literacy hours

**A SURVEY OF THE NATIONAL
PICTURE IN THE SPRING
TERM OF 1998**

Marian Sainsbury

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Contents

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1   Introduction

In August 1997, the government's Literacy Task Force brought out a document introducing a National Literacy Strategy, to be implemented in schools from September 1998, in order to meet national literacy targets by the year 2002. The strategy has a variety of aspects, including national and local management structures, additional resources, professional development for teachers and the involvement of parents and others. Amongst the recommendations of this document was that all schools should be required to 'timetable a daily, dedicated literacy hour' (para 43).

It was this new requirement that suggested the present research study. The original strategy document did not go further in specifying the nature of the literacy hour to be required. It did, however, present a description of the National Literacy Project, of which a literacy hour is an important feature. It also stated that advice on the organisation and structure of the literacy hour would be included in distance learning training materials to be produced by the Standards and Effectiveness Unit. The database of the National Literacy Trust suggested, however, that the National Literacy Project was not the only model of literacy hour currently in operation in schools.

The aim of the present research study was to find out how widespread was the use of a literacy hour, before the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy, and whether those in use included different models of literacy hour, varying in significant respects one from another. This information could contribute an additional perspective on the National Literacy Strategy and its implementation.

A questionnaire was devised and sent to each local education authority (LEA) in England, addressed to an identified individual with responsibility for literacy. Some of these were specialist literacy consultants; others were inspectors or advisers responsible for English, or general inspectors or advisers. Where the LEA had a specialist literacy centre, a questionnaire was also sent to a named individual at the centre. In analysing the responses, replies for each LEA were combined where necessary to obtain a single response. The responses to this survey are detailed in Chapter 2.

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In order to find out about the nature of the literacy hours in use, two methods were adopted. The National Literacy Trust database revealed three literacy initiatives that were clearly based on a literacy hour: the National Literacy Project; the Literacy Initiative From Teachers (LIFT); and Literacy For All. The organisers of these initiatives were contacted and asked for details of their schemes. The questionnaire then asked its LEA respondents whether any of these three schemes was in use in any of its schools, and if so, in how many. No further details were required in these cases. A visit was made to one school using each of these approaches, to observe them in practice.

The survey also aimed to find out about previously unknown literacy hour schemes. Respondents were also asked about these, using the following criteria to define a 'literacy hour': a daily hour of literacy activities for the whole class; a high degree of structuring; and a high degree of direct teaching. Where there was a previously unknown literacy hour in use, LEA respondents were asked to provide documentation, or a contact who could supply documentation, or to describe the scheme on two pages of the questionnaire.

The analysis of the literacy hours in use consisted of a desk exercise in which the available documentation was examined against certain common headings. The results of this analysis are provided in full in the Appendix, for all of those schemes for which details were provided, and for which permission was granted by the respondents to identify them by name. A draft of the report was sent to respondents to check, and details were amended where requested.

The information presented in this report is therefore based upon the written documentation for literacy hours, or on written questionnaire responses. It is very likely that literacy hours are more flexible in practice than the documentation suggests, and take different forms when implemented by different teachers. This research is not based on classroom studies and can therefore give no information about the range of approaches that are actually used. It simply analyses the documented intentions of the originators or users of the literacy hours. Nevertheless, this analysis revealed some differences in philosophy and approach between the different schemes, which are set out in more detail in Chapter 3 of this report.

The information obtained from the respondents sometimes went beyond describing the literacy hour, and gave detailed curriculum guidelines, or explained arrangements for resourcing schools, for training teachers or for monitoring the scheme in use. This information was not specifically requested,

however, and therefore not consistently provided. These additional details will not be reported here, in order to retain a clear focus on the nature of literacy hours themselves. It should be noted, however, that in many cases the literacy hours were just one component of a detailed approach to the English curriculum.

This survey took place in the spring term of 1998, and the results reported here are therefore a 'snapshot' of the national picture at one point in time, when the situation was changing rapidly as schools and LEAs awaited details of the new requirements. Before the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy Framework for Teaching, schools were not clear about what, exactly, would be required of them. However, interested teachers, heads and LEA advisers were beginning to familiarise themselves with literacy hours, so the situation was changing in the course of the term. In many areas, the appointment of literacy consultants was still under way, so the personnel involved were in the process of changing. By the summer term, the Framework for Teaching was in schools and many new consultants had taken up their posts, so the situation had already moved on from that reported here.

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2 Findings of the Survey

2.1 The sample

Questionnaires were sent to a total of 128 LEAs and were returned by 95 of these. Generally, the responses covered a wide geographical spread and a mix of metropolitan and non-metropolitan authorities. However, of the 13 inner London authorities, only five returned their questionnaires, so these results were less than representative. Because of local government reorganisation, some of the LEAs were newly established at the time of the survey and therefore only beginning to coordinate their literacy activities.

2.2 The National Literacy Project

The National Literacy Project (NLP) was in its second year of operation at the time of this survey. It included a total of 16 LEAs which formed 14 NLP centres, as some of them combined to implement the project. Of these, some did and some did not return questionnaires, so the figures for participation in the project were obtained independently so that they could be accurately reported here, and distinguished from other participants in the survey. The project recruited schools in 'cohorts' of 20. At the time of this survey, two cohorts had been included in each LEA. Allowing for some drop-outs, the best estimate available of schools participating in the project in the spring term of 1998 was 520.

One of the project LEAs also reported the use of LIFT in some of its schools, and these are included below.

2.3 Wider use of the NLP framework

The survey revealed that use of the NLP literacy hour was far more widespread than the project alone. Once the 16 project LEAs had been excluded from the analysis, a further 34 authorities were revealed to have at least one school using the NLP literacy hour. Numbers of schools ranged from one to 50, with a mean of 12, and the total number was 438. The following quotation from a questionnaire gives an idea of what may be happening in these authorities:

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Approximately 15 schools in our area have at least one teacher who is voluntarily piloting the NLP and we operate a support group for these teachers. A literacy hour is done each day and and the programme of objectives is followed.

Not all of them are sticking directly to the organisational model which requires rotation of small groups (devising own arrangements and groupings).

Most teachers began just by introducing 'shared reading' with some follow-up tasks. 'Guided reading' has been introduced later in the year.

KS2 teachers find that on at least one day a week a full hour and more time is needed for extended writing.

Beyond these schools, there was an indication that some teachers were beginning to experiment with the ideas of the NLP. Because they were outside any LEA support framework, however, it was not clear exactly how much was being done. Some LEAs that were introducing the NLP mentioned that there were others outside the support framework, trying out the ideas on their own. There were 13 LEAs, in addition to those mentioned above, where comments of this nature were made. The following quotations were typical:

We are not part of the existing project, but many of our schools are gradually using the literacy hour - phasing it in either in terms of structure, or time.

Two schools are using partial literacy hours, one has had training in guided reading.

All our schools are working towards the NLP framework, only one achieved so far.

To my knowledge there are no fully-fledged literacy hours in place, although some schools are working towards the September launch by trialling elements of the NLP model.

Several of the respondents said that teachers were basing their work on the NLP Framework materials, and others referred to the video, *Literacy Matters*. Some respondents expressed misgivings about schools' unsupported attempts to introduce literacy hours:

Other schools are beginning to use the NLP model though our advice is to wait for the training before full implementation.

There are many schools who think that they are 'doing' the literacy hour but are in fact 'doing' their own, watered-down, somewhat inadequate version.

