



# Language Curriculum Policy

## Polasaí Curaclam Teanga

English Language 1 (Béarla Teanga 1)

Irish Language 2 (Gaeilge Teanga 2)

**Board of Management**  
**Scoil Mhuire**  
**Cúl an Áirne**

# **Scoil Mhuire Cúl an Áirne**

## **Language Curriculum Policy**

### **Introductory Statement**

This is the whole school language curriculum plan for Scoil Mhuire Cúl an Áirne. The following plan was developed in 2000, reviewed in 2009 and reviewed again in 2022 following the publication of the new primary language curriculum and the inservice in this received by the staff. 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 language and ensuring consistency and continuity in practice throughout the school. During the development phase of this plan, the focus of the staff was to ensure that each component of the language curriculum was given due emphasis throughout a child's years with us. We have therefore decided that pupils would benefit from the development and implementation of a co-ordinated programme of learning. This plan also reflects the main areas of emphases in the Primary Language Curriculum.

### **Vision**

Our vision in Scoil Mhuire Cul an Áirne is to ensure that pupils are holistically developed in order to assist them in contributing and playing a fulfilling role in their own community. Language is the foundation upon which all learning across the curriculum is built. The confidence to acquire and use spoken and written language has always been at the heart of the ability to learn.

The acquisition and development of language depends on the interaction of speaking and listening, reading and writing and the children's own experience. Language plays a key role in the development of our identity and self-image. It can be used for many purposes- to celebrate, to persuade, to inform etc. We also see the teaching of language as something which underpins all other subjects across the primary curriculum.

## **Aims and Objectives of Primary Language Curriculum**

### **1. Children and their lives:**

- enable children to build on prior knowledge and experience of language and language learning to enhance their language learning
- encourage children of different languages and cultures to be proud of and to share their heritage
- encourage children to embrace Irish positively, and promote our cultural identity through the use of the Irish language
- recognise the wide variation in experience, ability and language style which children bring to language learning in school as a first step in enabling them to engage in relevant and meaningful communicative relationships

### **2. Children's communications and connections with others**

- embrace children's uniqueness by nurturing their appreciation of their home language, their understanding of language and diversity, and their ability to use different languages, gestures and tools to communicate with people in a variety of contexts and situations
- enable children to fully engage with and enjoy a wide range of relevant and meaningful linguistic and communicative experiences with peers and adults
- encourage and enable children to communicate effectively in both the first and second language of the school and to communicate in their heritage language for a variety of purposes

### **3. Children's language learning**

- broaden children's understanding of the world through a rich variety of language experiences and through fostering an awareness and appreciation of other languages and cultures in an enriching learning environment
- encourage children to engage personally with and think critically about a broad range of spoken, gesticulated, written and multimodal texts
- nurture within children an awareness of language, allowing them to appreciate and understand the content and structure of languages and acquire a basic understanding of the history of languages and other cultures
- promote a positive disposition towards communication and language by fostering within children a lifelong interest in and a love of language learning for personal enjoyment and enrichment
- support children to develop their literacy skills and enable them to progress at their own learning pace in oral language, reading and writing

### **In teaching language we aim to:**

- promote positive attitudes and develop an appreciation of the value of language spoken, read and written
- create, foster and maintain the child's interest in expression and communication
- develop the child's ability to engage appropriately in listener-speaker relationships
- develop confidence and competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing
- develop cognitive ability and the capacity to clarify thinking through oral language, writing and reading
- enable the child to read and write independently
- enhance emotional, imaginative and aesthetic development through oral, reading and writing experiences

## Curriculum Planning

### 1. Strands, Elements and Learning Outcomes

The broad objectives, content and methodologies for the teaching and learning of oral language, reading and writing are outlined in the Primary Language Curriculum. The Primary Language Curriculum is structured according to **strands, elements and learning outcomes**. To aid clarity the staff has chosen to plan through the strands:

- **Oral Language**
- **Reading**
- **Writing**

The elements of Communicating, Understanding, and Exploring and Using 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.

