

Scoil Na Mainistreach

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We do our best, we show respect.

English Policy of Scoil na Mainistreach

Introductory Statement and Rationale

The original school policy was drafted by the Principal and staff of Scoil na Mainistreach, Quin in 2005 as a result of staff in-service training in English. The plan was reviewed in March 2009 at a staff meeting facilitated by DES facilitator, Ms. Therese O'Connell, in relation to writing genres. This current review took place in January 2013 to reflect best practice in the teaching of Literacy at Primary School level as outlined in the following circulars published at www.education.ie :

0056/2011: Initial Steps in the Implementation of The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

0066/2011: Initial Steps in the Implementation of The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

0018/2012: Supporting Assessment: Standardised Testing in Primary Schools

0039/2012: Implementation of School Self Evaluation – Primary

All educational partners were consulted during the review process. Special consideration was given to recommendations from the national strategy to improve literacy entitled *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life*, the Whole School Evaluation Process 2010 and the School Self-Evaluation Process 2012. This policy can be read as part of the overall school plan and in line with the School Assessment Policy, the School Special Educational Needs Policy, The School Self Evaluation Report and the School Literacy Improvement Plan.

Vision

In Scoil Na Mainistreach, we are committed to the holistic development of all pupils in order to assist them in playing a fulfilling role in their own community. We are cognisant that in the modern world literacy, as outlined on www.pdst.ie, includes the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication, including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media. It is our vision that all of these aspects of literacy will be addressed in the school English Policy and in teacher planning and evaluation.

Aims and Objectives (Page 10 of the Primary Curriculum)

1. To promote positive attitudes and an appreciation of the value of language; spoken, read and written.
2. To development confidence and competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing of English.
3. To develop cognitive ability and the capacity to clarify thinking through oral language, writing and reading
4. To enable the children to speak, read, spell and write independently and effectively.
5. To enhance emotional, imaginative and aesthetic development through oral language, writing and reading.
6. To promote the development of Comprehension Skills ranging from the lower order literal type to the higher order evaluative type.

Section 1: Curriculum Planning

Strands and Strand Units

The English Curriculum is structured according to strands and strand units. The four strands of the English Curriculum are as follows:

- ***Receptiveness to language.***
- ***Competence and confidence in using language.***
- ***Developing cognitive abilities through language.***
- ***Emotional and imaginative development through language.***

To aid clarity the staff has chosen to plan through the following strand units:

- 1) **Oral Language**
- 2) **Reading**
- 3) **Writing**

1) Oral Language

Broad Objectives

The aim of this policy is to provide a structured sequential programme for teachers in oral language development to enable children to:

- Gain pleasure and fulfilment from language activity.
- Develop the capacity to express intuitions, feelings, impression, ideas and reactions in response to real and imaginary situations through talk and discussion, experimentation and the development of ideas.
- Develop fluency, explicitness and confidence in communication.
- Develop listening skills, language conventions, vocabulary, aesthetic response and language manipulation.
- Develop a structured approach to the teaching of the five components of effective oral instruction as outlined in the PSDT document *Five Components of Effective Oral Language Instruction*. For more information see:
<http://www.pdst.ie/node/1110>

Content and Methodologies in Oral Language Development are outlined in Appendix 1

Teachers help children to develop their oral language through the following contexts:

- Talk and discussion.
- Play and games.
- Story.
- Improvisational Drama.
- Poetry and Rhyme.
- Aistear Programme at Infant Level.

Strategies for the Development of Oral language

1. Discrete Oral Language Time

Grammar and use of language are addressed under discrete oral time. The curriculum objectives in the Teacher Guidelines and the PDST Document *entitled Five Components of Effective Oral Language Instruction* will be used as guidelines when teaching discrete oral language.

2. Aistear Programme

In 2011 the Aistear Programme was introduced at Junior Class level. This programme promotes language development through structured play. For more information on the Aistear programme see

http://action.ncca.ie/media/2945/information_leaflet_on_aistear_for_parents_.pdf

3. Links with reading and writing

Oral language skills can be developed through the teaching of reading and writing eg: The writing genres, exploring the novel and comprehension strategies.

4. Integration with other subjects

Oral Language skills can be developed across the curriculum and throughout the school day for example during Social Personal and Health Education, circle time, listening and responding to Music and Art, retelling the procedure in a Science experiment, expressing opinions in History, during the paired/buddy system between Juniors and Sixth class for art/craft sessions.

