

Language/Literacy Policy



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CONTEXT:

The stated vision of the Department of Education for N Ireland (DENI) is 'To ensure that every learner fulfils his or her potential at each stage of his or her development.' (DENI 2010).

This has been enunciated in the overall aim of the N Ireland Curriculum (DE 2008), which says, 'The N Ireland Curriculum aims to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives.'

The School Improvement policy document, 'Every School a Good School,' (DENI 2009) has outlined indicators of what will be recognised as effective performance under four headings:

- **Child centred provision**
- **High quality teaching and learning**
- **Effective leadership**
- **A school connected to its local community.**

The new strategy '**Count, Read, Succeed**' has been developed in order to improve outcomes in Numeracy and Literacy.

The aims of this strategy are to:

- a. support teachers and school leaders in their work to raise overall levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy among young people; and
- b. narrow the current gaps in educational outcomes

The document states that: "It must be a central purpose of our schools, supported by parents, to ensure that pupils develop the necessary literacy and numeracy skills to succeed at school and later on, in life and at work."

1. INTRODUCTION:

At Aghnacloy College, we believe that pupils' literacy skills, ie. their ability to talk, listen, read and write effectively, for purpose and audience, is the key to educational progress, to social integration and to personal development and happiness.

This policy document will outline the strategies and approaches we will support and develop in order to ensure that each child becomes equipped with the necessary language knowledge, understanding and skills.

The continuity and progression in our language planning will be underpinned by the learning intentions outlined in the Language Framework.

At Aghnacloy College, we intend that, by the end of Key Stage 3, a pupil will be able to:

- *speak confidently to a range of audiences with an awareness of purpose*
- *read and write with confidence, fluency and understanding, orchestrating a range of independent strategies to self-monitor and correct*
- *have an interest in books and read for enjoyment*
- *have an interest in words, their meanings, developing a growing vocabulary in spoken and written forms*

- *understand a range of text types and genres and be able to write in a variety of styles and forms appropriate to the situation*
- *develop the powers of imagination, inventiveness and critical awareness*
- *use a suitable technical vocabulary to articulate their responses.*

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Statutory requirements for the teaching and learning of English are laid out in the N Ireland Curriculum for English (CCEA, 2007) and include:

Rationale

We in Aghnacloy College believe that the effective use of language for learning is the concern of all teachers in every area of the curriculum and we recognise that each area of learning has a contribution to make through the special opportunities and demands it presents. Every teacher will promote and support in the development of children's talking, listening, reading, writing and thinking skills in all curriculum areas.

Pupils will be immersed in a stimulating environment of print, surrounded by print and other reading materials presented in an inviting and attractive way. Children will have opportunities, across all areas of the curriculum to present their ideas, experiences and understanding in ways, which require a growing awareness of purpose and audience.

Progression will be seen in pupils' increasing independence in talking, listening, reading, writing and thinking, their understanding and response to what they hear, read and write.

Aims

We in Aghnacloy College aim to promote confidence in and enjoyment of language.

Aims for language (literacy development)

- To promote consistency in the presentation of written work across the curriculum
- To develop pupils' confidence and raise their level of expectation by understanding and utilising the marking system
- To develop the key skill of spelling in all areas of language

Literacy across the curriculum

Language is the medium for learning and thinking and must therefore be central throughout the curriculum.

A central concern of all our teaching is to develop pupils' abilities to think, explore, organise and communicate. The effective use of language is crucial to successful learning in all subjects.

Each area of the curriculum offers different opportunities and challenges for extending children's language and literacy experiences. Many of the requirements of the English Curriculum can be approached through other areas of the curriculum. Children will learn to be literate from encounters with a rich diversity of texts, texts created for real purposes, with different textual features, providing opportunities to explore them, discuss them and make connections between them. Children will develop increasingly sophisticated understanding about the nature, structure and purpose of texts if they are presented with opportunities to engage with a range of different text types across the curriculum.

In addition to the opportunities provided in English lessons, children will observe, generalise, theorise and test their hypotheses about language across all curricular areas. They will also have opportunities for purposeful, literate engagements with those are relative experts and working collaboratively with a range of peers. Children will be encouraged to use their literacy skills actively and independently across all areas of the curriculum.

