyable for young children and those at the earliest stages of communicative development. At first, all learning arises from physical action and the gathering of experience through the senses. Therefore, children learn best when activities engage many senses. Initially their attempts to communicate will be non-verbal. As language develops and young children learn about conversation, thought becomes less dependent on action, although non-verbal messages remain an important form of communication throughout life.

As children develop speaking and listening skills, they build the foundations for reading and writing. They need lots of opportunities to interact with others as they develop these skills, and to use a wide range of resources for making early progress in reading, mark making and writing. We should therefore, give a greater emphasis to speaking and listening and the interdependent nature of speaking and pupils working within the P levels will need to develop their speaking and listening skills in order to enable them to begin to develop other literacy skills.



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## Phonics

### Waiting for SPT rationale/offer

Pre-phonics work, especially in differentiating different sounds, may be very usefully carried out through a broad music curriculum and we would recommend Sounds of Intent (freely available via [www.soundsofintent.org](http://www.soundsofintent.org))

## General Points

We have given examples of how the suggested activities can be used at different P levels. You can however use any of the activities with each P level differentiating them as appropriate. In this document we have suggested when each activity could initially be introduced and then can be developed as the skill develops for example: matching sound makers – maracas and triangles. Teacher plays an instrument; children with same instrument stand up and play.

We suggest starting at P4 with a choice of only two instruments both very different – drum, triangle whereas in the higher P levels more instruments can be used with similar sounds and the number of children in the working group could be larger.

When planning we suggest that you also access the Early Years Foundation Stage areas of learning and development; Linking sounds and letters and Reading. These begin at the birth and continue through to a twelve months level with:

- Listen to, distinguish and respond to intonations and the sounds of voices.
- Listen to familiar sounds, words, or finger plays.

With developmental matters working through the stages leading to the objectives from the Foundation Stage, these may be more appropriate for practitioners working with pupils in the early P levels

When planning Literacy for pupils working below age related expectations remember to:

- support expression and comprehension using multi modal approaches such as signing and symbols where appropriate
- use a creative and sensory approach to foster understanding and enjoyment of books, stories, plays and poems
- support pupils' learning to express themselves in varied and appropriate media, writing with a variety of tools and aids (especially using keyboards on i-pads, tablets and computers), the use of symbols, filming and videoing
- use ICT to support understanding, support specific needs (as a writing tool for pupils who have fine motor difficulties), and to aid recording by photographs and videos. Hopefully this may develop into pupils doing their own recording!
- access Literacy through links with the community through local theatres, film clubs, library services etc.

We hope through this Scheme that pupils will foster a love of literacy in stories, poems, books, films and drama and pupils will be enabled to access these as independently as possible especially helping them to master communication and the reading and writing processes where appropriate.



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### **Recommended Reading**

Grove N (2005). **Ways into Literature: Stories, Plays and Poems**. London David Fulton.

Imray P and Hinchcliffe V (2014) **Curricula for Teaching Children and Young People with Severe or Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties: Practical strategies for educational professionals**. London. Routledge. Chapter 10. A language, literacy and communication curriculum for pupils and students with severe learning difficulties. pp 135-163.

Nind M and Hewett D. (2001) **A Practical Guide to Intensive Interaction**. Kidderminster. British Institute of Learning Disabilities.

Park K (2010). **Interactive storytelling: developing inclusive stories for children and adults**. Bicester. Speech mark.



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