In an effort to develop higher order thinking skills the teachers will encourage the children to use oral language for the following purposes:

- To gain maximum information.
- To see and to give explanations.
- To discuss different possible solutions to problems.
- To argue a point of view.
- To persuade others.
- To examine fact and fiction, bias and objectivity.
- To develop critical thinking skills.

2. Reading

Broad Objectives

The aim of this plan is to provide a structured and sequential programme for teachers to enable children to:

- Develop print awareness, phonemic awareness, word identification strategies and sight vocabulary.
- Develop their comprehension and analytical strategies at all three levels ranging from the lower order literal type to the higher order evaluative type.
- Expand their understanding and usage of grammar, syntax and punctuation.
- Expose them to and develop their appreciation of the richness and diversity of reading material.
- Experience the pleasure and fulfilment to be gained from reading.
- Paired Reading between Junior and Senior Classes will continue at the teachers' discretion. Examples include the senior classes writing books for the Junior classes and generally preparing materials, books and questions in advance.

Content and Methodologies are outlined in Appendix 2

Creation of a Print Rich Environment

The following list is used to create a varied print rich environment throughout the school:

- Big Books
- Word Walls
- Job Charts
- Song Charts
- Poetry Charts
- Timetables
- Children's writing on Display
- Rules Charts
- Grammar Charts
- Calendars

Development of a Basic Sight Vocabulary

This is acquired from a number of sources for example

- Big Books
- Labelling
- Flash Cards
- Dolch list
- First words in writing
- High Frequency words
- Tricky words from the Jolly Phonics Programme
- School Reading Schemes – (See Resource Section - Appendix 4)

Development of Reading Fluency

Strategies to develop reading Fluency include;

- Reading aloud in class
- School Reading Schemes- (See Resource Section – Appendix 4)
- Improving knowledge of grapho-phonetic cues, Semantic and syntactic see TG p 59
- USSR
- Paired reading
- Development of word identification strategies
- Class novels
- Supplementary/Parallel Readers
- Early intervention through the Literacy Lift Off Programme
- Accelerated Reading Programme to boost the class libraries and integrate reading, comprehension and self-assessment with Information Technology from second to sixth classes.
- Video and Self-assessment.

Development of Comprehension skills

As stated in the Teacher Guidelines (TG) of the English Curriculum the ultimate objective of reading is comprehension or the reconstruction of meaning. Strategies to develop comprehension skills ranging from the lower order literal type to the higher order evaluative type will be explicitly taught throughout the school and include:

Synthesising- Determining Importance, summarising, paraphrasing and self-questioning.

Inferential - Connecting, comparing, inferring and predicting.

Literal - Creating Images, skimming, scanning and self-questioning.

(For more information see the document entitled *Teaching for Meaning* available at http://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/latest_1.pdf

Programmes such as *Building Bridges of Understanding* by Brendan Gleeson, *Guided Comprehension Teaching for Meaning* by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and the *PrimEd Comprehension Boxes* are currently being reviewed by staff with a view to developing Comprehension Strategies and Vocabulary Development Strategies for the 2013-2016 School Literacy Improvement Plan.

Developing Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness is an umbrella term which includes

- a. Phonemic awareness (focusing on sounds of letters and letter blends).
- b. Syllabification (focusing on breaking words into syllables)
- c. Onset and Rime (focusing on rhyme).

The Jolly Phonics Programme was introduced to the school in June 2011 from infants to 2nd classes. For further information in relation to the Jolly Phonics Programme see <http://jollylearning.co.uk/parent-teacher-guide/>

At senior class level 3rd to 6th the phonics programme currently in use is The Complete Phonic Handbook. This programme provides the teachers with a grapho-phonetic and spelling reference.

Spelling

It is the policy of Scoil na Mainistreach to implement a consistent structured spelling programme throughout the school. The objective of this programme is to assist the children in the writing process and to improve spelling standards in the school on an ongoing basis. In Scoil na Mainistreach it is our policy to emphasise the use of contextual spelling.

In all classes spelling and phonics are combined. As outlined above Infants to Second explore spellings through the Jolly Phonics Programme.

From 3rd to 6th Classes use the *Grapho-Phonic Programme* from the *Complete Phonic Handbook*. In the phonics handbook the spelling rule/sound will be taught on an age appropriate basis. Blue Words -2nd, Green Words 3rd/4th and Red Words 5th/6th. The teaching staff will assess the pupils work on a monthly basis for commonly misspelt words. These words will be displayed in the classroom and used in spelling bees for informal assessment. Dictation will also be used in all senior classes as part of the weekly spelling tests. Additional class resources for spelling include; *Improving Spelling* by Brendan Culligan, *Jolly Phonics Grammar Handbook 3rd- 5th*. Dolch Lists, Nessy IT Programme and Quest.