### 2. Language Programme *(as developed through the strands, elements and learning outcomes)*

#### **Methodologies:**

This plan reflects the use of methodologies as described in the Primary Language Curriculum and will inform all teachers of the methodologies to be used in the teaching of language as follows:

- Active learning
- Book discussion groups
- Collaborative/Co-operative learning
- Direct teaching
- Free exploration of materials
- Free writing
- Guided discovery/Enquiry
- Guided reading
- Guided writing
- Improvisational drama
- Independent reading
- Independent writing
- Language experience
- Learning through play
- Library usage
- Modelled reading
- Modelled writing
- Modelling language
- Oral familiarization
- Oral language
- Interview
- Paired reading/Buddy/Peer reading

- Play and games
- Presentation to audience
- Problem solving
- Process writing
- Reading
- Reading for purpose
- Reading to children
- Shared reading
- Shared writing
- Skills through content
- Story
- Talk and discussion
- Use of ICT and multi-media
- Use of poetry and rhyme
- Sayings
- Song
- Drama
- Using the environment
- Yard games
- Writing

## **Oral Language:**

Children need to work in a range of situations – developing the ability to question, explain and present ideas; give and understand instructions; Plan, discuss, tell stories and take part in collaborative and exploratory play. They will learn to develop confidence, precision and competence in reasoning, predicting, re-calling and expressing feelings. They should develop sensitivity to audience-encourage tolerance of views and ideas

### **Approach to Oral Language:**

The schools agreed approach to Oral Language will draw on three areas of content:

#### **1. Discrete Oral Language**

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 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

- 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 World Book Day etc, Library visits
- 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.

### **Print-Rich Environment**

We are very conscious of the importance of a print-rich environment throughout all classes and 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.

### **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, and words from the reader, high interest words, Dolch list, and social sight vocabulary.

## **Phonological Awareness**

Phonological awareness will be developed through:

- Syllabic awareness - syllabic blending, syllable segmentation, syllable counting, syllable isolation
- Onset and rime - 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

In terms of English language teaching Jolly Phonics is the programme being used from junior infants - 1<sup>st</sup> class. This phonics programme used is spiral in nature and is reflective of the child's developing ability to recognize patterns and sounds in the spoken/ written word. The spelling programmes in both English and Irish are intended to reinforce phonic programme throughout the school

## **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.) In order to develop reading fluency among our children we ensure time is allocated weekly to reading activities such as USSR /DEAR, etc.

## **Comprehension Skills**

The comprehension skills that will be developed through language activity in our school included analysis, synthesis, inference, deduction, summarization, evaluation and correlation. Teachers explicitly teach a number of strategies that relate to both factual texts and fictional texts including scanning, skimming, search reading, KWL, reflective reading, brainstorming and categorizing, 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.

## **Reading Material**

In Scoil Mhuire Cul an Áirne 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 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 SET supplements the reading programme by implementing early intervention programmes the year, devising the phonics and phonological awareness programme in consultation with staff.

- Novels are used from 2<sup>nd</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> and are assigned to each class
- Big books are used in Junior classes

However all of the above can be added to during the year by each class teacher in order to cater for children's needs and interests.

## **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. We also draw on materials from pdst and the ncca

### **Fostering the Process of Writing**

The school will provide opportunities for children to write for real purposes and real audiences, recognizing 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 Cúl an Áirne, we teach all the following genres to all classes from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>

- Recount - *school trip*
- 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. Cinderella*

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.

### **Poetry**

Children's engagement with poetry should be governed by the 'Pleasure Principle'. Hearing and reading poetry should be an experience of joy and fulfillment.