2.4   Literacy Initiative From Teachers (LIFT)

The LIFT literacy hour, which originated in Westminster LEA, proved also to be fairly widespread. In Westminster, over 30 schools were reported to be implementing this scheme. In addition, the survey revealed a total of 112 schools in 10 other LEAs where it was in use. In most of these cases, numbers of schools were small - below 10 - but one LEA had 65 schools using this model and another, 20. One respondent described the current situation:

nfer

> Four schools with Reading Recovery teachers began implementing LIFT from about
> 1996. This began in KS1 classrooms and is gradually moving through KS2.
> Training now is moving closer to the NLP model though emphasis on **text** →
> sentence → word will remain.

Here, too, there were reports of partial adoptions of the scheme alongside those
that were supported by the LEA:

> Some schools have included elements from LIFT in their daily timetable. Some
> schools have developed their own version of the literacy hour but change it as new
> information comes from NLP.

The LIFT scheme also underpinned some other schemes that are listed in the
Appendix under other names, where authorities adopted the scheme and
developed their own version of it. These include Livewires in Wirral and
Reading Enrichment in Birmingham.

2.5   Literacy For All

This model was found in two LEAs, with eight schools using it in one and one
in another. The eight schools were part of a two-year project currently coming
to an end. Again, there were indications that, within this LEA, elements of the
approach were in use in a number of schools beyond those formally involved in
the project.

2.6   First Steps

The First Steps programme was described as a literacy hour by respondents
from five LEAs. In one of these, 44 schools were involved, in another, three.
The other respondents were not specific about numbers, but indicated that
several schools had introduced the approach. This scheme is not described in
the Appendix, as the available documentation does not describe a literacy hour
structure, but rather a way of approaching the teaching and monitoring of
literacy. This approach was evidently used within a literacy hour structure by
these respondents.

Two further respondents reported the use of First Steps in some of their
schools, but not structured as a literacy hour.

2.7 Other LEA schemes

Ten further LEAs reported that there was a local literacy hour scheme in use. These accounted for 147 schools, where numbers were given. They varied from five schools to 60 in an LEA. For six of these, descriptions were provided by the respondents. They form part of the discussion in Chapter 3 and are described in the Appendix.

Respondents were asked to give the names of any individual schools that had introduced their own literacy hours. Details of two of these were forthcoming, and are also included in the Appendix.

2.8 Other responses

In the entire survey, there were only 15 respondents who gave no indication of any progress towards a literacy hour in their authorities. Some of these explained that they had taken up their posts only recently after local government reorganisation, and had not yet been able to establish what was happening in schools. Four of them stated that their policy was to wait until training was available in the summer before attempting to introduce the literacy strategy.

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3 Analysis of Literacy Hours

3.1 Overview

The full set of literacy hours described by respondents to the survey is included as the Appendix, with classified details of each. It was left to the respondents themselves to decide whether a literacy initiative was to be described as a 'literacy hour' in the terms of the survey. In some cases, the criteria - a daily hour, highly structured and with a high degree of direct teaching - did not all apply precisely, but schemes have generally been included here if they seem to have most of these features.

The similarities and differences between models are described in the following sections, which consider: the structure of the hour and the teaching methods within it; definitions of literacy and approaches to content; and assessment. Across the literacy hours in the survey, there proved to be similarities and differences in all these categories, some of which seemed significant and others less so.

All the literacy hours revealed by the survey addressed the primary years only; no schemes aimed at secondary-aged pupils emerged. Amongst the primary schemes, not all included the full age range. There were examples of schemes aimed only at younger children, in Key Stage 1, and some aimed only at older children, in Key Stage 2.

Overall, the analysis suggested that the schemes seemed to fall into two broad groups, defined by their underlying philosophy, rather than by specific details. The first, and by far the larger, of these groups consisted of schemes where the overall focus was **the teaching of the skills of literacy**. These will be termed **skills-based** literacy hours. This is not to imply any superficiality or narrowness in these schemes. In the vast majority of cases, the skills involved ranged right across those described in the National Curriculum, and included literal, inferential and evaluative comprehension of whole texts, as well as reading of words and understanding of language features. Nevertheless, the focus was on the teaching of these skills, and texts were used in the service of skills teaching, rather than the other way round.

The second, much smaller, group consisted of schemes such as the one that was described by one respondent as a 'literature hour' rather than a 'literacy hour'.

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Here, the focus was firmly on **understanding and responding to a particular text**. This, of course, involves skills such as those described above: these schemes aimed to develop literacy and oracy through the medium of literature. Nevertheless, the focus of these schemes seemed to be upon literature rather than literacy, so they could be termed **text-based** approaches. The skills were developed in the service of appreciating the text, rather than the other way round. There were three schemes that fell into this group: Literacy For All; Key Text Teaching in Hillingdon; and the Buckinghamshire Reading Project. The latter was also in use, since local government reorganisation, in Milton Keynes.

In both of the broad groups, shared reading was a common feature for introducing and discussing a text with children. Correspondingly, the approach to the programmes of study for reading seemed to vary little across all the schemes. The difference was found more in the group and individual activities. Those approaches described as 'skills-based' featured guided reading, and had an emphasis on literacy skills and strategies. Those described as 'text-based' were likely to have a broader range of activities related to the text, and did not include guided reading. These approaches will be described in more detail in the next sections. In practice, there may be less difference between the two groups than this description implies. Nevertheless, it emerged as an interesting distinction to bear in mind when considering the detailed features of each literacy hour.

3.2 Structure of the hour and teaching methods

Almost all the literacy hours in the survey had a similar underlying structure, in that each would start with a whole-class introduction, then the class would split up for group or individual work, and finally the whole class would come together again for a plenary session.

Introducing the hour

In the great majority of cases, the introduction to the literacy hour was described as taking the form of whole-class work on a text, usually as shared reading and sometimes as shared writing. The time allocated to this varied between schemes, and could be anything from 10 to 30 minutes, depending upon what was included.

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In a shared reading session, the whole class can see the words of the text. It may take the form of an enlarged book, or a page presented on an overhead projector, or, sometimes, a set of books so that each child has a copy. The text is selected for a variety of reasons: it may form the basis of work over several days; or it may have been selected to exemplify certain textual features for this specific lesson. Teacher and children read aloud, and the teacher introduces questions and discussions at various points, depending on the teaching focus. With younger children and less experienced readers, these questions are likely to model the use of a range of reading strategies as well as asking children about their understanding of and response to the content of the text. For example, the questions might draw out patterns in spellings; rhymes; word recognition; the function of punctuation; or the use of grammar and context. This is in addition to discussion of literary features such as plot, humour, character, text type and the author's choice of language and of presentational features. With older children and more experienced readers, questions of the latter type predominate, together with discussion of grammatical features such as the use of tenses. The shared reading session is intended to be lively and interactive, with an engaging text interspersed with stimulating questions so that the children are fully involved throughout the session.

In shared writing, a similar approach is used, except that teacher and children are engaged in a joint writing task, with the teacher as scribe. Here, too, text structures and choice of words can be discussed alongside grammatical features, spelling and punctuation.

In the literacy hours described by the survey, shared reading formed the introduction to the hour in almost all cases. There were two exceptions, in both of which the hour started with a short introductory phonics session.

Shared reading sessions characterised those schemes described as text-based hours as much as the skills-based approaches. Where the main focus was on the appreciation of particular texts, however, there were slightly different emphases in shared reading. In Literacy For All, a single text formed the basis of two weeks' work, so not every day necessarily began with shared reading of this text. On some days, there might be a drama or discussion session to bring out particular features of the text, or an introduction to reading other kinds of text on related themes. The Buckinghamshire Reading Project devoted the whole hour to reading and discussion of the text once a week. The Key Texts project had a shared reading session, in which the text was read and explored.

nfer

The reading was interspersed with discussion, but without losing the flow of the story.

