



Fleet Primary School

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Governor Visit Report

Area of focus for visit:	Phonics and Oracy	Link Governors: Kim Issroff & Annie Balme
Date of meeting:	22nd February 2024	Link Staff Member and role: Ruth Hanfling – English Lead

Context:

English influences much of what we do at Fleet; children at our school love to read and write. All of our written work relates to our topic based creative curriculum and teachers work hard to create meaningful lessons that are fun and engaging for the children. The subject encompasses writing, reading, grammar, phonics and spelling.

The link governors meet with English Lead. They look at the approach to English and how it looks across the school. They discuss the different aspects of the English curriculum from Early Years, through Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. They consider some of the current challenges and the approaches being taken to meet them. The outcome of this meeting is then shared via this report to the full governing body and published on the governor's page of the school website.

Meeting Report:

Phonics

The implementation of Little Wandle is now firmly embedded in the school and the phonics results have improved considerably. The current year 2 could almost all read by the time they started. However, there are other pathways to learning to read. Phonics clearly works for many children but is not always suited to the idiosyncrasies of English.

This has been a big learning curve for teachers and TAs and the program makes big demands on adult time and timetabling. All teaching staff have had training. And TAs are now getting online training which consists of 6 modules which are 4 hours each. Everyone in the school has done modules 1 and 2 and all staff working in EYFS have done all the modules. Part of the learning has been because the program is very rigorous and detailed, with rigid scripts. This is unlike how most teaching is done at Fleet and while the adults find it challenging, the children like it and it is research based and works.

New children are put on an accelerated program called Rapid Catchup which they do with a TA.

An external expert visits once every half term to support the phonics teaching and she is happy with how it is now embedded. Ruth now sets the agenda for these meetings.

Years 2 and 3 are now following the “phonics into spelling” program. If phonics hasn’t worked by year 3 i.e. the child is not reading, the approach is changed to precision teaching.

Guided reading is linked to Wandle. The children read the same book for 3 sessions. In the first they focus on decoding, in the second on prosody (intonation and expression) and in the third on comprehension. The school has lots of books with a wide range of complexity including new chapter books for year 2.

The next steps are to ensure that consistency is maintained. This is a timetabling and staffing challenge, particularly around support staff.

There was a parent workshop on phonics attended by about 30 parents who found it helpful. In particular, being introduced to some of the quite specific vocabulary, for example digraphs and trigraphs.

Oracy

We looked at Key Priority 6 on the School Development Plan which is to improve oracy levels across the school and support the diverse needs of the community - to embed oracy in the school curriculum and core approaches of the school. We looked in detail at how oracy is being implemented and monitored at Fleet and what the next steps are. Ruth clarified that the EYFS oracy work was being led by Beth and that there had been a recent presentation to governors about it, which is discussed below.

The school recognise that children’s spoken language is crucial for their future life chances and that children need to be confident at communicating throughout the school day and in their lives. The key priority for oracy in this year’s School Development Plan has been to set up and embed Camden Kids Talk pilot in the Early Years, to continue to use Word Aware in KS1 and KS2 and to introduce and use talk trios in their classrooms. Some teachers are using Voice 21 oracy skills with their classes too and assemblies continue to be a way to develop confident speakers.

In Summer Term 2023, all staff had INSET around embedding good oracy practice and when Don completed a learning walk in Autumn Term 2024, he found that all staff were implementing and developing what they had learnt.

In January 2024, Beth Cleine led a presentation to the Curriculum and Standards Committee to inform us about Camden Kids Talk and how this intervention gives the opportunity to children in EYFS to develop their speech, language and communication to support their wellbeing and potential. This is much needed as in Camden 51% of EYFS children, and at Fleet 58% of children, are one and a half years behind.