Strategies to Promote Spelling Development

The following strategies are used in the school to promote the development of spelling:

- Have a go
- Look, say, cover, write
- Dictation
- Correction of spellings in the context in which they are written

- Editing and rewriting
- Spelling Games
- Spelling Bee
- Information Technology e.g. websites such as www.spellingcity.com

3. Writing

Broad Objectives

The aim of this plan is to provide a structured and sequential programme for teachers to enable children to:

1. Write clearly, neatly correctly and fluently.
2. Use a wide range of vocabulary.
3. Use grammar and punctuation appropriately.
4. Write in a wide variety of genres encompassing differing styles, purposes, audiences and level of formality.
5. Experience opportunities to develop presentation, editing and publishing skills.
6. Engage in collaborative writing experiences through a writing Buddy system between senior and junior classes e.g. Personalised Books.
7. Develop a high standard of penmanship.
8. To develop a consistent writing programme throughout the school.

Process of writing

Children will learn to write through the process of writing. The process is as important as the product. Children will have opportunities for writing in a variety of genres and for different audiences. Page 76, Teacher Guidelines.

Writing Genres

- Narrative
- Persuasive
- Procedural
- Report
- Recount
- Explanatory

Steps to Teaching the Writing Genres used in Scoil na Mainistreach

1. Familiarisation with the genre.
2. Use an example to devise a framework.
3. Teacher (only) modelling.
4. Teacher and children share writing process.
5. Children plan their writing in pairs/groups/using the framework.
6. Child writes independently.
7. Presentation to audience.

Handwriting/Penmanship

It is the policy of Scoil na Mainistreach to implement a consistent and structured programme of penmanship throughout the school. The main objectives of this programme are:

- To promote clarity of presentation.

- To consistently produce neat and legible handwriting.
- To establish correct formation of letters.
- To establish a high standard of penmanship throughout the school.

In order to achieve these objectives the staff uses the following strategies:

- 1) The use of the *Write Here Programme* of Penmanship from Juniors to 2nd.
- 2) In Junior to 1st Class use B2 copies for handwriting.
- 3) In 2nd to 6th Class B4 copies are used.
- 4) Infant classes are taught script writing.
- 5) 1st to 6th Classes will be taught to use Looped Cursive Script.
- 6) Formal penmanship classes will be taught at all levels throughout the school.
- 7) Internal and external handwriting competitions are in place in the school.
- 8) Regular spot checks by the Principal to reward neatness and clarity of presentation
- 9) Tripod pencils have been purchased for all infant classrooms.

Poetry

Children in all classes are given the opportunity to study various poetry forms and to compose their own poetry. Children present their poetry in class and enter various poetry competitions. The children also present both their own and well known works at assembly. Each month the school newsletter will have a section dedicated to the students' poetry.

Grammar and Punctuation

Refer to p 84 TG. This is taught in the context of the children's writing. Additional resources to develop grammar include;

- Lift Off
- Jolly Phonics Programme
- Starry Links
- Reading Zone (Teachers Copy)
- Jolly Phonics

Content and Methodologies for Writing are outlined in Appendix 3

Section 2 Organisational Aspects of Our English Plan

1. General Resources

- Teacher Resources in each classroom including Role Play Boxes in the Infant Classrooms for the Aistear Programme
- TV, Video and DVD
- CD player in each classroom; and a
- Laptop, interactive whiteboard, visualiser, wireless keyboard and mouse in each classroom
- Digital cameras shared between two classes
- Two video cameras in school
- PM Reading Series
- Accelerated Reading Novels

For a more detailed list of school resources see Appendix 4

2. Parental Involvement

At Scoil na Mainsitreach we encourage and welcome the involvement of parents in their children's education. Such partnership is exemplified in:

- The enrolment meeting with parents where approaches to the teaching of reading are discussed. The importance of speaking listening and reading to and with young children is highlighted.
- Information sheets furnished to parents and placed on the school website in relation to the Literacy Lift Off, Accelerated Reading Programme and in relation to comprehension and oral language development.
- Termly Information sheets to parents in relation to the teaching of reading to promote parental involvement in the process at Infant level.
- Annual Parent/ Teacher meetings which allow for a discussion of individual children's progress
- Informal Parent / Teacher meetings convened at the request of the parent or teacher.
- Written communications via the child's Homework Journal.
- Other written communications e.g. School Newsletter.
- Opportunities for parents to share their talents and expertise with us e.g. local writers, poets, artists, historians etc.