The schemes differed somewhat in the emphasis given to sentence-level and word-level work and in the relationship of these to the shared reading. It was the National Literacy Project that originated the three-way split into text, sentence and word levels. The NLP has specified objectives in each area, and requires that text-level work should be followed by 15 minutes of whole-class work at word or word and sentence levels. Since this work is defined by specific teaching objectives at sentence and word levels, it may or may not be derived from the shared reading text. In LIFT, it is clear that much of the work arising from the text could be described as sentence-level or word-level. In this scheme, however, there are not separate specified objectives, so it is likely that the sentence-level and word-level work would start with the shared text and move beyond it if necessary. Other schemes described by respondents were often modelled on the NLP or LIFT approaches.

Group work: guided reading

After the initial introductory session, almost all the schemes described a carefully planned set of group tasks. In many schemes, a primary feature of group tasks proved to be guided reading.

For guided reading, the children are carefully grouped according to their assessed learning needs, to allow the session to focus upon the skills and strategies that are needed by particular children at that particular time. Guided reading is teacher-led, and the sessions are organised so that the teacher is able to work with each group in a concentrated way once, twice or several times a week. The children in the group all have a copy of the same text, chosen to be at an 'instructional' level. That is, they are able to read and understand the text with support. In providing that support, the teacher is giving instruction in the skills and strategies that the children are currently developing. This requires careful planning by the teacher in choosing an appropriate text and providing well matched support. The text used for guided reading, because it differs from group to group, is not normally the same as the text used for shared reading.

In guided reading, the teacher introduces the selected book by setting the scene, talking about the content, rehearsing the language if necessary, and making links with the children's own experience. In this way, it is made possible for the children to read the text independently, which often takes place after the

11

nfer

guided reading session has finished, when the teacher moves on to support another group.

Guided reading originated in this country with the LIFT project, and also forms an important part of the NLP approach. The survey findings suggested that guided reading was the distinguishing feature of those schemes described here as 'skills-based'. LIFT describes guided reading as 'at the heart of the reading programme' and it is in the guided reading session that children are instructed at a level which allows them to move on in their development of independence.

Of the three schemes described in this report as 'text-based', none featured guided reading. Instead, the group activities, with and without teacher support, were related to the shared reading text.

Group work: other activities

Whilst the teacher concentrates on a particular group, the other children in the class need to be engaged in related activities that they can undertake independently. It was clear from all the documentation that setting up routines and expectations for these activities was a major aspect of the teacher's role in implementing a literacy hour.

Where guided reading was a feature of the scheme, this often gave rise to an independent reading session based on the teacher introduction to the text provided in the guided reading. Beyond this, though, the survey revealed a number of descriptions of the kinds of activity to be undertaken: written responses to text; word definitions; phonics, spelling and vocabulary; reference skills; investigations of punctuation and grammar; computer work; 'reading round the room'; book reviews; character studies; story mapping; story telling with props; board games; making books. The LIFT scheme also mentions craft, art, drama and song, often giving rise to displays that then form part of the print environment for future reading.

There was some indication that those schemes described here as 'text-based' featured a different range of activities from those described as 'skills-based'. Literacy For All, in particular, described a broad range of text-related activities including artwork, design and technology and drama, aimed at developing children's speaking and listening skills. In the Hillingdon Key Texts scheme, the shared reading led on to differentiated teaching of writing, or to teacher-led activities involving the reading of other kinds of texts. The Buckinghamshire materials described follow-up activities in terms of written responses to the

nfer

shared text, writing in a range of forms and for a range of purposes, together with related reading work, such as the exploration of information or media texts on similar themes.

Many of the responses described the deployment of additional staffing to support the literacy hour. In cases where this was possible, several of the groups would have an adult working with them.

The final plenary

In almost all of the schemes, a short time at the end of the hour was set aside for reviewing the hour's work. This plenary session was described as giving children an opportunity to report back on what they had done and learned, and teachers the opportunity to comment, bring out key points, give praise and look towards the future. Thus the final plenary was described as contributing to the underlining of the day's teaching, but also as developing important skills in speaking and listening, as children described and explained their work and gave constructive comments on the contributions of others.

3.3 Definitions of literacy and approaches to content

The teaching of the subject of English is, of course, defined statutorily in the National Curriculum programmes of study, so all literacy hours are likely to address all or part of these programmes of study. Moreover, aspects of the programmes of study that are not covered within the literacy hour must be taught outside it, and sometimes the analysis gave rise to an indication of what these aspects were likely to be.

This section will, therefore, take as a basis the National Curriculum programmes of study, and look at the definitions of literacy provided by the literacy hour schemes analysed. There was found to be a variation between schemes in the range of work included.

In the National Curriculum, English is divided into three programmes of study: speaking and listening; reading; and writing. Each of these begins with the words: 'Pupils' abilities should be developed within an integrated programme of speaking and listening, reading and writing', thus making clear that although the language modes are described separately, teaching is seen as an integrated process in which speaking, listening, reading and writing all contribute to a

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child's development and the links between them are made clear. Each of the three programmes of study is structured into three parts: range; key skills; and standard English and language study.

Reading

At both Key Stages 1 and 2, the programme of study for reading starts with a statement of the **range** of reading required, and at both key stages this range is wide. From Key Stage 1 onwards, literature should be drawn from a range of genres and should include stories, poems and plays. Information texts, including reference books and on-screen reference materials, are also explicitly listed. Progression between the two key stages is found in some of the features of the texts. At Key Stage 1, for example, there is emphasis on accessible themes and ideas and recognisable repetitive patterns, rhyme and rhythm in the language, whereas at Key Stage 2 there is a requirement for challenging subject matter, more complex narrative structures and figurative language. In both key stages, there is a stress on the need for books of high quality, to 'stimulate pupils' imagination and enthusiasm' at Key Stage 1 and to help children develop as 'enthusiastic, independent and reflective readers' at Key Stage 2.

The range of reading emerges as a major feature in the National Literacy Project approach to the literacy hour. The indications given in the programmes of study are expanded and elaborated into a specified range of texts for each term's work, each year, from:

> a wide variety of traditional and modern rhymes, chants, action verses and stories with predictable structures, and patterned language

in Reception, to

> comparative stories, stories by same author on same theme; poetry by same poet, on same themes in same form; procedural texts, linked to work in other subjects; reference texts

in the final term of Year 6. In the project documentation itself, there are no specified texts, however. It is left to the teacher to select the material in each category and to plan teaching around it. Other local literacy hours derived from the NLP were also likely to have this feature.

The LIFT approach, by contrast, did not give any specific guidance on either specific texts, or the type of texts, to be used. These decisions are entirely left to teachers, although participating teachers are introduced to materials that may be suitable.

Those approaches that have been described here as 'text-based' took a different approach, however, as each of them built the work around specific texts, chosen in advance, which were a central element of the scheme. In all cases, these were literary texts, and response to the themes and language of the texts were highlighted in the accompanying notes. Other kinds of text also formed part of the teaching in these schemes, however. The themes emerging from the central text were systematically extended into other areas of reading. For example, Hillingdon's Key Texts scheme gives, amongst the follow-up suggestions to reading *The Day of Ahmed's Secret:*

> You could then balance the provision by moving to an information text such as ANCIENT EGYPT - a jump history book. ...
>
> As you use it reflect with the pupils on how we read information books differently from story books - we can 'dip in and out' - read information in any order ... (page 51)

Thus the central texts in these schemes led on to other kinds of reading, as children followed up poetry, information, reference or media texts on themes suggested by the central book.

