

EE603- Within the context of current policy requirements and relevant theory and research, students will submit a critical reflection on their understanding of English. Identifying areas for the further development of their subject knowledge and the planning, teaching and assessment of English in key stage 1 and 2, with reference to their own English subject knowledge portfolio.

Within the current National Curriculum for English, an overarching aim is to “promote high standards of language and literacy by equipping pupils with a strong command of the spoken and written word, and to develop their love of literature” (DfE, 2014). Hence Bearne and Reedy argue that phonics, grammar and literature underpin the English curriculum (2018). It can thus be suggested that, teachers require comprehensive subject knowledge to underpin the curriculum, informing pedagogy to provide quality literacy experiences (Barrs, 2001). Therefore, to identify my own subject knowledge and pedagogy of these crucial areas, I have acquired the ‘Subject knowledge needed by teachers’ model, developed by the Teacher Development Agency (TDA) (Brien, 2012). This provides an important opportunity to understand that pupil’s development is directly influenced by teacher’s subject knowledge and pedagogy, further encompassed by attitudes. This is important because the National Curriculum focuses on what children should be taught and fails to emphasise how teachers should facilitate high quality teaching. This further highlights the importance of holding core principles of English throughout your career.

The National Curriculum advocates that children should be supported to develop reading for pleasure, which will underpin their social, emotional and cultural development (DfE, 2014; Gamble, 2013). To facilitate this, teachers need to have a secure and comprehensive knowledge of high-quality literature to recall in practice, as Medwell believes that “teachers knowledge of children’s literature has a direct bearing on the effectiveness of their literacy teaching” (Medwell and Wray, 1998). Therefore, to ensure I have an extensive knowledge of relevant texts for keystage 1 and 2, as suggested by Gamble (2008) I have completed 30 children’s bibliographies, so I now know a diverse range of high-quality literature. Furthermore, through the review process I have identified how these texts would be best used throughout placement. This is important because Gamble (2013) states that

recommending high quality texts to children is crucial as they believe their parents suggestions will be boring. Thus, teachers must know a broad spectrum of current and stimulating authors and books to appeal to all children, which will encourage and support children to take risks when choosing texts (Gamble, 2013) underpinning reading for pleasure.

To reinforce reading for pleasure, children need to engage with positive literacy experiences (Barrs, 2001) through creative uses of resources (Ofsted, 2012) where teachers can explicitly model language (Goodwin, 2001) providing aural scaffolding (Bashir, 2007). This could be a consequence of shared reading (Perkins, 2015) with opportunities for shared thinking (Medwell and Wray, 2014). Moreover, because reading is part of a social process (King, 2012) this could be achieved through Literature circles which provide opportunities for discussion and interaction or through creative drama experiences (Cremin, 2013; Baldwin, 2003) which are further endorsed by Ofsted (2012). Moreover, Bearne and Reedy state that “reading comprehension is fundamentally supported by talk” (2018, p.1) because through literature children extend their understanding of what they know and feel which is further reflected in their writing (Meek, 1982) and their pupil voice (Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2009). The National Curriculum also declares that a wide variety of texts should be used in the classroom, which is further supported by Goodwin (2001). This has led me to identify that my repertoire of poetry is limited which must be amended for placement, as in doing so I can communicate my enjoyment of poetry to children. This is crucial because most children have experienced a limited amount of poetry (Lockwood, 2008).