In the early years the main emphasis will be rhymes, riddles, nursery rhymes and jingles. As they grow older the children will become familiar with a wide range of poetry - humorous, narrative and



lyric. The content should not only touch on the children's experience but also engage their imaginations as well

The children will be encouraged to read poems themselves and suggest poems to be read by the class. Children will also be encouraged to write poetry as a means of self-expression

Children can also experiment with types of poetry such as:

- Alphabet poetry
- Number poems
- Image Poems
- Acrostics
- Haiku
- Pyramid
- Kennings

### **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 Jolly Phonics style. In junior infants children will write with thick pencils and crayons, senior infants to 4<sup>th</sup> class use standard pencils and 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> classes use pencils and also roller ball pens when re-drafting work. In Scoil Mhuire Cúl an Áirne junior infants will focus on pre-writing skills and lower case letter formation. This is developed at senior infants. They will then focus on upper and lower case letter formation. Cursive writing will be introduced at 3rd class. By 4<sup>th</sup> class children will be expected to write in legible joined script and in 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> classes children will be expected to develop a legible, fluent personal style of writing. Writing competitions may be developed in the school.

### **Spelling**

In Scoil Mhuire Cul an Áirne, we recognise that spelling must be viewed as a fun activity by the children, and we acknowledge that spelling activities may be written or oral. We understand that mastering spelling is a developmental process and when children attempt to master the complexities of English and Irish spelling they go through a number of overlapping developmental stages. A multi sensory approach to spelling is encouraged.

- 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. 1999) The content for 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 the Jolly Phonics Programme and words from the class reading material. An agreed and appropriate spelling programme is used. We endorse best practice guidelines which state that progress in spelling takes

place when children experience a consistent and systematic approach to its teaching. They need to master strategies for learning new words which ensure that they don't rely totally on spelling out words letter by letter. Their attention needs to be directed to the whole word with the intention of reproducing it. In keeping with this rationale, we will enable children to learn spellings through the Look and Say, Cover, Write and Check method.

### **Grammar and Punctuation**

In Scoil Mhuire Cul an Áirne, we aim to teach grammar and punctuation in the context of the children's own writing and/or reading and we emphasize the oral aspect of teaching.

### **3. Assessment and Record Keeping**

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

- Concept Mapping
  - 2D Concept Maps
  - 3D Concept Maps
  - Concept Mapping
- Conferencing
  - Conferencing
  - Teacher and Parent(s)
  - Teacher and Pupil
  - Teacher and Teacher
  - Teacher, Parent(s) and Pupil
- Portfolio
  - Hard Copy Portfolio
- Questioning
  - Closed Test Questions
  - Correcting Responses
  - Free-response Questions
  - Matching
  - Multiple-choice Questions
  - Multiple-response Questions
  - Open Test Questions
  - Pupil Questions
  - Questioning
  - True/False Questions
- Self-Assessment
  - Checklists
  - Know, Want to know, Learned (KWL)
  - Ladders
  - Plus, Minus and Interesting (PMI) Diagrams
  - Rubrics
  - Self-assessment
  - Talk Partners/Buddies
  - Traffic Lights
  - Webs

- Standardized Testing
  - Drumcondra Primary Reading Test (DPRT-R)
  - Drumcondra Primary Spelling Test (DPST)
  - MICRA-T
  - Diagnostic tests as required.
- Teacher Observation
  - Anecdotal Observation
  - Event Sampling
  - Shadow Study
  - Target Pupil Observation
  - Teacher Observation
- Teacher-Designed Tasks and Tests
  - Group Assignments
  - Individual Assignments
  - Oral Tests
  - Teacher-designed Tasks and Tests
  - Written Tests

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.

#### 4. Children with Different Needs

In the teaching of language in Scoil Mhuire, Cúl an Áirne, we aim to ensure that all are included by using a variety of differentiated approaches such as those listed/shaded below. The SET also supports language/literacy needs where appropriate through an in-class support /collaborative approach.