To assess the children, the WELLCOMM communication and language screening tool was used so there is something concrete to measure against and then tailored support was put in place to support the children. The children were all assessed in the Autumn Term, rescreening of target children is taking place in the Spring Term to check their progress and in the Summer Term all children will be rescreened. Senior Leadership are reviewing gaps each term and putting actions in place to close the gaps. Fleet is being well supported by an external speech and language

therapist Cath to set up the programme and embed evidence-based practices supporting Speech, Language and Communication. There is coaching and modelling too, and a parent engagement programme is running this Spring Term which will continue into the Summer Term and then be embedded into the future EYFS curriculum.

On March 1st I took part in the third out of 4 parent and carer workshops that are taking place this Spring Term. These are being led alongside Fleet staff by Cath from Kids Talk and next term Fleet staff will take over leading the sessions. The focus today was around the Top Tip 'sharing stories', and Tip Ten 'adding new words.' There was a great turn out with 17 of the children having an adult with them and only 6 didn't. There were plenty of school adults supporting the session too and it was an engaging, hands-on session. Talking to parents they said how useful the sessions are and that the Ten Top Tips and workshops have improved their interactions with their children and have helped them to develop their child's language and communication in an engaging and creative way.

The session started with soft play with lots of activities set up around the room linked to the book for the session Rosie's Walk. Alongside the activities were key vocabulary, stem sentences and visuals to help children and adults to develop their interactions and communication and use new words. Today the focus was on using words to describe new actions, using the past tense and using words to describe the position of one object to another. The activities encouraged conversation and parents to practice the Top Ten Tips that they have been learning such as talking about doing everyday things, talking about feelings and adding new words.

In the second half of the session Cath modelled how to use story books to retell stories and build understanding of new words. Cath modelled how to talk about the pictures, use words to describe where the animals are (positional language), use more action words and introduce the past tense. To demonstrate this, she showed parents how to use the animal puppets they had made with their children. There were visuals and actions to support action words such as around, over, into too. For home learning, she encouraged the parents to use the QR links on Parent Hub and further information to support them learning to make their own stories, with puppets and pictures, and support their children's language and communication. At school, these Top Ten Tips are being practised alongside SHREC, where adults follow the children's lead and give them time to listen, process and reply. The children are in weekly interactive story groups too, where a story is based around a group's target to encourage language development using interactive activities.

Thank you to Rebecca and the nursery team for letting me visit today as I can see that the intervention is having a big impact. I could also see how committed to the programme the EYFS staff are and that they are putting in a lot of extra work to make it a success. Cath commented on this too. I look forward to hearing about the overall progress in the Summer Term too. Thank you.

In KS1 and KS2, the Word Aware scheme continues to be used to build children's vocabulary and new words are introduced each week. The vocabulary can be topic specific or related to classes English units and teachers plan key words to focus on throughout the year. There are three levels of words: 1. High frequency words 2. Less common words 3. Infrequently used words. The number of words given are dependent on the age of the children and these words are successfully fed into talk and improving the children's writing. It starts with one word a week and as the children develop there is an increase in Level 2 and 3 words, and by Year 6 there is a new word every day. There are 3 levels of words: 1. High frequency 2. Less frequent 3. Infrequent. Ruth and

Don are monitoring the implementation of Word Aware through learning walks and work scrutinies. There is evidence of the effectiveness of this in the children's writing and how the children use their increased vocabulary when speaking. Children know they have special words to think about.

Talk Trios have also been set up rather than partners, usually with one more articulate child talking with two others who need support. These are being successfully used in Maths and English with sentence structures support as needed. It has proved to be very successful in developing speaking in clear sentences and developing the children's listening skills too. Each class develops talk guidelines and showing that you are listening is discussed and encouraged. The children are given stem sentences to support a structured way to speak and the teachers are finding that the ideas are feeding well into their writing and supporting the children less confident at speaking. The trios work better than partners as if one child is away, conversations are still possible. Spoken language is also supported by the performances and assemblies at school.

Thank you very much for your time Ruth and the EYFS team, and your openness to discussion. It was all very informative and great to see the oracy target and phonics target being met on the School Development Plan and your clear and realistic vision for the next steps.

Written By: Annie Balme and Kim Issroff

Date Written: February 2024