English Policy



Introduction

This is the whole school plan for Scoil Mhuire Glenties. The following plan was developed over some years, beginning in 2008 when in-service training was provided to schools. This plan has been developed over a number of planning days. A **collaborative approach**was adopted when writing this plan to ensure that all the staff shares a sense of ownership in the planning process.

Rationale

It is hoped that this school plan will be a useful tool for teachers providing them with clear guidelines in the teaching of English and ensuring **consistency and continuity in practice**throughout the school. This plan also reflects the main areas of emphasis in the English Curriculum Statement (Gov. Of Ireland 1999) and accompanying Teacher Guidelines. This plan also reflects The **National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy**among Children and Young People 2011-2020

Vision

Our vision in Scoil Mhuire is to ensure that pupils are holistically developed in order to assist them in contributing and playing a fulfilling role in their own community. We see the development of their language skills as being central to this process. We believe that the ability of our pupils to communicate fluently, confidently and effectively will contribute greatly to the development of their self-esteem and their personal growth. We also believe that children leaving our school should have a **competency**in all aspects of the English language. We also see the teaching of English as something which underpins all other subjects across the primary curriculum. We believe that language learning as a tool for life- long learning.

Aims

In teaching English we aim:

* To promote positive attitudes and develop an appreciation of the value of language- spoken, read and written.
* To develop confidence and competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing
* To develop cognitive ability and the capacity to clarify thinking through oral language, writing and reading
* To enable the child to read and write independently.
* To enhance emotional, imaginative and aesthetic development through oral, reading and writing experiences.

*English Curriculum pp. 10-12*

Curriculum Planning

Strands and Strand Units

The broad objectives, content and methodologies for the teaching and learning of oral language, reading and writing are outlined in the English Curriculum pp. 2-3. The English curriculum is structured according to the strands and strand units. To aid clarity the staff has chosen to plan through the strand units:

* Oral Language
* Reading
* Writing

*The strands of:*

* Receptiveness to language
* Competence & Confidence in using language
* Developing cognitive abilities through language
* Emotional & Imaginative development through language

…are understood in the context of learning language and learning through language.

We feel the better the child’s ability with language, the more effectively he/she will learn. Therefore the integration of oral language, reading and writing is of paramount importance. The development of oral language is given an importance as great as that of reading and writing at every level. Within each strand, the strand units reflect the contribution **oral language, reading and writing**make to that particular facet of the child’s development and these strand units contain the detailed elements of curriculum content.

Language Programme *as developed through the strands and strand units.*

Methodologies

This plan reflects the use of methodologies by teachers and will inform all teachers of the methodologies used in teaching English i.e. talk and discussion, collaborative learning, active learning, use of the environment, problem-solving and skills through content.

Oral Language

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Approach to Oral Language

The school’s agreed approach to Oral Language will draw on three areas of content:

1. Discrete Oral Language*(pages 38-49 Teacher Guidelines)*

Form, structure, use of language and grammar are addressed during **Discrete Oral Language time**. Children are encouraged and taught to use correct pronunciation, grammar etc. when speaking. Discrete oral language will be addressed using curriculum objectives as guidelines e.g. introducing oneself and others; greeting others and saying good-byes; giving and receiving messages; using the telephone; making requests for information; giving directions; expressing appreciation; welcoming visitors; making a complaint; expressing sympathy etc.

This is timetabled oral language activity (ref. below) and will address the objectives that are not being addressed thoroughly in an integrated fashion.

2. Integrating Oral language through the Reading and Writing process

The following **oral language activities and skills**will be developed through the teaching of reading and writing – comprehension strategies, language experience approach, brainstorming at the pre-writing stage, peer-conferencing and conferencing with teacher, children in author’s chair, use of novel, writing process, etc.

3. Integrating Oral language across the curriculum

The following oral language skills will be targeted in an integrated way e.g. describing skills in Visual Arts, listening skills in Music and PE, turn taking, expressing opinions, media study in SPHE.

Planning oral language across the three strands ensures that these three areas of content are adequately addressed. In planning for oral language across the strands, the following contexts are utilised *(Teacher Guidelines. pp. 38-49)*:

* Talk and discussion
* Play and games
* Story
* Improvisational Drama
* Poetry and Rhyme

There is an emphasis on classroom organisation and methodologies that provide children with an opportunity to learn the form and structure of language and to use language discursively through questioning and for coherent expression. Teachers will incorporate a variety of organisational settings into the teaching and learning for development of Oral Language such as pair work, group work, whole class discussion, formal and informal debates and circle work.