- LEARNING CONTENT:
  - **Level**
    - ✓ Variation of the level and complexity of the content to reflect the diversity of the pupils' previous achievement
  - **Sequence**
    - ✓ Pupils introduced to different elements of the learning content in accordance with their identified stage of readiness
- LEARNING OUTCOME
  - **Response**
    - ✓ Pupils have opportunities to provide different outcomes while working on the same task
- LEARNING PROCESS
  - **Choice**
    - ✓ Pupils choose activities that they find more interesting and that match their ability
  - **Interest**
    - ✓ Tasks devised with the specific interests of the pupils in mind

- **Pace**
  - ✓ Varying the rate at which teaching takes place and/ or the rate at which pupils are required to work and produce outcomes
- **Resource**
  - ✓ Pupils provided with learning materials/resources specific to their own level of learning need
- **Support**
  - ✓ Variation of the nature of support in accordance with the pupils' individual needs
- **Task**
  - ✓ A variety of tasks, varying in their level of complexity, relating to the same learning activity
- **Teaching Style**
  - ✓ Variation of methodologies to reflect the different ways in which pupils learn

## 5. Equality of Participation and Access

All children are included and participate.

## 6. Timetable and organisational planning

- **INFANTS:** Language 1 = 4 hours and Language 2 = 2.5 hours
- **1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> CLASS:** language 1 = 5 hours and Language 2 = 3.5 hours

Integrated approach to language but discrete time is allocated to Oral Language e.g. (recommended minimum time) Infants ~ 15 minutes daily, 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Classes ~ 3 x 15 minutes per week, Senior Classes ~ 2 x 15 minute sessions per week

## 7. Homework

Please refer to school Homework Policy.

## 8. Library

### 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 as both space and resources allow. Each class teacher is responsible for organising their class library. A selection of picture books, short books that can be read at one sitting, a range of information books, story books, dictionaries, suited to the interests and age levels of the children are included in the Junior Class Library as recommended by the Primary Language Curriculum. The Senior Class Library is characterized by a wide range of fiction, biography, non-fiction books that will cater for a wide variety of interests, reference books and magazines. Pupils change their books as often as required and a record is kept of books read to ensure they experience reading in different genres. And they are encouraged to read a variety of genres. Other initiatives include:

- Book-related Events
- An annual book fair takes place in the school. We have developed active links with our local community to promote pupils' learning. Where possible local storytellers, authors and poets visit our school to read and share their work and the school promotes the participation of calendar events in our local library
- Where possible paired reading during the year is done with our younger pupils with (i) older pupils (ii) vetted members of the local community
- Activities are organised around World Book Day

## **9. Resources and ICT**

We are aware of the value of ICT in the teaching and learning of language 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.

## **10. Individual Teachers' Planning and Reporting**

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

## **11. Staff Development**

Staff development needs are identified through review and discussion at term 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, online webinars and workshops. We have also availed of support services as part of staff professional development, such as PDST. 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.

## **12. Parental Involvement**

Parental involvement is considered an integral part to effectively implementing language learning. Scoil Bhríde Nurney 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 Language. We involve parents in a number of ways in their children's learning in Language, for example, library involvement, Paired Reading etc.

### **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**

- Reading standards in reading.
- Increased involvement in independent reading.
- Involvement of parents in paired 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.

### **Implementation of revised plan to be ready for September 2020**

#### **(a) Roles and Responsibilities**

Scoil Mhuire National School believes that the school community must be involved to successfully implement the Language Curriculum. Therefore the teaching staff will implement this plan with the support of the Board of Management and parents

#### **(b) Timeframe**

The plan will be implemented by September 2022

### **Review**

#### **(a) Roles and Responsibilities**

It will be necessary to review this plan on a regular basis to ensure optimum implementation of the Language curriculum in the school. The school principal is responsible for coordinating this review. Those involved in the review will include: *Teachers, Parents, Post holders and Plan coordinator, BOM/DES/Others*

#### **(b) Timeframe**

This plan will be reviewed every three years

## Ratification of Language Curriculum Policy

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 21/11/2022

Signed: Paul Carroll

Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: Lorraine Mahon

Principal

Date: 21/11/2022

Date: 21/11/2022

Date of next review: 2024