3. Learning Support and Special Needs

Children with special educational needs are helped to achieve their potential in the core skills of oral language, reading and writing. Assessment is ongoing and an Individual Education Programme / Plan (IEP) or a small group learning plan (IPLP) is drawn up and co-ordinated by the Learning Support/Resource Teacher in consultation with the class teacher, the pupil, the parents and where appropriate the Special Needs Assistant (SNA) and any relevant professionals. The class teacher maintains overall responsibility for the educational development of the child. Suitable resources are provided to meet the learning needs of individual children. For more

information in relation to the teaching of special needs in the school see the school Special Educational Needs Policy at www.scoilnamainistrech.net

4. Linkage and Integration

While our English Plan is presented under the three strand headings of oral language, reading and writing, the practice in this school is that all three strands are interlinked. The manner in which our plan is organised also provides significant opportunities for its integration with all other curricular areas.

5. Equality and Inclusion

In line with our mission statement we are committed to the provision of equal opportunities to all our pupils in the implementation of our English programme. Equal opportunities are provided to all pupils to participate in discussions, debates, reading and writing opportunities etc. The use of language and textbooks deemed to be sexist, racist or non-inclusive are avoided.

6. Class Libraries and Development of School Library

In our school, a library is located in each classroom. Each library is organised by the respective class teacher and the provision of a wide variety of reading materials such as novels, newspapers, periodicals etc. is encouraged. Since 2010 the class libraries have been targeted as an area requiring development. In collaboration with the Parent Association the School introduced the Accelerated Reading programme at 4th class level in 2012. The school is currently in the process of extending this programme from 1st to 6th classes over the next two years. This programme is aimed at extending the stock in class libraries and also linking the library reading process with IT and self-assessment procedures. The PM series was also purchased to facilitate the Literacy Lift Off Programme, again in collaboration with the Parent Association. The County Library has also provided access to additional class novels through school staff on a rental basis. Due to lack of space the development of a school library can only be considered in line with the overall school extension process.

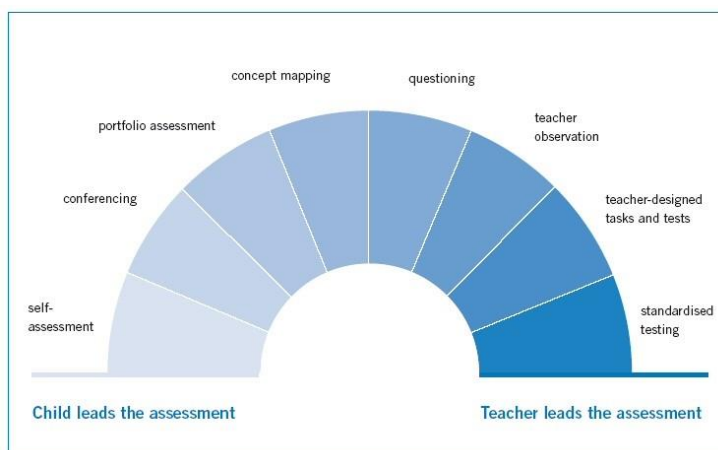
7. Community Involvement

The school has active links with our local community to promote pupils' learning. Local storytellers, authors and poets visit our school to read and share their work. We encourage the children to talk with their grandparents and others in the locality regarding its history and folklore. All senior classes publish the monthly School Newsletter on a rotational basis. Pupils display their work in the local church and/or community on special occasions such as First Communion, Confirmation, Christmas Parties and Catholic School Week.

8. Assessment & Record Keeping

The document *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools*, outlines how teachers gather information about children's progress and achievement, use this

information to enrich teaching and learning, and report this information to all those concerned with children’s education. These guidelines are currently being implemented in Scoil na Mainistreach. Oral language is assessed informally by each class teacher. Reading is assessed through a combination of teacher observation and standardised testing (*Drumcondra Primary Reading Test, Micra T and Middle Infant Screening Test*). Diagnostic assessment is administered as required at Learning Support level. (See assessment policy for listing) Informal assessment by the class teacher is conducted on an ongoing basis. Standardised assessment in Reading is administered on a bi-annual basis in October and May. All results are reported to parents at parent teacher meetings and in annual report cards. Test results are stored in the school office in compliance with the Data Protection Act. In compliance with Circular 0018/2012 the results from 2nd, 4th and 6th Classes are reported to the Board of Management, the PA and the Department of Education and Science. Scoil na Mainistreach is currently promoting the development of self-assessment techniques with the students thus providing a balance between teacher led assessment and child led assessment as advocated in the assessment guidelines document as the diagram below outlines.