Reading

Approach to Reading

In our approach to reading, we consider the following:

* the children’s general language development
* the central role of phonological and phonemic awareness
* the planning of book related events such as book fairs and book weeks
* the involvement of parents’ in children’s reading

These approaches will be recognised at all stages of children’s acquisition of reading i.e. from the emergent reader, to the instructional reader and to the independent reader.

1. Print-Rich Environment

A variety of examples of a **print-rich environment**are evident in our school including big books in a range of genres, picture books, independent reading books, charts of poems, songs and rhymes, labels and directions, name charts, written materials produced by the children, jobs chart, timetables, word charts, magnetic surfaces and magnetic letters, notice board (messages for children to read), charts of days, months, seasons and festivals calendars, theme charts, environment print in the neighbourhood, etc.

2. Basic Sight Vocabulary

Basic sight vocabulary is an important component of the language base the child needs before embarking on a **structured reading programme**. It will be acquired from **a number of sources**, such as language experience material, large-format books, environmental print, labeling, flash cards, etc. Sight vocabulary will be developed through selecting common words, core words, words from the reader, high interest words, Dolch list, and social sight vocabulary. *(REF 1: Samples of these lists are attached at the end of this plan)*

3. Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness will be developed through:

* Syllabic awareness – syllabic blending, syllable segmentation, syllable counting, syllable isolation.
* Onset and rhyme – nursery rhymes and rhyming poems, detecting rhymes in stories, rhyme judgement, rhyme generation.
* Phonemic awareness – identify initial sound – final sound – medial sound; Phoneme blending, Phoneme deletion, Phoneme isolation, Phoneme substitution, Phoneme transposition.

A range of specifically targeted Phonological Awareness Programmes will be used e.g Jolly Phonics, Newell.

**Assessment of Individual Phonological awareness:**. The class teachers and LS/RT will use the results of Phonological Tests, along with other informal/ formal tests and teacher observation to identify the needs of individual children.

4. Reading Fluency

The primary strategies recognised in this school to enable children to identify words are their knowledge of letter-sound relationships (grapho/phonic cues), their experiences and understanding of the world (meaning or semantic cues) and their knowledge of the forms of language (syntactic cues). From the outset children are encouraged to look at letters in words, the shape of words, for letters they recognise, to sound out letters that they know, to look for little words in big words etc.

Other strategies used with the children every day are encouraging the children to look at the shape of the word, look for small words, breaking the word into syllables etc.

5. Phonics

The specific phonics programmes used in our school are The Jolly Phonics Programme from Junior Infants to Second class, and **Jolly Phonics Grammar** from Third Class to Sixth. **The Jolly Phonics Programme is a Synthetic Phonics Approach** to learning phonics. In order to develop reading fluency among our children we ensure time is allocated daily to recreational reading activities.

6. Comprehension Skills

The comprehension skills that will be developed through language activity in our school include analysis, synthesis, inference, deduction, summarisation, evaluation and correlation. Teachers explicitly teach a number of strategies that relate to factual texts and fictional texts including scanning, skimming, search reading, reflective reading, brainstorming and categorising, sequencing, predicting etc. by modelling the language and process for children. Comprehension skills are developed through oral and written work with an emphasis on discussion.

7. Reading Material

In Scoil Mhuire, we aim to use a variety of reading material such as big books, class readers, parallel readers, poetry anthologies, etc.

**Big Books**are used to expose children to reading in order to develop their receptiveness to language. It also provides children with an opportunity to talk about reading and expose them to the conventions of print. The class reader is used to develop reading skills such as word attack skills, dictionary work, comprehension, information retrieval skills etc. Teachers ensure that their use of questioning on the class reader is differentiated to cater for the varying needs within the classroom.

**Parallel readers/ Library books**serve to give children the opportunity to read independently at their level to ensure they view reading as an enjoyable activity, to develop fluency and heighten their self-esteem. We endeavour to select reading material that lends itself to group/individual recitation, and we aim to include expository, narrative and diagrammatic/representational texts in our selection. We recognise the importance of using reading material as a means to develop our children emotionally and imaginatively and engage in activities such as character development, discuss why they chose a particular text, respond to material read through drama, art and music, etc We have adopted a variety of approaches such as collaborative reading, independent reading, group reading, whole class approach, etc and we aim to strike a balance throughout the year.

The **Learning Support Department supplements the reading programme**by implementing early intervention programmes during the year.

We have a celebratory Book Week for **World Book Day**each March. We encourage Book Fairs

Writing

The Process of Writing

The school’s approach to writing concentrates on the writing process in order to develop the child’s expressive and communicative abilities. Through the process of writing, children will explore a selection of independently-chosen topics, through a variety of genres for different audiences within a whole school that values children’s writing.

