

# Promoting a culture of articulacy

TEACHING AND LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT



SHARING LEARNING ACROSS THE LEARNING PARTNERSHIP  
PEER PARTNERSHIP VALIDATED SCHOOL STRENGTH

*"We don't want to just do things better, we want to do better things."*

**MAYA WITTLETON, HEADTEACHER**

## Intention

Avonmore is a one form entry primary school close to Kensington Olympia. Pupils come from diverse backgrounds, and there is no dominant community group. There are 48 languages currently spoken in the school.

The leadership of the school changed nearly two years ago, and it is now part of a larger school federation with two other schools.

The head of school advocates the importance of 'wellness' for her pupils. "We want them to be able to express their emotions, to develop a passion for learning, and to cope well in their everyday life. When the foundations are right, then we can build successful learning."

Leaders across the school are clear about the importance of language development in their curriculum. The headteacher says, "Everything we do and want to teach is about developing language."

Currently she has identified two important language rich curriculum initiatives that are making a real difference to pupils' outcomes at Avonmore. These are:

- Mrs Wordsmith's vocabulary



enrichment programme

- The development of formal debating skills in Years 5 and 6

As a school leader, she is strategic about curriculum development and wants to ensure that the curriculum is fit for purpose. For her this means that senior leaders must have time to experiment and develop ideas.

She sees curriculum development as an on-going activity. She is excited about the changes that she and her leadership team are now making. She comments, "You don't ever want to say to a teacher, here's the finished project!"

This is a view of curriculum that is active and that adapts to meet the needs of teachers and their different cohorts. There are some fundamental ideas behind Avonmore's curriculum design. The headteacher says, "We're always looking for quick solutions, but curriculum development takes time to breathe."

*“Staff benefit from a wealth of professional development based on evidence-based research and time to plan and evaluate the impact of what they do.”*

**HFLP PEER REVIEW REPORT, LESLEY LEAK, 2018/19**

## Implementation

The school has developed a set of initiatives to match pupils' language needs in language and literacy skills. Several of these initiatives are structured around developing pupils' range of vocabulary and speaking and listening skills. Others address grammar and punctuation skills in writing and reading. All of these initiatives contribute to the over-arching objective of the school: to develop and embed high-level vocabulary among all learners.

There is a cohesive approach to developing the English curriculum, from EYFS to the end of KS2.

The activities include:

- Maketon at EYFS - sign language and early vocabulary support
- Phonics at EYFS and KS1 – this includes applying phonics in writing
- Investigating word roots and spelling rules from Year 2 onwards
- Weekly Mrs Wordsmith lessons to extend vocabulary, particularly through synonyms and colicates
- Development of cultural capital language skills – speaking in full sentences; performances

in productions and assemblies and taking on a role as school ambassadors

- Debating programme – Years 5 and 6
- Guided reading across the school is at the heart of the school's approach to developing vocabulary

When marking is evaluated across the school, there is a regular vocabulary focus. Vocabulary is tracked throughout pupils' books during half termly book sampling.

Pupils know their next steps and are given a sense of ownership of their own learning. Independent writing is also developing and this is linked to teachers awareness of how much scaffolding is needed to support writing.



*“In Year 5 we learn debating skills and use vocabulary such as ‘rebuttal’ and ‘justification’. We need to develop good memory skills as there are lots of new words to learn, remember and use.” ISLA, YEAR 5 PUPIL*

## Impact

School ambassadors show visitors around the school with pride. They are carefully chosen to further develop their language skills through this very practical task. They are invited to train as an ambassador, and then receive bespoke training. They are proud of the school. This is a ‘real life situation’ in which the school enables children to put their developing language skills to the test, through the very practical task of welcoming visitors. This can mean that children who have not had rich language experiences are able to build up cultural capital as they practice their skills. It also helps everyone in the school to have an open-door approach to teaching and learning, as visitors regularly ‘drop in’ on lessons.

The school’s current leadership and management team know that they are building up language



expertise in pupils and that this is an on-going task rather than just a set of activities. They see language development as a whole school initiative that progressively builds and deepens pupils’ skills across the whole curriculum. The teacher who has led the school’s bespoke debate programme asks excitedly, “What will happen to our pupils’ debating skills when those children, who had the chance to use our speakers corner in the EYFS, begin to debate in Year 5? We think then that we will be able to start the debating programme at a far higher level, and go deeper too!”

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