9. Staff Development

Staff development needs are identified through review and discussion at staff meetings. When needs are identified, an action plan is devised to ensure that such needs are adequately addressed. Responses may include the organisation of a staff development day / session, engagement of external expertise, attendance by a representative of the staff at specific in-service and/or the provision of required resource materials. Notices of upcoming courses are circulated to each staff member. Staff members who have attended courses are given opportunities to report back to other staff members during time allocated at staff meetings or a staff development day.

10. Information and Communication Technology

In our school we have access to Broadband through the National Centre for Technology in Education and use a wide variety of websites to assist us in implementing the English Programme. A laptop, interactive whiteboard and visualisers are available in each classroom. Laptops are also provided in the learning support and resource rooms. A set of 17 laptops has been purchased in 2010 for use in the classrooms. Each class is timetabled to use these laptops to enhance the learning process. The Computer Classroom Package has been loaded onto all

computers. Pupils engage with interactive books, word processing packages , research for projects, recording of data e.g. graphs and creative writing programmes. The ICT Co-ordinator liaises with the Principal regarding the purchase of new software. In recent years the school has moved towards accessing new resources through the internet sites such as those listed on www.pfds.ie/pcsparchive/english/Useful%20websites_English.pdf

11. Timetabling

In compliance with Circular 0056/2011 all class teachers are required to increase the time spent on the development of literacy skills by one hour per week (i.e. to 6.5 hours for infants with a shorter day, and to 8.5 hours per week for students with a full day). A significant emphasis is placed on the provision of discrete time for oral language in the junior to Middle Classes with a greater focus on integrated oral language time in the Middle to Senior Classes.

12. Homework

English homework is given on a daily basis from Monday to Thursday. Children complete this homework which is also corrected by the class teacher on a daily basis. For more information see the school Homework Policy.

13. Differentiation

The reality of most classrooms is that they contain students of varying ability and that students have different learning styles i.e. Auditory, Visual or Kinaesthetic. To cater for this reality it is necessary to adopt a differentiated approach to the teaching of all subjects including English. The staff received facilitation in this area promote differentiation in the teaching of English through using the CARPET approach to teaching (differentiation on the basis of content, activities, resources, product, environment and teaching strategies).

3. Success Criteria for School English Plan

It is expected that the school-wide implementation of this plan will result in enhancement of pupil learning in the following ways:

Oral Language

- Increased confidence and competence in communicating.
- Greater willingness to express opinions and participate in class discussions.
- Improved listening skills.

Reading

- Improved standards in reading.
- Enhanced vocabulary development.
- Increased involvement in voluntary reading.
- Involvement of parents in shared reading activities.
- Experiencing of reading as an enjoyable pursuit.
- Engagement in Reading for meaning including higher order comprehension activities.

Writing

- Greater fluency and explicitness in communicating ideas and experiences.
- Enhanced experience of writing and sharing stories and poems.
- Use of ICT to enhance the teaching of English.
- Improved presentation of written work.

The achievement of these success criteria will be assessed through feedback from teachers, pupils, parents and the local Inspectorate. Improved individual and/or class scores in teacher tests and standardised assessment tests will also be seen as an indicator of success.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The implementation of our plan will be supported as follows:


Roles	Person(s) Responsible
Development of schemes of work:	Class Teacher
Assessment (Standardised / Diagnostic):	Class Teacher / Learning Support Teacher and Principal
Co-ordination of Class Libraries:	Parents, Principal, Teachers and SNA's
Purchasing of Resources:	Secretary, Principal, Individual Teachers
Parental Involvement:	Supporting children's learning through active engagement in the learning process.
Students:	Participation in learning programmes. Responsible for learning and self-assessment processes.
Co-ordination of monitoring and evaluation:	Board of Management, Principal and Deputy Principal and School Staff

Implementation and Review:

The implementation of this reviewed plan will be effective from date of ratification. The School Self-Evaluation Report and the School Improvement Plan will be drafted and published in Spring 2013. This English Policy will be reviewed as part of the annual school self-evaluation process and in line with changes in DES legislation in relation to the teaching of Literacy. A formal evaluation will take place in 2017.

Approval / Ratification of the English Policy

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management of Scoil na Mainistreach on Monday 28th January 2013.

Signed  Date: 21.2.13
Chairperson. B.O.M.

This policy will be uploaded to www.scoilnamainistreach.net