Fostering the Process of Writing

The school will provide opportunities for children to write for real purposes and real audiences, recognising that drafting, editing and redrafting are at the heart of the writing process. Free writing will be used to enable the children to become independent writers.

Genres of Writing

The purpose of the writing and the audience for whom it is written will determine the genre. In Scoil Mhuire NS, we teach the following genres:

* Recount – school trip, Harvest Fair
* Report writing – factual – e.g. life history of the butterfly – book review
* Explanatory writing – how a volcano is formed
* Procedural writing – rules, directions, recipes
* Persuasive writing – debate
* Narrative – story e.g. Jack and the Beanstalk
* Poetic Writing e.g Patrick Mc Gill/ Allingham

In teaching the genres of writing, the children will encounter the genres through reading/being read to, teacher-modelled writing, shared writing, guided writing, leading to independent writing.

1. Poetry

In order to develop the child emotionally and imaginatively children are encouraged to write a variety of poetry. Scoil Mhuire has a strong tradition of writing poetry, and publishing books of poetry. Each year the children take part and feature strongly in the Patrick Mc Gill festival**.**

Children are given the opportunity to work as a whole class, in groups and pairs as well as individually when writing poetry and the writing of different types of poems will be modeled.

2. Handwriting

Good habits in handwriting are developed at an early stage e.g. posture, paper position, pencil grip. In order to make handwriting more accessible to Junior infants, the letters taught are based on the print style in their reading material.

In Junior Infants children write with thick pencils and crayons, Senior Infants to Fourth class use standard pencils and Fifth and Sixth classes use pens.

In Scoil Mhuire Junior Infants will focus on **pre-writing skills**and lower case letter formation. This is developed at Senior Infants. In First class where they will focus on upper and lower case letter formation. Script writing will be introduced in Second Class. In third class, children will continue to refine their skills in **script writing**. By Fourth Class children will be expected to write in legible joined script and in fifth and Sixth class children will be expected to develop a legible, fluent personal style of writing.

3. Spelling

In Scoil Mhuire, we recognise that spelling must be viewed as a fun activity by the children, and we acknowledge that spelling activities must be written as oral spelling is of little value. We understand that mastering spelling is a developmental process and when children attempt to master the complexities of English spelling they go through a number of overlapping developmental stages:

* using sound-letter relationships
* using pattern
* using meaning.

We also believe that spelling must never be a barrier to children’s writing and therefore we must not dampen a child’s enthusiasm to write by insisting on accurate spelling. To this end we are very conscious of the value of invented/approximate spelling as it allows children to self-correct their attempts as they move through the different stages. “*However direct instruction can be of benefit to those who fail to spell accurately, particularly children who find it difficult to develop literacy. Direct instruction in spelling should be undertaken in the context of reading and writing and should be guided by information derived from the children’s approximate spelling.”*(TG)

Content for the children’s spelling programme will be sourced from a combination of the child’s own writing, words from the **Dolch list**, words from the Phonological Awareness Programme, and words from the class reading material. The **Spelling Programme**used in our school is Spelling Made Fun.

Teachers place an emphasis on the Teaching of Spelling as oppose to just testing. Spelling is assessed in a variety of methods. Children’s own writing, teacher designed tasks, dictation and spelling tests. With this rationale, we will enable children to learn spellings through the Look and Say, Cover, Write and Check method.

4. Grammar and Punctuation

In Scoil Mhuire, we aim to teach grammar and punctuation in the context of the children’s own writing and/or reading and we emphasise the oral aspect of teaching. We utilize the Jolly phonics and Jolly Grammar programme throughout the school to also teach grammar and punctuation in discrete teaching time.

Assessment and Record Keeping

Assessment is integral to teaching and learning process. In Scoil Mhuire, we value the different assessment tools that we use that include:

* Teacher observation
* Teacher-designed tasks and tests
* Running Records and Free Writing
* Work samples, portfolios and reports
* Diagnostic tests e.g. Jolly phonics checklists
* Screening Tests e.g. M.I.S.T.
* Standardised tests e.g. MICRA-T

Each of these has a contribution to make in helping to monitor individual children’s rates of progress and levels of attainment as they engage with the language curriculum and by using the information provided in them, we can build up a profile of each child as they progress through the school.

Please refer to our Assessment Policy and Learning Support Policy as appropriate which outlines what assessments are kept, how long, in what format are they retained, who has access to records, etc.

Children with Different Needs

We maintain strong links with the local Speech & Language Department. This Department regularly holds classes and workshops within the school. The school has built up a solid base of expertise in Speech & Language in our Learning Support / Resource Department over the years. Our Resource Department uses **Social Stories**as an aid for children with special needs.