The **key skills** of the programmes of study are again broad, and set out the full range of children's reading skills and of their understanding of and response to what they read. At Key Stage 1, the skills and strategies that children need in learning to read are set out as a 'balanced and coherent programme' consisting of phonic knowledge, graphic knowledge, word recognition, grammatical knowledge and contextual understanding. In addition, children need to learn about books and about print, to learn the alphabet and to develop phonological awareness. Their responses to literature should include retelling and prediction as well as talking about characters, events and language. They should learn to use reference materials for different purposes and learn about the organisational devices within them. The programme of study for Key Stage 2 builds upon this, requiring that children should consider in detail the quality and depth of what they read, including plot, characters, ideas, vocabulary and the organisation of language, and referring to the text to support their opinions. Their understanding of non-literary texts should include considering arguments critically, distinguishing between fact and opinion, making notes and using a wide range of reference material which they are able to locate for themselves.

Here again, the analysis of the NLP approach showed it to give a systematic elaboration of these key skills into termly objectives throughout the two key

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stages. These are more detailed even than the 'range' objectives, including, for example:

> to re-tell stories to pick out significant incidents and give the main points in sequence, and to notice differences between spoken and written forms in retelling by comparing oral recounts with the story text

at Year 1, and:

> to use appropriate terms for discussing poems: verse, couplet, stanza, rhyme, blank verse, etc

at Year 5. The documentation explicitly adopts the five types of reading strategy given in the programme of study, and the objectives for word-level and sentence-level work systematically address the phonic, graphic and grammatical elements set out there.

Other literacy hours were not as explicit or systematic as this in setting out objectives for learning. However, it was apparent that a similar set of key skills in reading underlay them. The LIFT documentation, for example, includes: predicting, confirming and extending the storyline; learning to appreciate the importance of using meaning, oral language structures and print information simultaneously in order to re-construct the author's message; appreciating and responding to literary language, style and genre.

The 'text-based' literacy hours addressed the same skills, but by means of specific guidance on questioning about particular texts. Literacy For All, for example, highlights particular words in particular texts for looking at rhyme patterns, and includes advice such as:

> Focus discussion on the interaction between the characters and how they are feeling on each page, paying close attention to describing facial expressions. (*Oscar Got the Blame*, page 5)

Key Text Teaching, similarly, gives examples of particular questions to be asked in looking at selected texts:

> The end of the page indicates that Ahmed is responsible in his work. What age do you think he might be? Compare your responsibilities with Ahmed's. Discussion/reflection. (*The Day of Ahmed's Secret*, page 48)

The Buckinghamshire scheme, which addresses only Key Stage 2, sets out a table of learning objectives and specific activities related to the chosen texts, in similar terms to those outlined above.

The **standard English and language study** sections of the National Curriculum for reading at Key Stages 1 and 2 are less detailed than the preceding sections. They focus mainly on helping children to appreciate the

features of different text types, and to understand the forms and uses of standard English.

This area of the programmes of study, too, seemed comprehensively addressed in the literacy hours considered. There was a clear emphasis in the documentation upon teaching textual features, together with appropriate language to talk about them.

The approach to the programmes of study for reading, therefore, seemed, above all, the feature that united the literacy hours included in this survey. Coverage of range, key skills and standard English and language study, as set out there, emerged clearly as a principal purpose of almost all the schemes. The methods of defining the content varied, from leaving decisions entirely to the teacher, to setting out specific questions on specific texts. However, the overall thrust was identifiably the same in almost all schemes. The only exceptions to this were the two schemes from individual schools, where the documentation suggested that the key skills might be more narrowly defined than those described above. These two schools supplied only examples of their approaches, so it is not possible to elaborate further.

Writing

The National Curriculum programmes of study for writing parallel in many ways those for reading. In the 'range' sections, it is clear that children should be systematically introduced to the idea of writing in different forms for different purposes and audiences, and to the distinctive features of these different text types. The 'key skills' include the early understanding of the relationship between speech and writing and an introduction to letters and the alphabetic nature of writing. There is an emphasis on the processes of writing - planning, drafting, revising, proofreading and final presentation - alongside the ability to organise work in different ways according to the text type. The 'key skills' then include a section on punctuation, one on spelling and one on handwriting. Children need to learn to use punctuation correctly, to spell accurately and to hand-write clearly and fluently in order to make their meaning clear to their readers. 'Standard English and language study' in the writing programmes of study is described in terms of a growing understanding of the grammatical structures of standard English, together with explorations of words and their uses, and awareness of vocabulary choice.

In the literacy hours analysed for this survey, there was a good deal more variation in the approaches to writing than there was in the approaches to

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reading. The NLP literacy hour gives the same status to writing as to reading, so that there is a parallel set of teaching objectives for writing, related to the range of texts specified for each term, for example:

> to organise writing as a report using organisational devices, eg listing points, using paras, headings, quotes, etc

in Year 4. Similarly, the word-level and sentence-level objectives deal systematically with spelling, grammar and punctuation:

> to understand the need for grammatical agreement - matching verbs to nouns/pronouns correctly, eg *I am, we are*

> to investigate, collect, compare, learn groups of words with common letter strings, eg *ck ough are ace ail tch ite ame oon one ll bb ade;* use own knowledge, word searches from reading, dictionaries, word banks etc (Year 4)

As these quotations make clear, the interrelationship between reading and writing is a strong feature of the NLP approach. The same range of texts is used each term to give rise to both reading and writing activities. Reading is used to demonstrate features of particular text types, which are then created in writing. Grammar, spelling and punctuation are learned through reading and practised through writing. The 'integrated programme' required by the National Curriculum is embodied in this approach. Again, several of the other skills-based literacy hours described an approach similar to this, with a balance between reading and writing activities, and teaching which highlighted the connections between the language modes.

The LIFT literacy hour, however, proved different in its emphasis. The documentation revealed reading to be the principal focus. Although there were indications of writing activities related to the reading work, LIFT does not claim to address the range of writing skills within the literacy hour. Teachers are encouraged to teach writing at a different time.

All the text-based literacy hours included a number of writing activities related to the selected reading texts. In Literacy For All, for example, there is:

> Children to write underwater stories individually. On Day 7 write the beginning chapter, on Day 8 the middle chapter, and on Day 9 the final chapter. Encourage the use of different connectives. Encourage the children to move away from a purely descriptive beginning and to use an exciting beginning sentence before they move away to start writing independently.

> On Day 8, the children read out their starting chapters from Day 7 and invite positive comments from other children. Encourage the children to tell what they did well and/or to ask questions about the text read. Repeat for middle and final chapters. (*The Rainbow Fish*, page 7)

This demonstrates the variable structure within Literacy For All. Although all the work is related to the text *The Rainbow Fish*, on these three days, the focus

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is on writing, and the whole hour - introduction, individual work and plenary - is devoted to writing-related work.

The Key Texts scheme provides guidance on differentiated writing activities related to themes emerging from the central text, for example:

> Find a picture from a media text (newspaper/magazine) of a person whom you can class as homeless. **Differentiate writing tasks according to ability.** Allow children to work in twos or threes, but each child must produce a written text. Ensure that you have 'models' in the classroom of the different written styles you ask for.

> Some possible suggestions for tasks differentiated according to ability [set out as a diagram surrounding 'Picture of homeless person 'Jo']:

> Write the story in the 1st person: A day in the life of Jo

> Write a song 'The ballad of Jo'

> Extract from police file of missing persons

> Newspaper article (non-tabloid)

> News documentary on homeless

> [and other suggestions] ... (*Way Home*, page 60)

Again, these schemes approached the range and key skills of the National Curriculum through specific guidance arising from specific texts.