The National curriculum states that by Year 2 “pupils should be able to read all common graphemes” (DfE, 2014, pp.16) thus most of phonics teaching and learning should occur in Year 1 building upon prior learning from the Early Years Curriculum. The National Curriculum further establishes the statutory requirements of pupils learning with minimal commentary on how to achieve these statements. However, the non-statutory guidance does advise that the teaching of blending sounds would best be supported through high quality literature, which is the only suggestion that other cueing systems may be of value

(Perkins, 2015). Considering, the change from analytic to Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP), Jim Rose reviewed the new strategy, in which he agrees that SSP should be taught through the review, teach, practice, apply application as only part of the reading journey. Outlining that the delivery of such teaching needs to be through focused multi-sensory, active lessons (Maryon, 2015; Perkins, 2015), to provide meaningful opportunities to blend and segment words. The Rose review (2006) further stresses that phonics needs to be embedded through a language-rich environment (Maryon, 2015; Perkins, 2015) so that children have the experiences to develop their love of reading rather than seeing reading as just decoding (Maryon, 2015). Hence forth, books not only provide valuable starting points for meaningful contextualised learning (Perkins, 2015) but further provide opportunities to model blending for children. Furthermore, children should be given access to books that they can decode independently so they can practice their blending with success, reinforcing a positive relationship with books (Perkins, 2015). Which will develop all aspects of their learning through immersive opportunities (Robertson, 2015).

In 2010 the change of government meant that the majority of the Rose review was disregarded, along with the projected Rose curriculum (Duncan, 2010) and replaced with a National strategy for teaching SSP called Letters and Sounds (DfE, 2007). This was based on 'The simple view of reading' model (DfE, 2006) which was further recommended by Rose. This framework set clear guidance for discrete teaching of phonics at each stage of development including a range of activities for the classroom (Perkins, 2015). Due to the most recent change in government some schools continue to use Letters and sounds whilst others have since chosen to adopt different SSP schemes such as Jolly Phonics. These schemes will all have a hierarchical programme (Brien, 2012) with a predetermined order of teaching to be delivered regularly and discretely (Ofsted, 2014). Some schemes can reduce flexibility to teachers which can limit their planning (Perkins, 2015). Therefore, to support schools in choosing the best scheme for them, the DfE produced 'Core criteria for a systematic synthetic phonics programme' (2010) which provides criteria for quality first phonics teaching. Thus, when deciding what type of school, I want to work in I will be looking at which Phonics scheme the school uses, as I would like to be able to plan engaging, multi-sensory lessons because this style of teaching intensifies learning (DfE, 2010). In

addition, my placement school uses Jolly Phonics, so I will read the school policy to ensure my pedagogy aligns with theirs and then observe this in practice before I teach.

Wyse (et al, 2013) states that phonics should be taught as an integrated approach where teaching is embedded in high quality texts, to provide opportunities for reading and meaningful talk to support development. In addition, The University of Brighton's Principles of teaching English states that 'Learning to read, write and talk are active, creative meaning-making processes' (UoB, N.D) underpinning contextualised phonics teaching. However, a barrier to this style of learning, which Clark (2014) argues is driving the curriculum is the phonics screening test. This screening emphasises decoding above all other reading cues (Darnell, 2017) which can cause teachers to feel under pressure and therefore can revert to discrete teaching. In these circumstances, Perkins (2015) suggests that quality teaching can still occur through ability grouping which allows intense focused learning of phonics. Overall the teaching of phonics is subject to continued change from the political environment (Wyse, 2013; Darnell, 2017) but at the heart of quality phonics teaching should be a teacher who is confident delivering quality first teaching with a positive attitude (Brien, 2012). Focusing on engaging children in their learning rather than government tests, through engaging explorations (Clark, 2014). This requires underpinning high quality literature (Wyse, 2013) to acknowledge that grapho-phonemic is not the only cueing system (Clark, 2014) which is something I aim to foster in my practice.