Equality of Participation and Access

All children are included and participate. Reading material reflects intercultural approach in the school and the use of language and textbooks deemed to be sexist is avoided. Each child’s culture is valued and encouraged. We encourage gender awareness through promoting consideration of the roles associated with men and women in literature, the media, advertising etc. as well as consideration of the language associated with such roles.

Organisational Planning

Timetable for English

* 3 hours – Infants
* 4 hours – 1st-6th

Integrated approach to English but discrete time is allocated to Oral Language.

Homework

.Parents are actively encouraged to read with and to their children, listen to children read, talk and listen to their children, encourage their children’s writing, and take an interest in their children’s homework.

Library

School and Class Libraries

In our school, there is a library in each classroom. Each class teacher ensures that there is a variety of factual and fictional texts, poetry anthologies and texts in a range of genres. All books are organised according to their level of difficulty and category of interest. Each class teacher is responsible for organising their class library. The content of these libraries are discussed regularly at staff meetings and planning meetings.

Picture books, short books that can be read at one sitting, poetry anthologies, collections of short stories, a wide range of information books, dictionaries, periodicals suited to the interests and age levels of the children are included in the Junior Libraries as recommended by the Teacher Guidelines in English.

The central library is characterised by a wide range of fiction, biography, non-fiction books that will cater for a wide variety of interests, poetry anthologies, plays, reference books, newspapers, magazines and periodicals. Pupils change their books as often as required and a record is kept of books read to ensure they experience reading in different genres.

We have a celebratory Book Week for World Book Day each March. We encourage Book Fairs every April. We replenish our library books, novels and readers on a needs must basis.

Resources and ICT

**A record of the ICT resources**available to teachers has been distributed and is also available with the resources in the GP room at the charging bench. We are aware of the value of ICT in the teaching and learning of English by contributing to the print-rich environment, in supporting the development of word identification, spelling and other reading skills through reinforcement software, the Internet and reference books available in CD-ROM.

We are very conscious of the value of content-free software e.g. Microsoft Word, in enhancing the process writing approach advocated in the curriculum and children in our school are encouraged to publish their work using ICT in order to enhance the standard of presentation of their work, giving them added pride in the final product.

Individual Teachers’ Planning and Reporting

This plan in English and the curriculum documents will inform and guide teachers in their long and short term programme of work in English. Each teacher will keep a Cuntas Míosúil and this will inform our progress and needs when evaluating and reviewing our progress in English.

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. To date staff has participated in the following training e.g. in-service days, workshops, Cuiditheoireacht etc.

We have also availed of a number of support services as part of staff professional development, such as PCSP, SDPS, SESS, etc. Teachers are also encouraged to attend literacy courses and will share information/skills acquired at these courses with other members of staff during staff meetings.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is considered an integral part to effectively implementing the English Curriculum as Scoil Mhuire appreciates that parents are the primary educator and that therefore play a crucial role in the language development of their children.

This plan and the curriculum documents are available for parents to inform them of the programme for English.

Community Links

Scoil Mhuire believe that the local community has a very important role to play in supporting the programme in English and endeavour to liaise with the members of the community. We also encourage our children to take part in initiatives such as write-a-book projects, competitions, quizzes, debates, and writing competitions.

Success Criteria

The success of this plan will be evaluated through teacher’s planning and preparation, and if the procedures outlined in this plan have been consistently followed. We will also judge its success if the children have been enabled to achieve the aims outlined in this plan and children’s learning has been enhanced 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.
* Increased involvement in independent reading..
* Experiencing of reading as an enjoyable activity.

Writing

* Greater fluency and explicitness in communicating ideas and experiences.
* Enhanced experience of writing in a variety of genres and sharing stories and poems.
* Increased use of ICT to support the writing process.
* Improved presentation of written work.

The achievement of these success criteria will be assessed through feedback from teachers, pupils and parents.

S.S.E/ Deis plan

The focus of school self evaluation in English in Scoil Mhuire was oral language. Deis plans and oral language self evaluation documents outline the details of work in this area.

Implementation

Roles and Responsibilities

Scoil Mhuire believes that the school community must be involved to successfully implement the English Curriculum. Therefore the teaching staff will implement this plan with the support of the Board of Management, Parents and the Local Community

Review

Roles and Responsibilities

It will be necessary to review this plan on a regular basis to ensure optimum implementation of the English curriculum in the school. The Principal and Learning Support Coordinator are responsible for co-ordinating this review.

Those involved in the review will include:

* All Teachers
* Pupils
* Parents
* Post holders/plan co-ordinators
* BoM/DES/Others

Timeframe

This plan was reviewed in September 2016. A further review will be undertaken in September 2018.

Ratification and Communication

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire ratified the plan in October 2016.This plan is available to view at the school by the parents.

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