

ENGLISH CURRICULUM POLICY

St. Mary's Primary School Athlone

2021/2022

Principal: Ms. Ailish McManus

Introduction

This document is a statement of the aims and objectives, principles and strategies for teaching and learning English at St. Mary's National School. It has been revised and amended by staff of the school to incorporate the Primary Language Curriculum guidelines (2019), principles and methodologies of Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (2009), aims & targets of our 3 year D.E.I.S. plan, and current understandings of best practice in literacy education.

Objectives

St Mary's N.S. cherishes all pupils equally and seeks to support them in their language-learning journeys. We seek to make the various strands of English and Language applicable to each child's stage of development. We endorse all objectives set out in the Primary Language Curriculum.

Vision and Aims

(a) Vision

St. Mary's N.S. recognises that children learn language and learn through language, and that language learning is an integrated process and that an engaging environment encourages all children to explore, make discoveries, solve problems, express themselves and interact with others.

We expect teachers to be familiar with the strands of Oral Language, Reading and Writing in both English and Irish. Across these strands are interconnected elements which describe essential language and learning.

These elements are:

- Developing communicative relationships through language
- Understanding the content and structure of language
- Exploring and using language



Each element has a set of Learning Outcomes which describe the expected learning and development for learners at the end of a period of time. At St. Marys we recognise that progress in these elements is not linear, and is influenced by each child's circumstances, experiences and abilities. With this in mind, teachers have the agency and autonomy to make professional judgements when planning, teaching and assessing all children based on these learning outcomes.

Table 1: Overview of Learning Outcomes, showing Strands and Elements:

	Oral Language Teanga ó Bheal	Reading Léitheoireacht	Writing Scríbhneoireacht
Communicating Cumannáid	Engagement, listening and attention Rannpháirtíocht, éisteacht agus aird	Engagement Rannpháirtíocht	Engagement Rannpháirtíocht
	Motivation and choice Inspireadh agus rogha	Motivation and choice Inspireadh agus rogha	Motivation and choice Inspireadh agus rogha
	Social conventions and awareness of others Gnásanna sóisialta agus feacht ar dhaoine eile		
Understanding Tuiscint	Sentence structure and grammar Struchtúr abairte agus gramadach	Conventions of print and sentence structure Gnásanna cló agus struchtúr abairte	Conventions of print and sentence structure Struchtúr abairte agus gnásanna cló
	Vocabulary Stór focal	Vocabulary Stór focal	Vocabulary Stór focal
	Demonstration of understanding Léiniú tuiscena	Phonics, word recognition and word study Fónaic, athint focal agus staidéar ar fhocal	Spelling and word study Litriú agus staidéar ar fhocal
		Phonological and phonemic awareness Feacht fhóneolaíoch agus fhónéimeach	

Exploring and using Fiosú agus úsáid	Requests, questions and interactions Iarratais, ceisteanna agus idirghníomhúithe	Purpose, genre and voice Cuspóir, seánra agus guth	Purpose, genre and voice Cuspóir, seánra agus guth
	Categorisation Catagóirí	Comprehension Tuiscint	Writing process and creating text Próiseas na scríbhneoireachta agus ag cruthú téacs
	Retelling and elaboration Athnuíocht agus míonleiriú	Response and author's intent Freagairt agus intinn an údair	Response and author's intent Freagairt agus intinn an údair
	Playful and creative use of language Teanga a úsáid go spraiúil agus go cruthaitheach	Fluency and self-correction Líofacht agus féincheartú	Handwriting and presentation Peannairmácht agus cur lathair
	Information giving, explanation and justification Eolas, míniú agus údar a thabhairt		
	Description, prediction and reflection Cur síos, tuair agus machnamh		

(b) Aim

We aim through this plan, drawn up in accordance with the English curriculum, to set out our approach to language learning at St. Mary's N.S. The focus of this plan is Knowledge of the curriculum and how we teach it. This plan will form the basis for teachers' long and short-

term planning. It will also inform new or temporary teachers of the approaches and methodologies used in our school.

Curriculum Planning

Oral Language:

Oral Language has been identified as a priority area for the school going forward. In St. Mary's N.S. we recognise oral language as an integral part of the teaching and learning process in all areas of the curriculum. Children enter our school with a wide variety of experiences in oral language. In addition to this, children may also have additional needs eg. children where English is not their native tongue, speech and language disorders, or



special needs. A structured whole school model for effective oral language instruction is based on the components of Promoting Auditory Memory, Developing Listening and Speaking Skills, Teaching a Variety of Spoken Texts, Creating a Language Learning Environment, and Teaching and Extending Vocabulary and Conceptual Knowledge. This model is practiced in conjunction with outcomes from First Steps Speaking and

Listening, and follows the learning outcomes of the Language Curriculum.