The 2014 National Curriculum increased the grammar provision in the primary classroom (Waugh, 2014). It requires children to learn about the metalanguage associated with grammar, and how to use each grammatical term within their own writing successfully. This enables children to know about grammar so that they can explain their decisions within their writing (Crystal, 2004). This is facilitated through the National Curriculum appendix which endorses contextualised grammar through reading, writing and speaking (DfE, 2014). The DfE further suggests that children should have opportunities to increase their vocabulary through reading high quality texts (2014). This is additionally supported by Myhill (2013) who states that high quality texts provide meaningful opportunities, to make

clear connections between grammar and writing, which will therefore scaffold children's own writing allowing them to take ownership of their work (Myhill, 2013). By teaching grammar, you provide children with further autonomy through their grammatical choices, which can be reflected in their work, allowing you to formatively assess their understanding (Waugh, 2014). Bromley (1998) agrees and identifies that effective learning creates holistic links between knowledge through children's language use. Thus, it is argued that grammar teaching should not be discrete and prescriptive (Waugh, 2014; Myhill, 2013) as children struggle to make links between grammar and writing without explicit modelling (Myhill, 2013). Henceforth, teachers who lack subject knowledge tend to focus on teaching just the metalanguage (Myhill, N.D) rather than teaching through meaningful contexts which provides deeper understanding (Waugh, 2014).

As part of my continuing professional development I assessed my subject knowledge of grammar, which revealed that I need to develop my metalinguistic knowledge to be able to facilitate learning effectively. To do this I will read 'Rediscover Grammar' by Crystal (2004), so I will feel confident in using grammatical terms which will enable me to teach grammar through contextualised learning rather than discrete lessons. Furthermore, high quality literature provides opportunities for shared reading and writing, enabling the children to see the explicit links between reading and writing through their underpinning grammar knowledge (Myhill, 2013). However, these experiences are diminished if there are limited opportunities for purposeful discussion to explore the grammatical structure of high-quality texts (Myhill, 2013; DfE, 2014). A further barrier to contextualised grammar teaching could be the year 6 Spelling Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG) test. This result orientated climate creates tension and teachers feel under pressure to get teach grammar through discrete lessons, to ensure they have covered the understanding assessed in the SPaG test. Therefore, to prevent this from occurring when I am a NQT, I will work in a school that has strong core values that align with my own teacher identity, that underpin quality English teaching. Enabling me to be a reflective practitioner to best support the children in my class (Hayes, 2015).

Looking forward into my practise there are several core beliefs that I need to retain. The first being that high quality literature underpins all aspects of English teaching (Maryon, 2015) which enables lessons to be contextualised rather than discrete, leading to meaningful learning (Myhill, 2013; Meek, 1982). This needs to be further supported through immersive multi-sensory resources (Perkins, 2015) in combination with purposeful talking opportunities, which empower children to unpick their learning (Brien, 2012). The Curriculum will evolve throughout my career as policy dictates education, however my core beliefs as an English teacher will underpin my practise to ensure that I focus on quality first teaching. To continue developing my subject knowledge I have identified areas of development. In addition to the previously mentioned targets, I will also research high quality cross curricular books, as these experiences should not be limited to just one lesson. In doing this, high quality language and discussion will become embedded within my classroom, which will develop and underpin contextualised grammar teaching. Equally I must develop my understanding of phonics progression, as through my limited experiences I have not seen the full range of phonic development. This may differ for each SSP scheme; however, my final placement will provide an opportunity to facilitate this. To accompany this, I also need to develop my understanding of effective assessment for learning and assessment in learning of the English curriculum, as this will provide meaningful insights into children's understanding which will further influence my future practice. This is important to me because subject knowledge underpins effective pedagogy, which has a direct correlation to pupil development (Brien, 2012). Therefore, comprehensive subject knowledge is crucial and to maintain this I will engage with the NQT English blog, to ensure my subject knowledge is comprehensive, which will inform my planning.

I will then use this underpinning knowledge to transform my planning as a teacher, to create engaging contextualised lessons, where I consider the needs of the children and respect their pupil voice. I aim to inspire children through effective and explicit modelling of reading for enjoyment (Gamble, 2013) which I believe is at the heart of good practice. In addition, I will reflect in my lessons as well as on my lessons which will support my future practice (Hayes, 2015). Through careful and purposeful assessment for learning and assessment in

learning, I will understand where my children are at and what I will need to do to progress their learning (Bearne, 1998). As pupils learning should be at the pinnacle of our planning.

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