

Story Dough! as Part of Our

EYFS Literacy Strategy



Intent

At Shobnall Primary and Nursery School we recognise that the foundations of literacy begin long before children can read or write independently. Our early literacy curriculum is underpinned by high-quality interactions, imaginative play and rich oral language experiences that foster a lifelong love of stories.

As part of our EYFS literacy provision, we have embedded **Story Dough**, developed by Greg Bottrill, to nurture communication, vocabulary, imagination and storytelling through purposeful play. Story Dough supports our belief that children should first become confident storytellers before becoming successful readers and writers.

This approach complements the EYFS Framework and reflects our commitment to developing the whole child through joyful, meaningful learning experiences.

What is Story Dough?

Story Dough! is a short, highly engaging storytelling experience where children use a large piece of playdough to create characters, settings and imaginary worlds whilst immersed in stories.

Rather than producing a finished model, children explore ideas through conversation, creativity and collaborative storytelling. Adults model rich vocabulary, pose thoughtful questions and encourage children to develop narratives through play.

Greg Bottrill describes Story Dough! as an opportunity for children to become "story dreamers"—placing imagination, wonder and language at the heart of literacy.

Why We Use Story Dough

Story Dough! supports our vision that literacy should be experienced before it is taught.

Through regular Story Dough! sessions, children develop:

- confidence in speaking and listening
- ambitious vocabulary
- imagination and creativity
- narrative understanding
- story sequencing
- sustained shared thinking
- collaboration and problem solving
- fine motor control through manipulating dough
- positive attitudes towards books and storytelling

These experiences provide the essential foundations upon which phonics, reading and writing are later built.

Links to the EYFS Framework

Story Dough! supports several areas of learning within the EYFS.

Prime Areas

Communication and Language

Children are encouraged to:

- listen attentively
- engage in meaningful conversations
- ask and answer questions
- explain ideas
- use increasingly sophisticated vocabulary
- build confidence when communicating with others

Physical Development

Children strengthen the fine motor skills needed for future handwriting through:

- rolling
- pinching
- squeezing
- stretching
- moulding playdough

Specific Areas

Literacy

Story Dough! develops:

- story comprehension
- understanding of narrative
- vocabulary acquisition
- sequencing
- storytelling
- mark-making opportunities
- readiness for Drawing Club and independent writing

Expressive Arts and Design

Children:

- create imaginary worlds
- express ideas creatively
- explore symbolism
- engage in collaborative imaginative play

Supporting the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning

Story Dough! naturally develops all three Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning.

Playing and Exploring

Children investigate ideas freely, experiment with language and create their own stories.

Active Learning

Children remain highly engaged because learning is meaningful, playful and child-centred.

Creating and Thinking Critically

Children solve problems, invent characters, adapt narratives and make connections between experiences.

Impact on Literacy Development

Through Story Dough! we expect children to develop:

Communication

Children become confident communicators who are willing to share ideas, listen to others and engage in sustained conversations.

Vocabulary

Children acquire and use ambitious vocabulary within meaningful contexts, increasing both expressive and receptive language.

Story Comprehension

Children develop a secure understanding of:

- characters
- setting
- sequence
- problem
- resolution
- cause and effect

These skills support later reading comprehension.

Writing Readiness

Story Dough provides the experiences children need before formal writing, including:

- generating ideas
- oral rehearsal
- symbolic thinking
- fine motor development
- confidence in storytelling

Inclusion

Story Dough is an inclusive approach that benefits all learners, particularly:

- children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)
- children with SEND
- children learning English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- reluctant speakers
- children requiring additional communication opportunities

Its multisensory, language-rich approach enables every child to participate successfully.

Evidence-Informed Practice

Although Story Dough! itself is an emerging pedagogical approach, it is firmly rooted in established evidence surrounding early literacy.

Research consistently demonstrates that successful literacy development is supported by:

- rich oral language experiences
- explicit vocabulary teaching
- shared storytelling
- imaginative play
- sustained shared thinking
- meaningful adult-child interactions
- secure fine motor development

These principles are reflected in the EYFS Framework, the Department for Education's *Best Start in Life* guidance and the Education Endowment Foundation's evidence on communication and language.

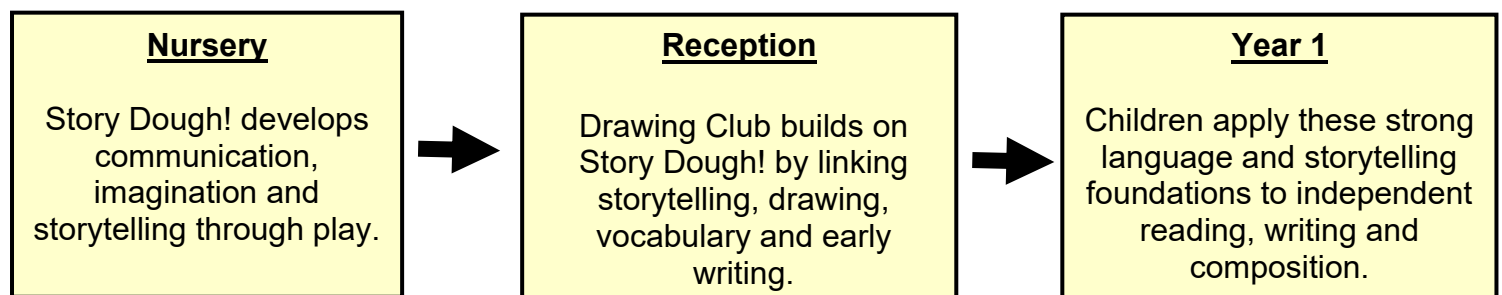
Monitoring the Impact

As Literacy Subject Leader, the impact of Story Dough! will be monitored through:

- learning walks
- pupil voice
- floor books and learning journals
- observations of communication and language
- monitoring of vocabulary progression
- evidence of children's storytelling
- transition into Drawing Club
- improvements in mark making and early writing
- EYFS Profile outcomes, particularly Communication and Language and Literacy

Long-Term Vision

Story Dough forms part of our progressive literacy journey:



This progression ensures children experience literacy as joyful, purposeful and creative from the very beginning of their education.

Subject Leader Reflection

Story Dough is much more than a playdough activity. It is a carefully considered pedagogical approach that places language, imagination and relationships at the centre of literacy learning. By embedding Story Dough within our EYFS curriculum, we are investing in the essential foundations that enable children to become confident communicators, enthusiastic readers and capable writers. It reflects our commitment to an ambitious, inclusive and play-based curriculum where every child has the opportunity to flourish.