



Literacy in the Topaz Pathway



Overview

Literacy in the Topaz pathway sits within a 'Doing' curriculum, where children learn through engagement, exploration and sensory experience.

This pathway prioritises:

- Communication as the foundation for all learning
- Engagement before expectation
- Play and shared experiences before formal literacy skills

Children are typically at the earliest stages of development, and learning is:

- Highly individualised
- Based on EHCP targets
- Rooted in interaction, exploration and repetition

Intent: What Literacy Should Look Like

Literacy in Topaz is:

- Highly personalised and centred on individual EHCP outcomes
- Focused on early communication, attention and engagement
- Embedded within play, routines and sensory experiences
- Designed to build the foundations of speaking, listening, reading and writing

The priority is for children to:

- Develop communication in all forms (gesture, vocalisation, AAC)
- Engage with stories, sounds and shared experiences
- Build early skills in attention, listening and interaction

Formal literacy skills are not the focus — instead, children are developing readiness for literacy.

Implementation: How Literacy is Delivered

1. Communication at the Centre

Communication underpins all literacy learning:

- All forms of communication are recognised and valued
- Adults model communication without expectation
- Opportunities for interaction are embedded throughout the day

Children are supported to:

- Develop shared attention
- Respond to familiar voices, sounds and routines
- Begin to communicate wants, needs and interests

2. Literacy Through the Day

Literacy is not taught as a discrete subject, but is embedded across all experiences:

- Continuous provision
- Play-based learning
- Daily routines (e.g. snack, transitions)
- Sensory exploration

Skills are:

- Practised daily
- Reinforced through repetition (overlearning)
- Linked to familiar and meaningful contexts

3. Stories and Texts

- Stories and texts are central to engagement
- Children experience a range of texts across all key stages
- Texts are linked to topics, but always chosen to motivate and engage

A strong focus is placed on:

- Sensory stories
- Interactive storytelling experiences
- Repetition of familiar stories

Stories are explored through:

- Props and real objects

- Sensory elements (sound, touch, movement)
- Adult modelling and shared attention

4. Early Reading Skills

Children develop early reading foundations through:

- Listening to stories
- Engaging with sounds and percussion, rhythm & rhyme
- Oral segmenting
- Alliteration
- Oral blends
- Exploring books and images

This includes:

- Developing attention and listening
- Recognising familiar objects and symbols
- Beginning to understand meaning through experience

5. Early Writing Skills

Children develop early writing foundations through:

- Sensory and mark-making experiences
- Exploration of different materials
- Physical development activities (e.g. movement, fine motor play)
- Write Dance sessions

Children may:

- Make marks with purpose
- Explore textures and tools
- Begin to express ideas through movement and action

6. Teaching Approaches

Literacy is delivered through:

- Play-based, sensory learning
- Hands-on and exploratory experiences
- Low-demand interactions
- Repetition and overlearning

There is:

- No expectation to complete tasks
- No pressure for formal outcomes
- A strong focus on engagement and participation

7. Adult Role in Literacy

Adults are central to learning and must:

- Follow the child's lead
- Build on interests and engagement
- Model communication consistently
- Create opportunities for interaction and shared experiences
- Allow processing time

Adults focus on:

- Co-regulation
- Building relationships
- Supporting early communication and engagement

Environment: Supporting Literacy Learning

The environment is:

- Low arousal and sensory-considerate
- Designed to reduce anxiety and invite interaction

Key features include:

- Access to books and sensory story resources
- Communication supports (objects of reference, visuals, AAC)
- Heuristic and exploration areas

- Spaces for shared interaction and storytelling

The environment supports:

- Independent exploration
- Shared reading experiences
- Communication in all areas

Assessment and Evidence

Learning is:

- Highly individualised and developmental
- Linked directly to EHCP targets

Early literacy skills are:

- Observed and assessed through engagement and interaction
- Recognised as small but significant steps

Learning is evidenced through:

- Observations and photographs on Tapestry
- Learning journeys
- Recorded moments of engagement and communication

Key Principles

- Communication is central to all learning
- EHCP targets drive all literacy experiences
- Engagement comes before learning
- Learning is play-based, sensory and meaningful
- Repetition and overlearning are essential
- Every interaction is an opportunity for literacy development

What You Should See in a Topaz Classroom

- Children engaged in sensory storytelling and shared experiences
- Adults interacting, modelling and responding to communication

- Use of props, objects and sensory resources to support stories
- Literacy embedded in play, routines and exploration
- A focus on engagement, attention and communication
- Highly individualised learning

Literacy in the Topaz pathway builds the foundations for communication, engagement and future learning, preparing children for the next stage of their literacy journey.