

GRAMMAR AND PUNCTUATION

Introduction

The importance of grammar and punctuation to the curriculum

Grammar is concerned with the way in which sentences are used in spoken language, in reading and in writing. Sentences are the construct which help give words their sense. The purpose of grammar teaching is to enable pupils to become conscious of patterns of language which they can apply in their own work to enhance meaning.

The purpose of punctuation is to clarify the meaning of texts. Readers use punctuation to help make sense of written texts while writers use punctuation to help communicate intended meaning to the reader.

Strategy for implementation

Entitlement and curriculum provision

The National Curriculum gives a clear developmental programme for the introduction and acquisition of knowledge about grammar and punctuation. The form of the Literacy Hour is well suited to the practical development of this knowledge through the sentence level work provided in the National Literacy Strategy Framework.

Teaching and Learning

To teach pupils about grammar and punctuation, the emphasis is on the close consideration of examples of language in use, including pupils' own writing and on the exploration of language as a system. The aim is to develop pupils' curiosity about language and their capacity to observe and reflect, which will in turn enable them to develop more control and choice in their use of language.

The role of the teacher:

- to provide direct teaching and accurate modelling;
- to provide resources and an environment which promotes a developing understanding of grammar and punctuation;
- to observe pupils, monitor progress and determine targets for development.

Within the National Literacy Strategy, the objectives relating to grammar are located within sentence level work.

Grammar and punctuation will not to be taught through exercises. While they can provide some limited opportunities for consolidation, the use of decontextualised exercises does not help the pupils to make progress in the use of grammar and punctuation in their own writing.

Continuity and Progression

Foundation Stage

Pupils expect written text to make sense and they recognise sentences in their shared reading of texts and in their own play and experimental writing. They write simple sentences based on speech and begin to use significant punctuation, for example capital letters for their own name and at the beginning of a sentence.

Key Stage 1

At Key Stage 1 the emphasis is on developing pupils' general awareness of language, both written and spoken. Pupils are encouraged to attempt more complex spoken language and to observe the use of punctuation in written texts as a pointer for pausing, intonation and as an aid to meaning. They recognise sentences, expect them to make sense and use basic sentence structures in their own writing. Some punctuation marks are used in context. More complex sentences are developed through the use of an increasing range of connectives.

Key Stage 2

In Years 3 and 4 pupils are introduced to the grammatical functions of different types of word and they begin to explore how sentences are constructed. The emphasis here is not about grammatical labelling (the naming of parts of speech) but on discovering their function, i.e. what words can be made to do. Explicit teaching of a wider range of punctuation marks occurs and this is reflected by their use in pupils' writing. However, care should be

taken that punctuation is taught within the context of what is being read and what the pupils need to use in their own writing.

In Years 5 and 6 this basic knowledge is extended through the close reading and discussion of carefully chosen examples from a range of text-types. In their writing pupils are encouraged to draw on this understanding to develop a sense of style, to experiment with the construction of complex sentences and to restructure sentences for clarity and effect. This will necessitate the use of a wider range of punctuation marks, including punctuation within a sentence.

The learning environment

Classrooms use wall charts, grammatical word hoards and examples of pupils' investigations to stimulate and provide information. Pupils have good access to a range of appropriate dictionaries and thesauruses.

The role of parents and carers

As with spelling, it is important that parents do not become over-concerned about inaccurate use of punctuation in their child's writing.

Assessment and recording

Assessment of grammar and punctuation is mainly undertaken using conferencing and marking strategies. Work in the Literacy Hour will focus on key learning objectives about grammar and punctuation and occasionally on pupils' errors as they arise.