Through structured explicit and active oral language activities children will be enabled to:

- Broad Objectives
1. Gain pleasure and fulfilment from language activities
 2. Develop the capacity to express intuitions, feelings, impressions, ideas and reactions in response to real and imaginary situations through talk, discussion and the development of ideas.
 3. Develop fluency, explicitness and confidence in communication.
 4. Develop listening skills, language conventions, vocabulary, aesthetic response and language manipulation.

Methodologies:

There are some methodologies that are followed at whole school level and others that are more relevant to a particular stage of development. Listed below are a sample of methodologies employed at our school. This list is not exhaustive.

We plan for and appreciate the importance of creating a genuine context for oral language activity. This is done:

- By ensuring there is a variety of stimulation in the form of ideas and topics.

- By creating and facilitating the organisational structures in which talk can take place.
- By consistently implementing the First Steps Speaking and Listening Programme.
- By employing active and playful activities to promote learning
- By ensuring opportunities are provided for children to present their work to a variety of audiences, e.g. classmates, other classes, teachers and visitors to the classroom.

Reading:

The aim of this plan is to provide a structured and sequential approach to reading. This approach is characterised by the provision of systematic, explicit instruction that integrates listening, speaking, reading and writing, in order for children to:

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Broad Objectives | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop print awareness, phonemic awareness, word identification strategies and sight vocabulary. 2. Develop their comprehension and analytical strategies. 3. Expand their understanding and usage of grammar, <u>syntax</u> and punctuation. 4. Expose them to and develop their appreciation of the richness and diversity of reading material. <p style="text-align: center;">Experience the pleasure and fulfilment to be gained from reading</p> |
|------------------|--|

Pupils are exposed to a wide variety of inclusive reading materials reflecting different genres, cultures, abilities, reading levels and text forms (picture books, magazines, podcasts, etc).

Teachers in St. Mary's NS believe in prioritising phonemic awareness as a pre-reading skill, explicit & systematic instruction in phonological and phonemic concepts particularly in the junior classes and for those children who are having difficulties with reading. In St. Marys we base our reading program on:

- Scientific research-based core, supplemental and intervention reading programs.
- Assessment data to drive differentiated instruction for all students.
- Identifying struggling students and providing the additional instruction/ intervention support they need.



At St Mary's we promote a balanced approach to literacy instruction based on the 2 core components of reading instruction: Word Recognition and Language Comprehension. At every class level we aim to ensure that students have sufficient higher order comprehension abilities alongside word recognition skills to achieve proficient reading.

Reading Intervention Programmes

At St. Marys we believe in a pro-active approach to reading intervention. We use:

Literacy Lift-Off for children in Senior Infants and 1st Class. It is an intervention that gives children lots of opportunities to read books at their own level of competency and gradually lift the complexity of what they can do in both reading and writing.

Reading Recovery is a short-term, early literacy intervention, designed for children in lower primary who are struggling with reading. Reading Recovery involves intensive one-to-one lessons for 30 minutes a day with a specially trained Reading Recovery teacher.

Get Great @ Reading - From Junior Infants to the end of 3rd class, children take part in the Get Great at Reading Initiative. They are given graded readers to take home twice a week which they read to their parents/guardians. The purpose of this is to gain fluency and foster an enjoyment of reading.

Paired Reading · Toe by Toe, Precision Teaching and SNIP

Writing:

The school recognises that the process of writing is as important as the product and fosters an appreciation of the value of writing as a means of communication. The child's ability to write is developed through the process of writing, coupled with talk and discussion to help the child to self-correct and to write independently. The aim of this plan is to provide a structured sequential approach to writing which enables children to:

- Broad Objectives
1. Write clearly, 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.
 7. Develop a high standard of penmanship.

Oral Language and Writing:

In St. Marys we recognize the importance of oral language in pre-writing activities. Children are encouraged to discuss topics before, during and after writing. They are encouraged to write from their own experiences as well as to use their imaginations.

Genres of Writing

The genres in which children write will vary, and the range of this will expand, as children grow older. As per our First Steps Plan (Appendix A) children spend one term each year immersing themselves in a particular genre. They also review genres from previous years or as they occur throughout the integrated curriculum.