Speaking and listening

In these two language modes, too, the National Curriculum programmes of study are structured in terms of range, key skills and standard English and language study. The 'range' sections describe the development of talk for a variety of purposes and to a wide range of audiences, for example, telling stories, reporting events, exploring ideas, exchanging and justifying opinions. Children should listen carefully to a range of speakers and respond thoughtfully to what they have heard. Drama is also explicitly included, at both key stages. The 'key skills' correspond to this: children should learn to explain themselves clearly, to add detail to make their accounts interesting, to take turns in conversation and give respect to the views of others, to understand the different purposes of talk and to evaluate and comment upon their own talk. In 'standard English and language study', the emphasis is upon developing vocabulary and understanding the role and form of standard English.

Since all literacy hours are conducted through the medium of speaking and listening, there are clearly numerous opportunities in all of them to develop a range of the skills and understandings defined in the programmes of study. The analysis of the schemes also revealed, however, some specific guidance on

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developing these language modes in particular. The NLP guidance mentions plenary sessions as important in this because:

they provide opportunities for pupils to present and discuss their work;

they enable pupils to reflect on, explain, justify etc what they have done;

they help to develop an atmosphere of constructive criticism and appreciation of other pupils' work. (page 64)

There are also some specific teaching objectives involving speaking and listening:

to re-enact stories in a variety of ways, eg through role-play, using dolls or puppets (Year 1)

The analysis of the Buckinghamshire project indicated that it placed a particular importance on developing talk, through the systematic use of 'circle time':

All book talk sessions took place with the furniture re-arranged so that the pupils could sit in a circle with the teacher. The teacher was seen to be an equal member in the community of enquiry, even though the teacher chaired the session. The circle was important in enabling pupils to respect the opinions of others and to support each other. Talking about the skills of discussion was an important part of the process. Pupils became aware of issues such as who was dominating the group, the need to allow time for other pupils to offer opinions, and helping shy members to talk. Teacher and pupils negotiated a basic set of rules for promoting quality talk. (page 12)

This, then, was a particular development in the area of speaking and listening, allied to reading and response to text.

Some schemes mentioned drama as an integral part of the response to texts. The LIFT scheme included drama in a list of text-related activities, and other schemes related to LIFT also mentioned drama or role-play activities. Both the Key Texts scheme and Literacy For All specified drama amongst their text-related follow-up teaching.

Overall coverage of the programmes of study

The analysis above reveals some significant differences across literacy hours in the extent of their coverage of the English programmes of study.

All of them address reading quite thoroughly, although there are some areas of the programmes of study that may not be included, or may need monitoring to check that enough attention is given to them. For example, sustained silent reading is not a feature of many literacy hours. The NLP states explicitly that it must be accommodated outside the hour. Similarly, the emphasis on teacher-selected texts makes it important to monitor that children are having the

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opportunity to make their own choices. Listening to literature read aloud was also unlikely to be found within the highly structured literacy hour.

The coverage of writing varied noticeably between the literacy hours in the analysis. In most, however, sustained writing was likely not be included within the hour, and again there may be a need to monitor that children have enough opportunity to make their own choices about the form, purpose and audience for some of their writing.

Speaking and listening was included to some extent in all the hours analysed, but was often not comprehensively covered.

3.4 Assessment

Assessment was included as part of the questionnaire survey, but not all of the respondents specified their approaches to assessment. Both summative and formative assessment could be part of a literacy initiative. Summative assessment - the systematic measuring of children's attainment, often by means of a standardised test - was relevant where the literacy hour was a specific initiative to raise standards. Here, a testing programme was sometimes mentioned as a check on the standards that had been achieved.

It might be expected, however, that formative assessment - ongoing assessment to inform teaching and learning - would form a central part of the literacy hour approach. There is, in several of them, an emphasis on carefully differentiated teaching which makes it essential for the teacher to make ongoing formative assessments, either during or outside the literacy hour.

The LIFT literacy hour was originally derived from aspects of Reading Recovery, and includes a systematic assessment programme including teacher observations and running records, often linked to reading books graded according to the Reading Recovery levels. Running records were also specifically mentioned as a feature of the assessment approach in the Livewires project, the Coventry project and Reading Enrichment in Birmingham.

The NLP takes a different approach, in the form of a ten-minute individual discussion with each child, which takes place at half-termly intervals and during which a target is set for reading and one for writing. The Buckinghamshire project also specifies a ten-minute discussion with each child.

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In Literacy For All, which is generously resourced, assessments are made on an individual basis outside the literacy hour by the school's advisory teacher.

Several of the schemes also mentioned the possibilities for assessment offered during the teacher-led or teacher-monitored group work, or during the final plenary part of the literacy hour.

4   Looking Ahead: The National Literacy Strategy

This research was conducted at a time of very rapid change in the national context. The framework for teaching the National Literacy Strategy is already in schools, and sets out in great detail the approach to the literacy hour that is expected by the government. This is substantially similar to the National Literacy Project model described here.

To some extent, then, these findings have already been overtaken by events. In many cases, the respondents to the survey were already aware of the need to adapt their literacy hour projects to meet the new requirements. By the autumn term of 1998, most of the approaches described here that differ substantially from the National Literacy Strategy are likely to have been discontinued.

Nevertheless, the National Literacy Strategy is not so rigid that it permits no variation. Once teachers have mastered the structure of the hour and the teaching objectives, there is plenty of scope for individual variation within the overall structure. The points set out below, then, are intended to offer some suggestions for consideration within the new literacy hour, derived from the variety of different models considered as part of this research.

Attitudes to literature

There were three schemes in this survey that focused upon responding to and appreciating particular texts. They were characterised by the time devoted to the central text, in exploring its content and themes and in responding to them in a variety of ways. This highlights the need to ensure that children do not lose sight of the pleasures of reading whilst they are learning the necessary skills. The National Curriculum includes an indication that these attitudes are important: books should 'stimulate pupils' imagination and enthusiasm' and help children develop as 'enthusiastic, independent and reflective readers'. The choice of such stimulating texts and the fostering of children's sheer enjoyment of them offer plenty of scope for teachers to use their imagination and expertise within the literacy hour.

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Approach to group work

Little of the guidance in the schemes was explicit in its description of independent group work. This leaves open to teachers a choice in the organisation of this work. As in any other teaching situation, 'group work' can mean that the children sit together, working independently on the same task; or it can mean that the groups are set up with a collaborative purpose, so that their speaking and listening skills are developed in genuine interaction. The effective organisation of the group work within the literacy hour is clearly a major challenge, at least at first, but within this, there is scope for a range of approaches, and teachers may wish to monitor the opportunities for interaction that children are offered within it.

Approach to speaking and listening

The previous point is one example of the way in which speaking and listening can be integrated within the literacy hour. There is scope for imaginative development of the speaking and listening programme of study within the groups as well as in the plenary sessions, and teachers should monitor the range of opportunities offered to children.

Assessment

The differentiated teaching included in most literacy hours necessitates a thorough approach to formative assessment. If the guided reading and tailored group sessions are to be effective, teachers must become skilled at monitoring children's progress in their literacy development across the key skills of the programmes of study. Some of the schemes included guidance on regular and systematic formative assessment. In others, however, there was little indication that the development of these professional skills was needed.

Documentation, rationale and underlying research base

The final point goes beyond suggestions for the new literacy hour and stems from consideration of the research overall. The conduct of a research project based mainly upon written documentation has revealed variation in the extent of the theoretical rationales provided for these schemes. Some consisted of detailed guidance for teachers, in which the underlying objectives were made explicit and related to the National Curriculum programmes of study. In no case, however, did a scheme's documentation include any evidence to support the basic position that all schools should be required to 'timetable a daily, dedicated literacy hour'.

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It is, of course, understandable that initiatives aimed at changing practice should concentrate on practical measures to develop teachers' skills so that they can be effectively implemented. Nevertheless, the National Literacy Strategy, which is detailed and will undoubtedly be extremely influential, should extend its documentation to include the theoretical justifications for its approaches.