At Key Stage 3 (Years 8-10), pupils should learn to change the way they talk and write to suit different situations, purposes and audiences. They should read a range of texts and respond to different layers of meaning in them. They should explore the use of language in literary and non-literary texts and learn how the structure of language works.

CHILD CENTRED PROVISION:

The following indicators from ESaGS will be reflected in the school's approaches:

- Decisions on planning, resources, curriculum and pastoral care reflect at all times the needs and aspirations of the pupils within the school.
- A clear commitment exists to promoting equality of opportunity, high quality learning, a concern for individual pupils and a respect for diversity.
- A school culture of achievement, improvement and ambition exists with clear expectations that all pupils can and will achieve to the very best of their ability.
- Effective interventions and support are in place to meet the additional education and other needs of pupils and to help them overcome barriers to learning.
- There is a commitment to involve young people in discussions and decisions on school life that directly affect them and to listen to their views.

Inclusion:

Teachers will make use of a range of teaching methods which meet the needs of individual pupils, groups of pupils and the class as a whole. They will not confine themselves to any one method. The following methods will be used to develop literacy skills:

- Model presentation
- Model marking
- Model spelling
- Provision of framework for spelling
- Involvement of pupils in self-monitoring of their achievements;

The emphasis will be on promoting children's learning through the provision of quality, concrete, active experiences across the curriculum. Planning for cross-curricular activities and the use of a variety of stimuli will ensure that language is used in different contexts. All tasks will have clearly identified outcomes and will be matched to pupil's abilities and interests.

We aim to provide for all pupils so that they reach their full potential in English according to their individual abilities. We will identify which pupils or groups of pupils are under-achieving and those with special educational needs in order to take steps to improve their attainment. Gifted children will be identified and suitable learning challenges provided.

This is organised through:

- *Identifying pupils on entry to year 8 through various standardised tests.*
- *Various in-class strategies to ensure all pupils are being challenged and able to achieve targets set for them*
- *The classroom assistant*
- *Involvement of parents*
- *A range and variety of resources, including uses made of technology.*

Intervention programmes

Early identification, assessment and provision for any SEN child is very important.

Some children will receive support in the class and others will be withdrawn for more individual help. The centrality of literacy in all curriculum areas requires that talking, listening, reading, writing, spelling and presentation are likely to be the focus of the support given to children with SEN.

Intervention programmes in school include reading partnership and writing partnership where targeted pupils are withdrawn from class with the literacy assistant.

Underachieving pupils are targeted and identified using standardised testing at the start of each year. Specific targets are set at the start of these programmes and then reviewed and evaluated at the end of the programme.

Pupils identified with SpLD receive two hours literacy support per week.

Equal opportunities

All children are provided with equal access to the English curriculum. We aim to provide suitable learning opportunities regardless of gender, ethnicity or home background.

Essential Skills Qualification at Key Stage 4

This qualification will be offered as an alternative to pupils who will find it difficult to achieve a GCSE English grade. The children will be offered this opportunity based on 'Key Stage 3' assessment, standardised tests, classroom observation and involvement of parents.

HIGH QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING:

The following indicators from ESaGS will be reflected in the school's approaches:

- A broad and relevant curriculum is provided for the pupils.
- An emphasis on literacy and numeracy exists across the curriculum.
- Teachers are committed and enthusiastic, enjoying a positive relationship with their pupils and with other school-based staff and dedicated to improving learning.
- Teachers use adaptable, flexible teaching strategies that respond to the diversity within the classroom.
- Assessment and other data is used to effectively inform teaching and learning across the school and in the classroom and to promote improvement.

- Rigorous self-evaluation is carried out by teachers and the whole school, using objective data and leading to sustained self-improvement.
- Teachers reflect on their own work and the outcomes of individual pupils.
- Education outcomes reflect positively on the school and compare well, when benchmarked measurement is undertaken, against the performance of similar schools.