The formal teaching of one individual genre takes place over each term. The suggested structure for teaching a new genre begins with Familiarisation. Discovery involves breaking down the text in terms of its structure, language features, grammar and so on. This is followed by Modelled Writing, then Shared Writing. Guided writing takes place using frameworks and leads to Independent Construction. After editing and redrafts the text can be presented to an audience.

FREE WRITING

The teacher provides the class with 10 – 15 minutes of free writing a number of times a week. The children choose their own topics and genre. The teacher does not mark, correct or criticise this work, but can date it and discuss it with the child. This writing is completed in a specific copy. Children may choose to illustrate their work, write in their native language, or use pictures to convey messages. The purpose of Free Writing is to promote the enjoyment and fluency of writing.

Handwriting

As per the primary language curriculum, children will be encouraged to write legibly and fluently in a chosen script using a personal style, ensuring correct formation of lower and upper-case letters. The style of handwriting adopted by this school will be based on a progression from letter formation to cursive writing. The 'Ready, Steady, Write' and 'All Write Now' handwriting schemes are used throughout the school to ensure consistency, and handwriting copies are used for additional practice. Junior grip pencils are recommended in the Infants Classes. Page position, posture and pencil grip are of high importance. Children are instructed to hold their pencil in a tripod grip.

Spelling

In St. Mary's we recognise that, as a whole school, a multi-dimensional approach to spelling is essential. Every class has varying levels of spelling ability and the pupils are differentiated and assessed accordingly.

Children in junior and senior infants engage in pre-spelling activities through phonological awareness and word families. Formal spellings are given from first class upwards. The spellings may be selected from the child's own work, reader, a determined list e.g. Dolch or a spellings book. The spellings given each night will be modified to cater for a range of ability in the classroom. Spellings may be monitored through the look-say-cover-write-check method, through weekly spelling tests or as they occur in the children's written work. Additionally the Schonnel Spelling Test is administered to every child from 1st – 6th class at the end of each year.

3. Assessment (Refer to St. Mary's School Assessment Policy)

Assessment involves building a picture over time of a child's progress in learning. The teacher uses this information to identify the child's current learning, and to provide him/her with appropriate support for future learning[1].

Assessment is both formal and informal and is happening continuously in the classroom.

Classroom Assessment methods may include:

- Teacher observations
- Self-Assessment
- Conferencing
- Teacher designed tasks and tests

- Work samples, portfolios & projects
- Pupil profiles
- AFL and AOL
- Regular tests (end of week/unit)

Class teachers are also required to use the Primary Language Curriculum and First Steps Continuum to inform their teaching. Additionally, each class teacher is responsible for tracking 3 children in reading, writing and speaking & listening in First Steps.

Standardised assessment is administered on an annual basis during the final term of the school year. Test results are used to establish the need of individual pupils and to inform future planning.

- B.I.A.P (Belfield Infants Assessment Profile) – at the end of Junior Infants to those children deemed to be 'at risk' of literacy difficulties
- Screening testing is administered to each child at the end of Senior Infants
- Drumcondra Primary Reading Tests (English) and Sigma-T (Maths) are administered from 1st to 6th class in May each year by class teachers and S.E.T.
- Schonell Spelling Test administered from 1st to 6th class annually by class teachers.

Diagnostic assessment is administered as required at School Support level

(For more information on this topic see St. Mary's Assessment Policy)

4. Equality of Participation & Access

A balanced English Language programme covers all areas of Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing. The introduction and development of each topic will be structured in a graded and sequential way to allow for the individual child to develop and participate at their own level and pace.

Where a child demonstrates a particular difficulty, either with a topic, strand or overall, the class teacher will provide extra support, differentiation and assistance to the child. This support will be documented in a Classroom Support Plan. Classroom Support is an intervention process coordinated by the class teacher and carried out within the regular classroom.[2]

If the child continues to experience difficulty, the class teacher will involve the support teacher assigned to their class. While the class teacher retains overall responsibility for the pupil's learning, children with additional educational needs will receive support at School Support level. This may involve targeted team-teaching, stations or withdrawal in small groups.

Where a child demonstrates a particular strength, the class teacher will endeavour to challenge the child, so the child is able to reach their full potential. The learning support teacher may be involved in order to support the child's learning and discussions may be had with the parents or families.