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Appendix

Literacy Hour: National Literacy Project

Structure of hour

Time	Grouping	Activity / ies
10-15 mins	whole class	shared reading or collaborative writing task
10-15 mins	whole class	sentence / word level work
25-30 mins	groups	guided reading or focused writing instruction with the teacher or independent tasks
5 mins	whole class	report, review

Age range	Reception to Year 6
Definition of literacy: **Reading** **Writing** **Oracy**	For both reading and writing: National Curriculum range, key skills, standard English and language study, covered in an integrated way Structured as text level / sentence level / word level work. Teaching objectives in these three areas are set out term-by-term for Years R-6. 'Most of the NC objectives for oral work should be covered in the course of teaching this programme.' Outside the literacy hour: sustained silent reading extended writing, at least at Key Stage 2 assessment discussions
Content	The programme of teaching objectives sets out the types of text to be covered, but the choice of specific books is left to the teacher.
Teaching methods	Teachers should spend close to 100 per cent of their time during the hour in direct teaching. Part of this time is spent teaching the whole class, and part of it with groups. Groupwork with the teacher mainly consists of guided reading at KS1 and guided reading or writing at KS2. Teachers also plan independent tasks for the other groups. Systematic planning is an essential part of the project and planning sheets are provided for half-termly, weekly and activity planning. A weekly evaluation sheet is also supplied.
Assessment	Half-termly, 10-minute individual discussion at which each child agrees a target for reading and a target for writing. These are recorded on a half-termly pupil assessment sheet.
Other	Gives a definition of literacy: ... a unitary process with two complementary aspects, reading and writing Describes the model of reading strategy on which it is based: ... a set of searchlights, each shedding light on the text knowledge of context, graphic information, word recognition, phonic, grammatical knowledge ... each of the searchlights used in reading also needs to be brought to bear in writing.

Literacy Hour: Literacy Initiative From Teachers (LIFT) (Westminster)

Structure of hour

Time	Grouping	Activity / ies
15 mins	whole class	shared reading
35 mins	groups	guided reading or independent reading
5 mins	whole class	report, review

Age range	Mainly Reception to Year 2, though some schools have extended it into Key Stage 2
Definition of literacy: **Reading** **Writing** **Oracy**	Principal focus is on reading. 'There should be many opportunities for children to explore links between reading and writing.' Text reading involves listening, joining in, practising reading and problem-solving new texts with support. Letters, words, spelling, punctuation, grammar and literacy conventions are taught functionally in and out of context. There is an emphasis on individual problem-solving and responsibility. Children are taught the instructional language associated with books as well as reading strategies to manage their own learning.
Content	The choice of texts and the structure of the learning objectives are left to the teacher. Sets of carefully graded fiction and non-fiction texts are needed.
Teaching methods	The main focus of LIFT is how to teach, rather than what to teach. LIFT addresses the expertise of teachers by means of demonstration classes and highly trained project leaders. Shared reading with large-format texts, where the teacher rehearses fluent, expressive reading and the children join in as they can. Children explore and comment on features of the text as well as elements of the content. In guided reading, the teacher works with a group of children who use similar reading processes and are able to read similar levels of text with support. The teacher introduces the text, discusses it with the children, and provides the opportunity for pupils to read the text independently. Independent learning is organised with a task management board, so that groups of children systematically undertake reading-related activities.
Assessment	Regular running records determine the text level and teaching decisions for each child. Reading recovery assessment and recording formats are often used.
Other	LIFT was evaluated in a research study undertaken by Jane Hurry, Kathy Sylva and Jeni Riley. Children in the study made significant gains in attainment. The researchers noted a high level of direct instruction by teachers and more time spent on task by children than in non-LIFT classrooms.

Literacy Hour: Literacy for All

Structure of hour

Time	Grouping	Activity / ies
flexible, often 10-20 mins	whole class	introduction by teacher: often shared reading, but may also be discussion, drama, listening to teacher reading, listening to tape, etc
flexible, often 30-40 mins	groups, pairs or individuals	various activities related to text, some with support of teacher or other adult
5-10 mins	whole class	report, review

Age range	Year 1 - Year 4
Definition of literacy: **Reading** **Writing** **Oracy**	Reading, writing and oracy taught through a variety of activities based around texts. Each text is expected to give rise to about two weeks' work. These activities are planned to cover all of the National Curriculum programmes of study in reading, writing, speaking and listening.
Content	There is a specified collection of 30 picture books, each of which has guidance notes which set out the teaching activities related to it.
Teaching methods	Teacher-led whole class activities include: shared reading; discussion of story; teaching of skills and strategies; drama; discussion; shared writing. Group activities, sometimes with teacher support, include: independent reading; group discussion; drawing and writing; model-making; use of reference books; extended writing.
Assessment	Individual assessments are carried out outside the literacy hour.
Other	In Brent, Literacy for All is funded by Harlesden City Challenge, which gives resources for an advisory teacher in each participating school and an additional teacher so that the literacy hour is always taught to half classes.

Literacy Hour: Livewires Key Skills Project (Wirral)

Structure of hour

Time	Grouping	Activity / ies
20 mins	whole class	shared reading or shared writing followed by sentence/word level work
25 mins	groups	guided reading or group tasks
15 mins	whole class	report, review

Age range	Year 1 - Year 6
Definition of literacy: **Reading** **Writing** **Oracy**	Reading and writing processes within the literacy hour. Text, sentence and word-level work as in the National Literacy Project.
Content	A large centrally held bank of resources is available for loan to support the project's work.
Teaching methods	Shared reading, for example: introduce text; model reading; focus on specific features of text; highlight word/sentence level features (words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs); question children. Guided reading, involving independent reading and response to text. Group activities, for example, writing, word definition work, sentence structure. Plenary session in which children report back, read own writing, ask questions, teacher gives praise, considers follow-up work.
Assessment	Continuous assessment by means of running records.
Other	Parental involvement is also part of the project.

Literacy Hour: Buckinghamshire Key Stage 2 Reading Project

Structure of hour

Weekly:

Time	Grouping	Activity / ies
one session of 45-60 mins	whole class	reading and discussion of text
two follow-up sessions of 45-60 mins	groups	individual or group activities related to text

Age range	Year 3 - Year 6
Definition of literacy: **Reading** **Writing** **Oracy**	Integrating reading, writing, speaking and listening in a response to a text. Learning objectives in reading drawn from the Key Stage 2 programme of study, including theme, setting, plot, character, personal response; analysis of style, non-fiction reading. Speaking and listening: including rules of group discussion; drama and 'hot-seating'. Writing related to reading text, including approaches to debating different opinions. Cross curricular links explored as appropriate.
Content	The programme is built around two or three specific books in each year group.
Teaching methods	Circle time: book talk sessions with the furniture arranged so that the pupils sit in a circle with the teacher. Teacher and pupils negotiate a basic set of rules for promoting quality talk. Circle time divided between reading from the text and discussion of issues arising from the text. Teacher questioning carefully planned and an important aspect of the work.
Assessment	Half termly, 10-minute individual discussion with each child
Other	A report on the project has been published, and details key findings in the management, conduct and outcomes of the project.