To deliver the aims of the '**Count, Read, Succeed**' strategy we will align the following key work strands with a particular focus on improvements in literacy and numeracy by:

- a. providing the revised **curriculum**, which has literacy and numeracy at its core and is accompanied by appropriate guidance, support and professional development for schools;
- b. introducing **assessment** arrangements that complement the curriculum, by attaching priority to progression in literacy and numeracy, and provide an effective means for assessing pupil progress that will inform teaching and learning interventions and the recording of pupils' achievements;
- c. recognising the central role of **teachers** in raising pupil attainment, supported by school leaders and those in the education system (as set out in *Every School a Good School - a policy for school improvement*);
- d. ensuring **early intervention** to address actual or potential underachievement, ie as soon as it begins to appear, and to support pupils with special or additional educational needs, including those who do not have the language skills to access the curriculum, and to promote inclusion for pupils of all ages;
- e. linking with **parents, families and communities** to help them support their children, particularly in literacy and numeracy, for example through the Extended Schools programme, and within DE, through the creation of a directorate with a specific focus on parents, families and communities; and
- f. identifying, acknowledging and disseminating the **best practice** that exists in so many schools, while ensuring that schools with less effective practice deliver improvements.

Subject Organisation

The English Curriculum is delivered using the requirements in the N. Ireland Curriculum for Language and Literacy.

Each year group is split into 2 classes based on ability. Each teacher uses the same units of work and work is differentiated as necessary. Classroom assistants are used efficiently where available.

Planning is based on the language model of text, sentence and work level outlined in the Language Framework (SELB).

Units of work are reviewed, evaluated and updated as necessary.

Approaches to talking and listening

The strands of talking, listening, group discussion and interaction and drama pervade the whole curriculum. Oral language should be recognised as the *primary mode of language* and hence should receive a central emphasis and focus in all areas of the curriculum and in the life of the school. Pupils are encouraged to listen attentively and to speak clearly, confidently, fluently and appropriately for a variety of different audiences and purposes.

Opportunities for Talking and Listening are highlighted throughout the units of work that the department use. Pupils are involved in activities that allow them to:

- *learn to talk*
- *use talk for better learning and thinking*
- *link talk to writing*
- *use drama and drama activities*
- *develop confidence, self-esteem and emotions.*
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Approaches to reading

Outline the opportunities, organisation and provision of the following:

- modelled, shared, guided, silent, paired and independent reading.

An emphasis must be placed on the importance of comprehension skills and strategies, which must be developed and encouraged from the beginning. The pleasure and enjoyment of reading should be fostered in the language lessons, across the curriculum and beyond the classroom. Involvement of the parents can be critical in this context.

Resources

Teachers will provide material appropriate to pupils' interests and abilities.

The department have the following at our disposal:

- A wide range of books
- A range of ICT resources
- A school library with an adequate stock of books, newspapers, magazines, audio-books etc.
- A variety of games and activities
- SEN resource base.

Other approaches

- At the beginning of Year 8 parents are sent a leaflet entitled 'How to help your child succeed in English'.
- Parents of year 8 pupils will have the opportunity to attend paired reading workshops with their child.
- Each class in years 8 -10 are timetabled for one period a week in the school library and are encouraged to make use of the local library
- Opportunities for wider reading provided for all pupils which consists of reading: fiction, non-fiction, poetry, drama

- Strategies are in place to encourage and stimulate an enjoyment of reading eg paired reading programme, sponsored read.
- Teachers are aware of possible gender differences in relation to attitudes and interests and provide a wide range of reading material to cater for all pupils' interests.
- A book fair and poetry workshop will be arranged to encourage reading.

Approaches to writing

Teachers will use various strategies when approaching the teaching of writing:

modelled writing, shared writing, guided writing, independent writing, extended writing, handwriting.

It will be beneficial to remind pupils in all year groups to: *think it, say it, write it and read it aloud when developing their writing. The links between talking and writing should be recognised and developed, e.g. reading as a writer and writing as a reader. The following approaches will be used:*

- *Various resources used to support the teaching of writing*
- *the use of writing frames*
- *development of an understanding of genre/text-type in fiction and non-fiction*
- *awareness of purpose and audience and the link to genre and form*
- *providing a wide range of opportunities to write with attention to purpose and audience*

TS and PCs/Cross curricular opportunities for literacy development

Teachers will seek to take advantage of opportunities to develop Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities and to make cross-curricular links. They will plan for pupils to practise and apply the skills, knowledge and understanding acquired through language lessons to other areas of the curriculum.

The following aspects should be considered:

- *awareness of different styles of learning and the need to encourage pupils to use their visual, auditory and kinaesthetic channels for better learning*
- *use of a range of active learning strategies in the classroom, including drama strategies*
- *use of the structure of Philosophy for Children to develop reasoning skills, if possible and appropriate*
- *ensure effective questioning by the teacher and pupils.*

The use of ICT

Opportunities to use ICT to support teaching and learning in Literacy will be planned for and used as appropriate.