E.A.L. Provision

The Department of Education (DE) provides additional educational resources for pupils who are learning English as an additional language (EAL) in primary schools. The English language needs of each child in our school will be assessed and support will be provided when necessary. Their proficiency in English is tested biannually (September and May/June) using the PSAK (Primary School Assessment Kit) assessments. EAL teachers work in a withdrawal and in-class support capacity, dependent on the needs of individual students.

5. Roles & Responsibilities

The implementation of our plan will be supported as follows:

Roles	Person(s) Responsible
	Educational

Development of schemes of work	-	Class Teacher
Assessment (Standardised/Diagnostic)	-	Class Teacher/ Special Needs Teacher
Coordination of School/Class Libraries	-	Class Teacher
Purchasing of Resources	-	Principal, Class Teachers and Special Educational Needs Teacher
Coordination of monitoring and Evaluation of plan	-	Post Holder for English (Ms Arrigan) in conjunction with the Literacy Team at St. Mary's N.S.

This plan should be regularly monitored by all staff and any feedback duly noted to the Principal, who has overall responsibility for leading the teaching and learning of English in the school.

6. Planning & Reporting

The whole school plan and the curriculum documents for English provide information and guidance to individual teachers for their long and short term planning. Teachers make short and long term plans according to the appropriate strands (Oral Language, Reading & Writing) for his/her class. This ensures an integrated language learning experience for the children in St. Mary's N.S. The monthly Cúntas Míosúil is collected by the principal. These schemes are available on a whole-school level for review and for planning for the following years.

Individual teachers will plan their yearly English programme specifically for their own class, based on the learning outcomes of the Primary Language Curriculum and this school plan. This should ensure clear progression as children move from class to class. Teachers at each class level will collaborate on content and methodology for English from this whole school plan and it will be monitored and assessed on an on-going basis.

Teachers are expected to complete yearly (or termly) plans for the teaching of English in their classes and are responsible for the implementation of such. They must also include English in their fortnightly (or weekly) plan. Such must include strand, element, learning outcomes, learning experience and key vocabulary.

7. Staff Development

Staff needs will be assessed and identified through review, reflection and discussions. Responses to these 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. The staff will also avail of training as provided by the Department of Education and Skills, particularly in relation to further training days for the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum. Notices of up coming 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. We endeavour to engage in best practice at all times and will explore new developments in research as appropriate.

8. Parental Involvement / Community Links

At St. Mary's National School, we encourage and welcome the involvement of parents and the wider school community in childrens' education. Such partnership is exemplified in:

- Our initial meeting for parents of the incoming Junior Infants at which the importance of speaking with and listening to as well as reading to and with the young child is discussed.
- 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 / Communication Journal.
- Other written communications e.g. the St. Mary's Newsletter or website
- Opportunities for parents to share their talents and expertise with us e.g. local writers, poets, artists, historians etc.
- Events in the local library
- Local homework club
- Inter-school debating

9. Timetable

Language learning is an integral part of each subject therefore it is being explored both explicitly and incidentally in a cross-curricular approach. Literacy skills are integrated with other curriculum areas, and some discretionary time may also be used for literacy activities.

The teaching of English is conducted in line with the time allocation as set out by the DES and NCCA (ref: Circular 0056/2011).

The teaching of English is organised on a both a whole-class and team-teaching level. A team-teaching approach is taken to support the teaching and learning of English and involves the close collaboration with the support staff.

10. Homework (Refer to St. Mary's School Homework Policy)

Homework is part of the continuous learning process and in St. Mary's National School we strive to include a balance between oral, reading and writing activities. Homework is assigned Monday to Thursday, (September-June) leaving the weekend free for family activities. As a core subject, English homework is usually assigned daily. From first class, spellings are assigned each day. Parents/carers are regularly reminded of the importance of oral language and reading homework, as well as written work.

11. Success Criteria

The success of this plan will be measured using the following criteria:


- Ongoing assessment, formal and informal, will show that pupils are acquiring an understanding appropriate to their age and ability.
- Implementation of the school plan will be evident in teachers' preparation and monthly reports.
- Results of Standardised Tests will be analysed every year to ensure that the teaching and learning of English improves
- Results of targets set as part of our DEIS literacy plan will be analysed annually.
- Inspector's Suggestions and Reports will be taken into due consideration.
- Feedback from parents, pupils and the wider school community will advise the revision of this plan.