Literacy Hour: Coventry Literacy Project

Structure of hour

Time	Grouping	Activity / ies
20 mins	whole class	shared reading; sentence/word level work
30 mins	groups	guided reading / guided text work or independent work connected to shared reading or sentence / word level work
5-10 mins	whole class	report, review

Age range	not specified
Definition of literacy: **Reading** **Writing** **Oracy**	Main focus is on reading, structured as text-level, sentence-level and word-level work. Writing is related to reading
Content	Texts are selected by teachers to meet the National Curriculum range requirements.
Teaching methods	Shared reading is teacher led and involves the whole class. It aims to create effective learning strategies by modelling and teaching with a direct focus on text. There is a high level of interaction between teacher and children. Word/sentence level work may be developed from the original shared text, or from a text selected with a specific purpose in mind. During the introductory session, learning outcomes are set for the children. Guided reading with teacher, using texts matched to groups, focused on development of individual literacy skills. Independent activities arise from shared reading or sentence/word work and might include: character studies, reference skills; story mapping; book reviews; writing additional chapters; investigation related to punctuation and grammar; phonic knowledge, spelling and vocabulary.
Assessment	Regular monitoring during guided reading sessions, including the use of running records.
Other	

Literacy Hour: Reading Enrichment (Birmingham)

Structure of hour

Time	Grouping	Activity / ies
5 mins	whole class	phonological training using shared poetry
15 mins	whole class	shared reading
30 mins	groups	guided reading or independent group activities
10 mins	whole class	report, review

Age range	Year 1 - Year 6
Definition of literacy: **Reading** **Writing** **Oracy**	Phonological awareness training Reading skills and strategies through shared and guided reading Some follow-up writing tasks are included in the hour, but teachers found it difficult to manage the quality teaching of writing within the hour. Some KS1 teachers taught two 30-minute writing sessions in addition to the hour, whereas some KS2 teachers tried a one-and-a-half hour session.
Content	Texts selected by teachers
Teaching methods	At KS1, the emphasis is on teaching reading as problem solving and giving children time to rehearse their learning within the hour. Word work, phonological work and spelling are carried out in the context of whole text. At KS2, the emphasis is on close reading to encourage critical thinking, explore language and build language for discussion, and on learning to process information.
Assessment	One literacy hour a week is given over to assessment and monitoring. Individual reading conferences with running records. Where appropriate Marie Clay Observation Survey used for initial and final assessment.
Other	This scheme grew out of LIFT but was extended into KS2.

Literacy Hour: Key Text Teaching (Hillingdon)

Structure of hour
40-75 minutes, according to age of children, for the 'lead lesson' on each text

Time	Grouping	Activity / ies
flexible	whole class	shared reading and discussion of text
flexible	individuals or groups	teacher-led follow-up reading and writing activities related to the key text, which might involve writing or exploration of related texts
flexible	whole class	review of differentiated group work

Age range	Nursery - Year 6
Definition of literacy: Reading Writing Oracy	The Key Texts programme forms an integral part of the document *Planning for English,* which sets out approaches to the National Curriculum programmes of study, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, language study, standard and non-standard English. Within the hour, there is a literature focus with whole-class teaching of reading and differentiated teaching of writing. Group reading and other English teaching take place outside the hour.
Content	The 'key texts' are selected books, matched to the year-group of the children, each with teaching notes. The list of key texts is constantly updated as teachers work with the programme. Each lesson has learning objectives in reading and writing derived from the National Curriculum and related to the key text.
Teaching methods	Whole-class reading of text, with discussion of literary and language features of the text. Teacher-led writing activities derived from reading, in different styles for different purposes and audiences. Teacher-led exploration of other text types on related topics.
Assessment	Assessments are made through the writing, addressing knowledge of aspects of the taught literature and writing style.
Other	

Literacy Hour: RAISE (Raising Achievement in Shropshire Education) Project

Structure of hour

Time	Grouping	Activity / ies
15-20 mins	whole class	shared reading or collaborative writing task Often, but not always, the same text is re-visited each day for a week, with a different teaching focus each day. Typically teachers focus on text level work on one day, and on sentence, word and grapho-phonic levels on successive days
30 mins	groups	Differentiated text-related group activities planned to follow the whole-class focus (ie work at text, sentence, word and grapho-phonic levels) covering both reading and writing Guided reading in some schools
5 mins	whole class	report, review, making explicit the learning

Age range	Began with Year 1 - Year 4; models have been developed across the full primary age-range and into Year 7 in some secondary schools
Definition of literacy: **Reading** **Writing** **Oracy**	Reading, writing and oracy activities based around a shared text. Explicit teaching of the full range of reading skills and strategies, with an emphasis on pupils being able to reflect on and apply the range of strategies
Content	Texts are selected across a range, including non-fiction, and often relate to the school's focus for the English Blocked Unit within the Scheme of Work. Usually a single text will generate a week's work.
Teaching methods	Whole-class teaching based on a shared text, with teachers planning for a specific focus each day. Text, sentence, word and grapho-phonic level work are generated from the shared text. After a daily shared whole class session, pupils work in groups on reading/writing tasks related to the text. The teacher targets his/her time on specific groups, covering all groups within the week.
Assessment	Project schools use regular standardised testing to plot progress of a small group of 'focus' pupils, ie those with RA up to two years below their CA. Teachers were also encouraged to undertake running records/miscue assessments, to keep observational notes and to record reading discussions with pupils.
Other	The model began as a reading project in Years 1-4. The aim was to improve the targeted teaching of a focus group of pupils within each class (those with RA up to two years below their CA, but not identified for SEN support). The majority of teachers quickly extended the model across the whole class and many schools developed it across the whole primary age range. A DfEE funded literacy project further developed the whole class work, included a focus on writing and involved some secondary schools who trialled the model through joint work between the English and Learning Support departments.

Literacy Hour: An individual infants and nursery school

Structure of hour:

Twice weekly:

Time	Grouping	Activity / ies
10 mins	whole class	phonic work and handwriting
20 mins	whole class	chalkboard journal
25 mins	groups	individual reading
25 mins	groups	individual writing
20 mins	whole class	report, review

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Age range	up to Year 2
Definition of literacy: **Reading** **Writing** **Oracy**	Reading and writing skills and strategies
Content	
Teaching methods	Teacher models writing, spelling and letter formation; children read back chalkboard writing. Independent reading and writing, supported by teacher and other adults.
Assessment	
Other	Two classroom assistants work alongside the teacher for each of these sessions.

Literacy Hour: An individual junior school

Structure of hour

Time	Grouping	Activity / ies
20 mins	groups	direct teaching of key skills
20 mins	groups / pairs / individuals	set activities to reinforce key skills
20 mins	groups	report, review