- *technology may contribute to teaching and learning across the school and all areas of learning*
- *appropriate technology will be made available to teachers and pupils*

- *Staff will be provided with opportunities to continue their professional development*
- *the use of technology is planned into the department schemes and evaluated on a regular basis.*

Assessment and target-setting

Targets

According to DENI 'all primary and post-primary schools should set their own targets for the improvement of their pupils' literacy and numeracy. These targets, and the monitoring of progress towards meeting them, should form part of each school's literacy and numeracy policy, and be integral to its development plan.'

As a result of audits and evaluation procedures targets will be set accordingly.

Assessment and Record Keeping

Careful thought will be given to the purpose of assessment; we will adopt a wide range of methods to reflect the whole curriculum and learning opportunities. The main purpose of assessment will be to facilitate progress in pupils' literacy skills.

Work will be assessed in line with the Assessment Policy.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP:

The following indicators from ESaGS will be reflected in the school's approaches:

- An effective school development plan is in place, providing clear and realistic targets for improvement based on a sound vision for the school.
- Governors understand their responsibilities and provide clear strategic direction as well as support and challenge to the Principal in carrying forward the process of improvement.
- School leaders demonstrate a commitment to providing professional development opportunities for staff, particularly teachers, and promote a readiness to share and learn from best practice.
- Teachers are given the opportunity to share in the leadership of the school.
- The resources at the disposal of the school are managed properly and effectively, with appropriate arrangements in place for financial management, attendance management, and working relationships
- School leaders monitor and evaluate effectively school outcomes, policies, practices and procedures and the School Development Plan itself.

Role of the Literacy Co-ordinator

The Literacy Co-ordinator should be responsible, in consultation with the Principal, teachers and parents, for improving the standards of teaching and learning in Literacy through:

Monitoring and evaluating Literacy:

- pupil progress
- management and analysis of relevant data

- provision of Literacy (including Intervention and Support programmes)
 - the quality of the Learning Environment;
 - the deployment and provision of support staff
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- Auditing and supporting colleagues in their CPD
 - Taking the lead in policy development
 - Purchasing and organising resources
 - Keeping up to date with recent Literacy developments
 - Maintaining contact with all concerned: Principal, Senior Management in the school, teachers, other staff, parents, and pupils
 - Ensuring channels of communication are open and active with all relevant outside agencies, including DENI, the Board, CCMS, RTU, CCEA, etc.

The Board of Governors

Regular reports are made to the governors on the progress of English provision and on the standards being achieved by the school.

A SCHOOL CONNECTED TO ITS LOCAL COMMUNITY:

The following indicators from ESaGS will be reflected in the school's approaches:

- Good relationships that facilitate engagement and communication between the school and its parents and the wider community that it serves.
- The school and its teachers are held in respect by parents and the local community who in turn actively support the work of the school.
- The school uses its involvement in particular programmes (for example Extended Schools or Specialist Schools) effectively in meeting the needs of the community and nearby schools.
- Good relationships and clear channels of communication are in place between the school and the education agencies that support it.
- The school works closely with other relevant statutory and voluntary agencies whose work impacts on education, especially Health, Social Services, the Public Library Service and, where appropriate, local Neighbourhood Renewal groups.

Parental Involvement

We regard reporting as a valued opportunity to inform parents about progress and to help develop pupil self image form constructive feedback.

Pupils' progress will be reported back to parents on a special Parents' Night or Parents' afternoon as well as in the end of term report.

Teachers in the department may also contact a parent by homework diary, telephone or letter having first informed the H. O. D. and form tutor.

We ask parents to sign spelling lists/planners at the start of the year.

Teachers will send home postcards every half term to those pupils who have been working well in class.

At the beginning of Year 8 parents are sent a leaflet entitled 'How to help your child succeed in English'.

Parents of year 8 pupils will have the opportunity to attend paired reading workshops with their child.

CONCLUSION:

This policy is in line with other school policies, including:

- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Assessment and Record Keeping
- Responding to pupils' work / Feedback / Marking policy
- Numeracy Policy
- Special Educational Needs' Policy
- ICT Policy
- Equal Opportunities' Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

REVIEW OF POLICY:

This policy will be evaluated, reviewed and up-dated annually. An audit and action plan will be used.