## Emerging Literacy in Highland: The Rationale

Research shows that children's individual differences in key emerging literacy skills are an underlying factor in the variation of attainment across the curriculum. The many skills involved can be classified into four key skill areas: concepts of print, oral language, phonological awareness and pre-handwriting. **Research** also shows that children make the most progress when teachers ensure that literacy teaching and learning reflects the developmental status of the children that they teach.

To make this practical, teachers need sustainable ways to assess the skill level of pupils, and also a range of approaches to teaching that can support the development of the four key skill areas.

Classroom teachers in Highland have been working with Allied Health Professionals (AHPs), including Occupational Therapists and Speech and Language Therapists, as well as other specialists, to provide assessment and teaching materials that can enable teachers to respond to the literacy needs of each learner in their class. These are set out as developmental continua in each of the four key skill areas. This approach is now being embedded within the seven local authorities across the Northern Alliance.
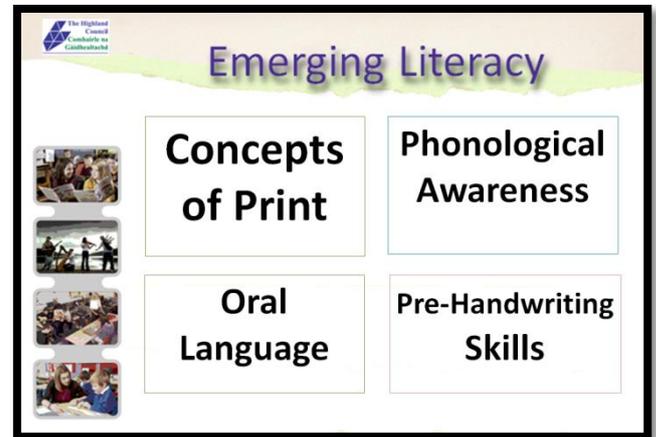
The Process of Taking a Developmental Approach to Emerging Literacy
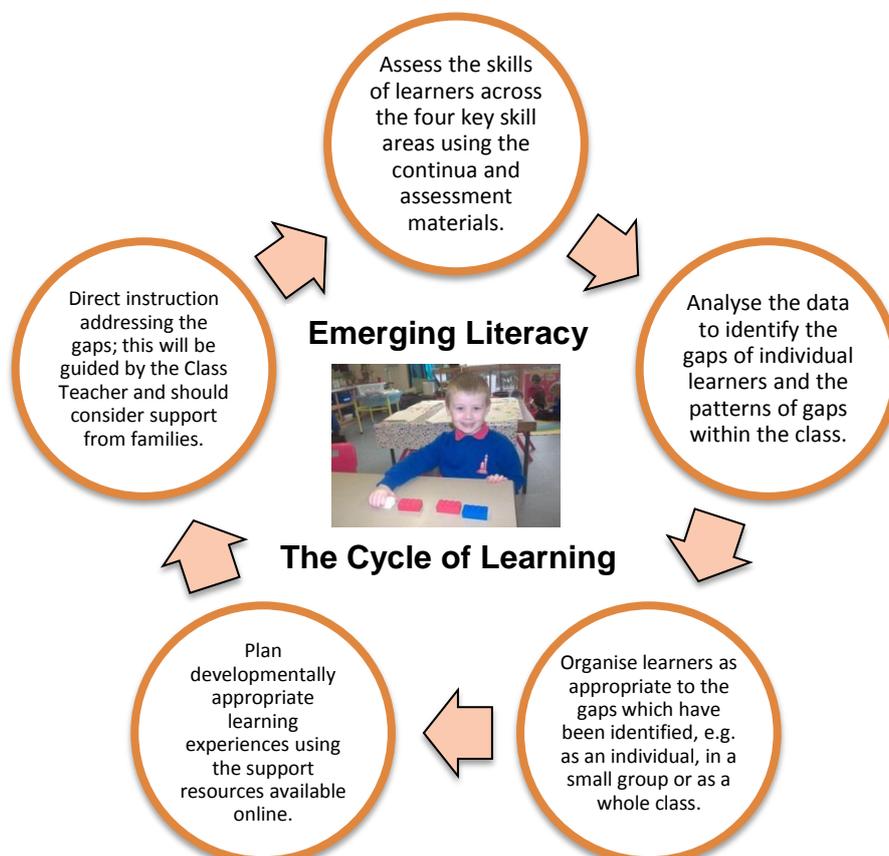
Emerging Literacy across the Northern Alliance: The Cycle of Learning

Emerging Literacy: Across the Early Level

Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)

In Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings, Early Years Practitioners (EYPs) should promote development of the four key skill areas through developmentally appropriate child initiated play based emerging literacy experiences. Nursery 4 children in Highland will have a **4 year old Developmental Overview** completed before they transition into school. In addition to Highland, some of the other local authorities across the Northern Alliance are using these to support children in Early Learning and Childcare.

Primary 1

At the beginning of Primary 1, if you are using the Developmental Overviews, it is recommended that you address any yellow (still developing) or blank (not yet developed) gaps. The **bumps2bairns** site can be used to support practitioners in addressing gaps.

On Primary 1 entry, the assessment materials linked to the developmental continua can be used to identify learners' strengths and skills gaps in the four key skill areas. Whilst ensuring that children have opportunities to address key skills gaps in concepts of print, oral language and phonological awareness, teachers should use their professional judgement as to the appropriate introduction and pacing of systematic phonics teaching. **The Northern Alliance Phonics Principles** can support practitioners in the teaching of phonics. Similarly key skills gaps in pre-handwriting should be addressed with appropriate differentiation. Teachers should take account of fine motor skills, scissor skills and pencil control skills when introducing formal handwriting instruction.

The **'Northern Alliance: Emerging Literacy – Where to Start?'** guide for practitioners includes links to the Emerging Literacy resources to support the development of the four key skill areas. The **Northern Alliance: Emerging Literacy Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)** guidance provides answers to frequently asked questions practitioners may have when taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy. The **Emerging Literacy Training Videos** can also be used to support practitioners.

Emerging Literacy: Beyond Primary 1

Where children are making less than expected progress in Literacy and English, this may be explained by gaps in development within the four key skill areas. Teachers can use the continua and screening tools to assess the gaps, and suggested activities to plan for developmentally appropriate learning experiences. It is recommended to involve families in this process, and follow school policy with regards to **Staged Intervention**.

Family Engagement and Involvement

To support schools in sharing the **Emerging Literacy** approaches and materials with families, a **family learning resource** has been created. This could be used with families during the Nursery – Primary 1 transition meeting or during a Family Literacy event. Each slide comes with comprehensive notes for the facilitator and links to suggested resources on the **Highland Literacy Blog**. The classroom based Emerging Literacy activities are appropriate for sharing with families to support literacy learning within the home environment.