Age range	Year 3 - Year 6
Definition of literacy: **Reading** **Writing** **Oracy**	The English coordinator has worked out a detailed breakdown of the key literacy skills the school should be teaching in each year group.
Content	
Teaching methods	Direct teaching with clear focus on the key skills. The school has redirected all its support staff, teaching and others, to work with smaller groups of children during the hour.
Assessment	Use of standardised reading test in September, with specific support for children whose reading age is 4 months or more below their chronological age.
Other	The school has over 75 per cent EAL pupils. During the first half of the autumn term, teaching of some foundation subjects is suspended in order to concentrate on literacy skills.
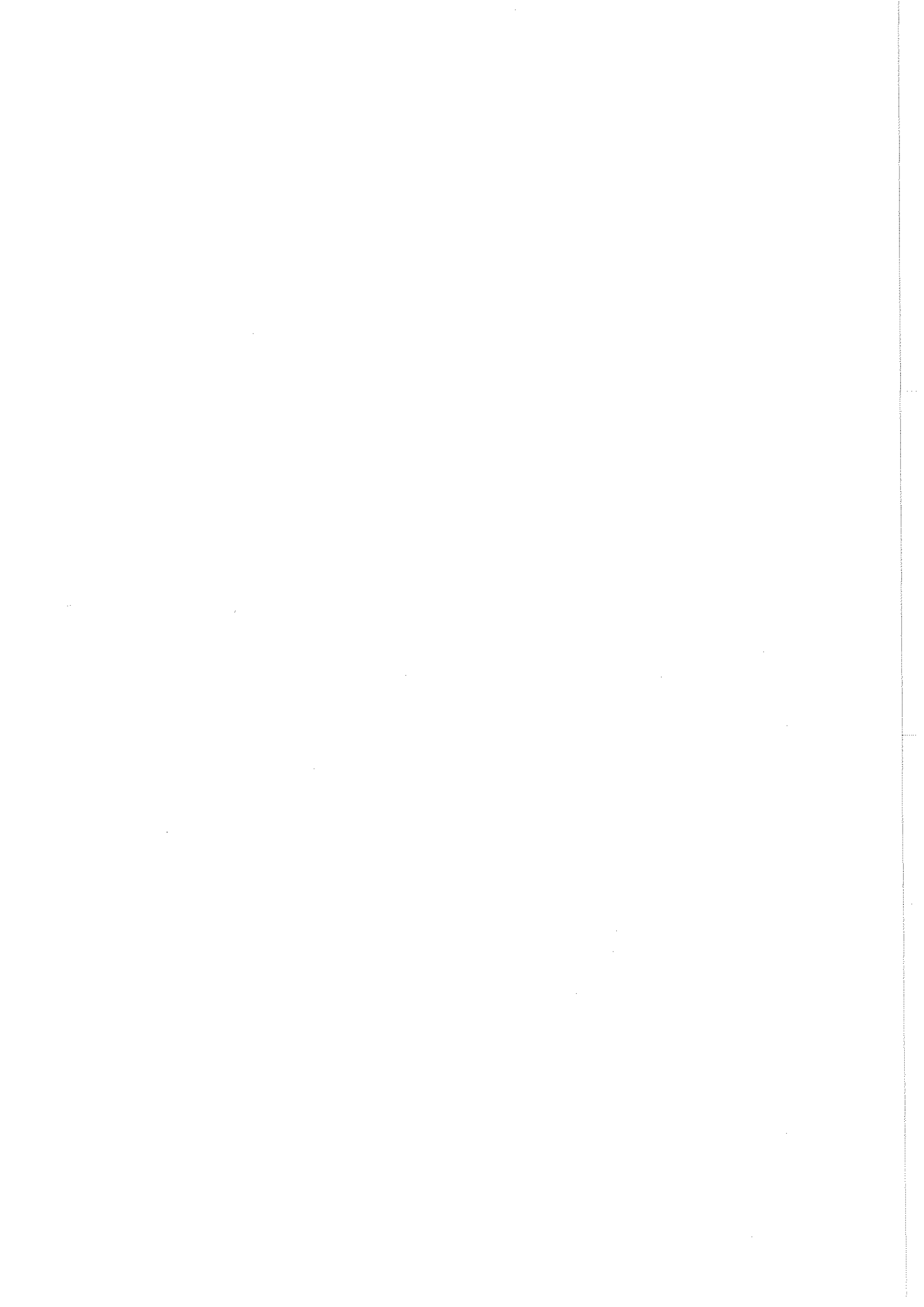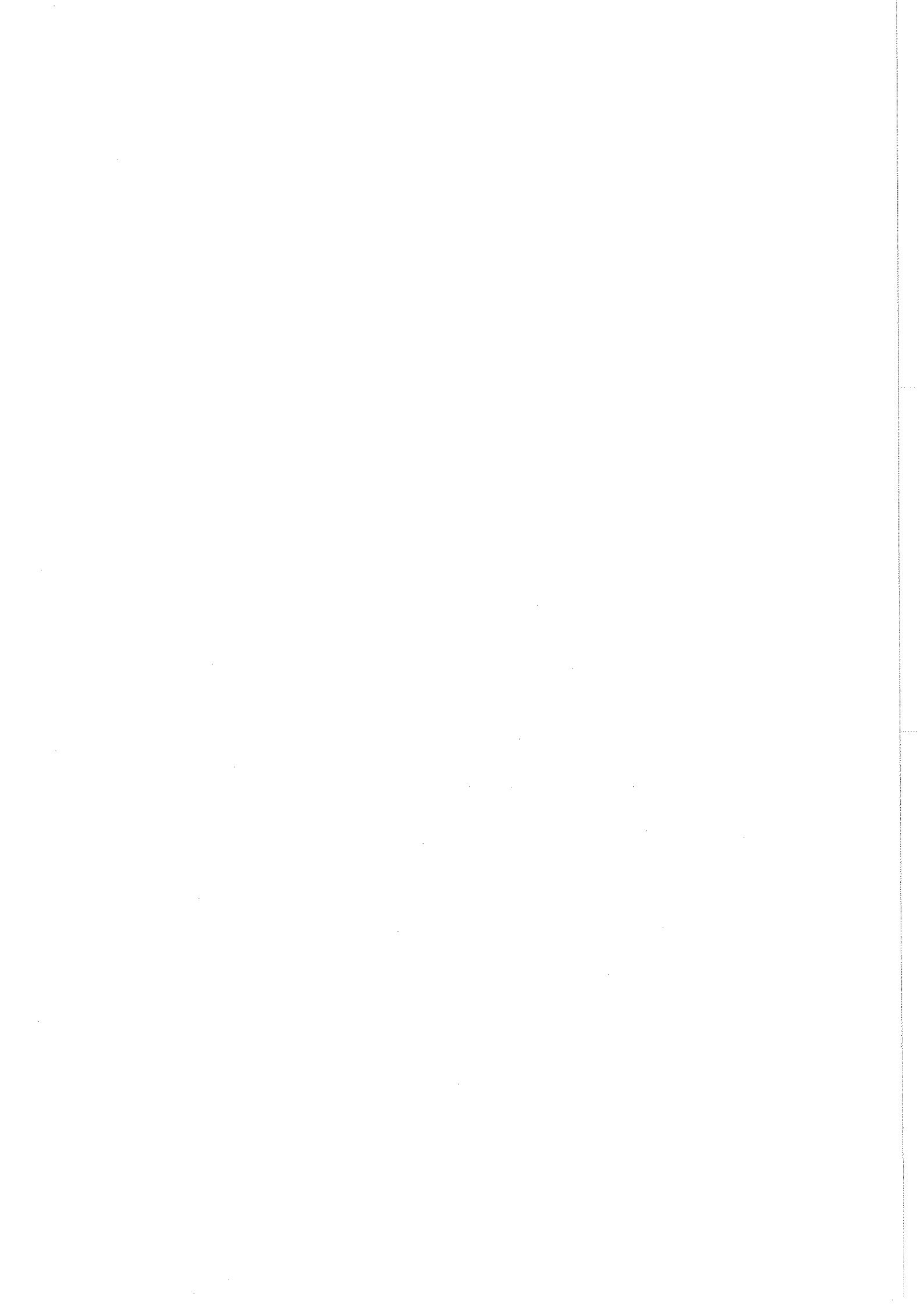
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literacy hours

A survey of the national picture in the spring term of 1998

An important part of the Government's National Literacy Strategy is the introduction of a literacy hour - an hour dedicated to intensive literacy teaching - into schools. The National Literacy Project has already introduced such an hour into over 500 schools. There are, however, other models of the literacy hour. This survey of local education authorities aimed to establish how widespread was the use of a literacy hour, and whether there were significant differences in approach between different models.

This report presents the results from the survey, which show that the use of a literacy hour is considerably more widespread than the National Literacy Project alone, and that not all literacy hours are the same. It gives a summary of the models of literacy hour revealed by the survey, compares and contrasts these, and relates each to the National Curriculum programmes of study.

The National Literacy Strategy sets out clear guidelines for schools in implementing the new literacy hours. Nevertheless, there is scope for teachers to interpret these guidelines for themselves, and this survey of different ways of doing the literacy hour suggests some possibilities to bear in mind.