English Policy

Introductory Statement

The English plan was formulated by the staff of Derrycreha N.S. on 08.06.2004.

Rationale

It was decided to focus on this area for development to review the existing plan for English in light of changed emphases and new methodologies outlined in the primary curriculum.

The English curriculum consists of four strands

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

Each strand of the English curriculum is organised according to three strand units

- Oral language
- Reading
- Writing

The English curriculum envisages language learning as an integrated process in which these three strand units are interconnected. The curriculum promotes the centrality of language – and – particularly oral language – as a vital context for learning, not just in English, but in every curriculum area.

We, in Derrycreha N.S. endorse this approach to language learning and teachers will adopt this approach in the teaching and learning strategies utilised in classroom work.

Aims

The aims of the English language curriculum are to :

1. Develop in the pupils confidence and competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing.
2. Develop an appreciation of the value of language – spoken, read and written.
3. Enable the child to read and write independently
4. Enhance emotional, imaginative aesthetic development through oral, reading and writing experiences.

Broad Objectives

The objectives of the English language curriculum include enabling the child to:

1. Regard language activity as a pleasurable interlude.
2. Develop the skill of attentive listening.
3. Expand his/her vocabulary and develop a command of grammar syntax and punctuation.
4. Become fluent in communicating ideas and experience.
5. Explore and express reactions to poetry and fiction.
6. Compose and write own poems and stories.
7. Develop a range of comprehension strategies.
8. Learn to edit and refine writing and develop a sense of appropriate presentation.

Emergent Reading

Phonological and phonemic awareness will be fostered and pupils will be encouraged to use a range of word-identification strategies in learning to read.

Strategies used with the emergent readers include print-rich environment, the use of big books, word boxes, labelling, flash cards, word games, nursery rhymes, songs, poems and jingles.

Instructional Reading

The instructional reading is based mainly on the Magic Emerald reading scheme using the above strategies where appropriate.

Supplementary readers are widely used throughout the school and from second class up a novel is also part of the English Programme.

Children's comprehension skills are developed through a combination of reading the text, reflecting on it, discussing it and writing about it. (See Teacher Guidelines p612-68).

Independent Reading

Independent reading is encouraged throughout the school. The pupils in the middle and senior classes are exposed to a wide variety of reading materials along with their reading scheme and novel.

Paired reading is also introduced at this stage.

Learning Support

The early identification and remediation of reading difficulties is essential and based on teacher observation and standardised and diagnostic test.

Oral language – across the curriculum

Much oral language development is accomplished informally across the curriculum e.g. Maths, S.P.H.E., S.E.SE., P.E., Visual Arts, R.E.

Through the English Programme

In the English programme an effort will be made to maximise the use of oral language in developing children's comprehension and reader response skills, and as a basis for reading and writing. However, the implementation of this is difficult in a multi-class situation.

Discrete Oral Language Time

An effort is being made to incorporate discrete oral language time dedicated to aspects of language such as form, structure and use. Each class teacher is responsible for the time allocation at each class level.

Oral language activities includes the following:-

Talk and discussion, play and games, poetry, story and improvisational drama.

Reading

The school plan is to provide each child with a reading experience appropriate to his/her needs and abilities. To this end, the Magic Emerald scheme was introduced in September 2001.

Developing a Reading Culture

Developing a reading culture by encouraging and motivating pupils to read from an early age is a vital part of our school policy in English. All classrooms have well stocked libraries and new titles are added annually. Pupils are encouraged to join the library in Bantry and also pupils visit the mobile library every second week. From time to time visiting authors are invited to the school to speak and read to the children.

Poetry

Children's engagement with poetry is governed by the 'pleasure principle.' Hearing, reading and reciting poetry is an intrinsic element of their language experience.

Writing

Infant classes the definition of children's writing will be broad enough to include any graphic representation the child attempts. Gradually the child's ability to use letters and words will evolve through the strategies outlined on p.77 of the Teachers Guidelines.

The recommended approach to writing stresses the importance of the process of writing as well as the product. Children will write on a wide range of topics and in a variety of genres. The curriculum recommends that children have a consistent experience of drafting, editing and redrafting a piece of writing. While the merit of this is obvious to adults – children find it laborious and boring. The topics on which children write should arise from the reality of their lives or imagined experiences and should reflect their concerns and interests. Topics might include:-

- Personal concerns
- Everyday experiences
- Life at home and in school
- Stories
- Festivals
- Hobbies
- Book reviews
- General knowledge
- Current affairs
- News

Their writing is valued in a number of ways:-

- Having it read aloud
- Seeing it displayed in the classroom library
- Taking home and reading it to parents

Handwriting Skills

The early style of handwriting is based on the print style of their reading material. A cursive script is introduced in second class which facilitates speed, fluency and legibility. A fountain pen in introduced in fifth class. Folens system is used in the school.

Spellings

In order to become an independent writer the child needs to attain, progressively, mastery of conventional spelling. To this end, Folens Revised Spelling and Tables Book is used throughout the school and dictionaries are used in the Senior Room. Common spelling rules are learned as well. Children's spellings are tested on a daily/weekly basis.

Assessment and Record Keeping

A range of assessment tools are being used in the school. These include teacher observation, teacher designed tasks/tests and standardised tests (including Micra-T each June).

This ensures a common reference against which children's progress, ability and needs are measured.

Homework

Children in all classes are given English spellings and reading for homework each night. Poetry and written work are also included on a regular basis.

Resources

- Magic Emerald Scheme
- Magic Emerald Supplementary Materials
- Library Books
- Dictionaries
- Stile activities
- Selection of relevant CD Roms

Time Table

Junior/Senior Infants – 3 hours per week

First – Sixth Class – 4 hours per week