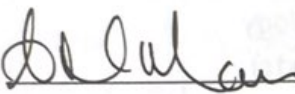
12. Ratification

The attention of all newly appointed staff will be drawn to this whole-school English plan upon their appointment to the school by the NQT mentor. This policy will be published on the school website, upon its development, and a copy of it will be provided to the Parents

Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and the Patron, if requested. Hard copies of this, and all school policies, are available at the school upon request.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management Feb 2022.

Signed:  (Chairperson, BOM)

Signed:  (Principal)

Term	Month	Topic
Term 1	September	Narrative (Use of text)
	October	
	November	
Term 2	January	Self-Censoring (Context)
	February	
	March	
Term 3	April	Reports (Use of text)
	May	
	June	
Year 5		
Term 1	September	Predicting (Use of text)
	October	
	November	

Appendix A – First Steps Timetable.

First Steps Reading, Writing, Speaking & Listening Year 1

Date		Writing	Reading	Speaking & Listening
Term 1	September	Recount	Visualising (Use of texts)	Determining Importance (Use of texts)
	October			
	November		Using Analogy (Use of texts)	
	December			
Term 2	January	Explanation	Synthesising & Adjusting Reading Rate (Contextual Understanding)	Self-Questioning (Contextual Understanding)
	February			
	March			
Term 3	April	Report	Inferring (Understanding Conventions)	Comparing & Contrasting (Understanding Conventions)
	May			
	June			
<u>Year 2</u>				
Term 1	September	Narrative	Predicting (Use of texts)	Self Talk (Use of texts)
	October			
	November			

	December		Connecting (Use of texts)	
Term 2	January	Persuasive	Skimming & Scanning (Contextual Understanding)	Code Switching (Contextual Understanding)
	February			
	March			
Term 3	April	Procedure	Summarising & Consulting a Reference (Understanding Conventions)	Inferring (Understanding Conventions)
	May			
	June			

Appendix B – St. Mary's Phonic Scheme

This may be altered slightly from year to year depending on children's needs and abilities).

Infants

42 Main letter sounds (including digraphs such as sh, th, ch and ck).

Forming and writing letters.

Blending sounds together to read and write new words.

Listening for the sounds in words and practising segmenting.

CVC words

Learning sight words that have irregular spellings.

First and Second

All lower- and upper-case sounds and names

Short Vowel sounds

Blend phonemes

CVC, CCVC & CVCC words

Homophones

Sounds: ei/eigh

Suffix: _ed, ing, y, s

Double consonants

Long Vowels – Magic/Silent e

Consonant Digraphs sh, ch, wh, th, qu, ck. a,e,i,o,u, followed by r.

Consonant blends br, cr, dr, gr, tr, pr, bl, pl, fl, cl, sl, Compound Words e.g. into.
Syllables: Two closed syllable words. Two short vowels in word e.g. rabbit.

Third and Fourth

Revise short/long vowels, consonant digraphs, and blends.

Introduce blends, st, sp, sm, sn, sw, sc, sk, sch, str, scr, spr.

Soft C Soft G

Vowel digraphs ee/ea, oa/ow, ai/ay, ue/ew/oo, ie/igh/y, ou/ow, au/aw, all ea (short)
oi/oy. Word endings ng, nk, nd, nt, rt, ft, ct, it, mp, pt, tch.

Compound Words & Homographs

Silent letters: b, k, c

Prefix: un_, re_, dis_, ex_, mis_, mid_, de_, over_, il_, im_, ir_, in_.

Suffix: _er, _est, _tion, sion, ssion, cian

Word Endings: -ought, -aught, -ture, -er, -ear/eer/ere

Sounds: ng, nc, nk

Syllables: 2 closed syllable words (eg. a/tom); open/closed syllables (eg. la/dy)

Suffixes and root words

Fifth and Sixth

Revise short/long vowels, consonant digraphs, vowel digraphs, soft c/soft g.

Introduce ph, tw, dr, ch says k.

Word endings -ture, -our, -tion, -cious, -ic, -ssion, -tient, -cial, -ious, -ce, -ant, -
ent, Suffixes -ly, -le, -ery, -ed, er, -ing, -ist, -ish, -ive, -est, -ous, -able. Silent

Letters: w-, w-, g-, t, l, h, gh.

Plural rules

Exceptions ar says "er", ear syas "er"; s having sh sound; gu rule; the "v" rule (ve); O says
"u"; ei or ie.

Syllables: Open and closed syllable. Three and more syllable words.

[1] Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for Schools, NCCA 2007

[2] Special Educational Needs – A Continuum of Support – Guideline for Teachers