



Scoil Naisiúnta Rónáin Naofa Cluain Lua

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The Primary Language Curriculum for English

Introduction

This plan was formulated by the staff at St. Ronans N.S. during 2022/2023.

Rationale:

The curriculum called the P.L.C. determines what we teach and how we teach. As there will be new initiatives and programmes recommended to us by diverse advocates it is imperative to be always cognizant of the P.L.C. to ensure we deliver a complete and balanced literacy curriculum.

Vision:

We intend to ensure that all of our pupils read a level of English where they can have clarity of thought. We intend to engender a positive attitude in our pupils to speaking, listening to, reading and writing English.

Aims:

Our overall aims are to enable children to:

- Clarify their own feelings
- Appreciate the value of speaking, listening, reading and writing.
- Understand the conventions of oral language and be able to engage appropriately in various listener speaker relationships.
- Listen actively in different situations for different purposes.
- Develop competence and confidence in speaking, reading and writing.
- Have a definite sense of the need to communicate clearly to ensure that your audience get the communications.
- Be able to read independently.
- Be able to write independently.
- Enjoy language activity that enhances emotional, imaginative and aesthetic development through oral, reading, writing, listening and dramatic experiences.
- Understand the conventions of written language and be able to engage appropriately in various reader/writer relationships.

Primary Language Curriculum Planning Strands:

The strands for all classes are: -

- Oral Language
- Reading
- Writing

Elements:

The elements of essential language learning are: -

- Communicating – Developing communicative relationships through language.
- Understanding - understanding the content and structure of language.
- Exploring and using – exploring and using language.

Communicating, understanding, exploring and using language are the elements of all languages. The elements are naturally interconnected. The curriculum expounds further on these elements on pages 16 and 17. The curriculum then guides us to develop competence in all the elements in the Learning Outcomes section.

Learning Outcomes:

Learning Outcomes describe the competencies in the different strands of oral language, reading and writing that children should achieve. Page 19 of the P.L.C. gives an overview of the learning outcomes that facilitates the teacher cross referencing the elements and the strands.

Section 5 (i.e. The Learning Outcomes Section), facilitates the teachers looking at a strand for example; reading and checking what the pupils in their class should be learning. The learning outcomes should be read, considered and used in concert with the teachers' experience and expertise to decide "what children learn, the sequence in which they learn, the pace at which they learn and the activities and experiences through which they learn." Circular 45/2019.

Blue links can be found throughout the learning outcomes pages. These blue links alert the reader to the obvious links between learning a first language and a second language, in our case Irish.

The teacher may decide to alert the children to the connections between the languages or simply to note the link themselves.

Learning Outcomes or Section 5 of the P.L.C. supports the teacher to "select what to teach and the best order in which to teach it." (P.L.C. 5)

The Primary Language Curriculum in Practice:

Chapter 6 of the P.L.C. outlines the macro thinking that drives the learning supported by the P.L.C. All our teachers have read and are aware of this chapter and the ideas it contains as knowledge of the ideas that language teaching and learning are founded on is essential if we are to support the "greater decision making at school and classroom levels" (Circular 26/2019) required to implement the P.L.C.

The importance of play in language acquisition is referenced on page 216. We are aware of the importance of play for language acquisition and ensure that we provide for "play that is

completely directed by the children; playful activities that are planned and led by the teacher; and times when the teacher and the children share play activity.” (P.L.C. 6)

We are aware of cross-curricular literacy development and will use other subject areas to provide for “meaningful and critical application of language and literacy skills.” (P.L.C. 6)

We are also very conscious of developing critical literacy encouraging our pupils to identify, analyse and possibly challenge perspectives offered in texts and in digital content. We have a Digital Learning Plan. The skills needed to be digitally literate start with literacy itself and our Digital Learning Plan is connected to the P.L.C. We are conscious that, “reading in the digital medium builds on reading skills acquired in a non-digital environment.” (students, computers and learning. O.E.C.D. 2015)

The P.L.C. Toolkit and Support Materials:

The P.L.C. toolkit can be found using the following link:

www.curriculumonline.ie/primarycurriculumareas/primarylanguages/primarylanguagetoolkit.

Having read chapter 6 and having studied how the P.L.C. is structured the P.L.C. toolkit is a great source of practical guidance and examples of the curriculum in action.

Examples of Children’s Language Learning:

This is a good source of demonstrations of the P.L.C. in action. Observations of these print, audio and video examples reveal how teachers “make decisions about what they teach, the type of activities, experiences and pedagogies they use and the information they gather on how well children are doing in their language learning.” (P.L.C. 7.1) We regularly revisit the examples as the number of examples is increased.

Progression Continua:

The progression milestones “describe in broad terms children’s language learning and development.” (P.L.C. 6.2 version 1). The progression steps “describe what children’s learning and development look like,” (P.L.C. 6.2 version 1).

These are reference guides that can be accessed to clarify how children acquire language. Teachers can read and consider the progression continua to support planning cognizant that “it is not expected that class teachers would assess the progress of individual children using progression milestones.” (P.L.C. 7.2)

Support Material for Teachers:

These support materials are practical examples of how to deliver a lesson. We recommend that all teachers read and consider these support materials as they demonstrate the P.L.C. in action. We particularly recommend that newly qualified teachers spend considerable time considering these materials to see language teaching in action. As the “toolkit will continue to be populated over time.” (P.L.C. 7.3), the support material should be regularly reviewed.

Teachers Individual Planning:

Teachers use the Whole School English Overview (See Appendix 1) to create their long term and short term plans.

St. Ronan's N.S. respects the professionalism of its teachers to write these plans in a format that meets their planning requirements. We are conscious that, "the process of planning varies from teacher to teacher," and that "teachers should use a template or planning rubric that best suits their needs." (Circular 45/2019) Insisting that all teachers in a school use only one template for all their respective planning regardless of experience, expertise or training indicates a lack of confidence in all teachers' professional judgements and over-simplifies the many instructional decisions an effective teacher makes throughout every lesson. In our efforts as a school to keep our teachers effective we are conscious that "tendencies in some countries for a strong, top-down specification of the way things are to be done and this trend, coupled with much greater demands for paperwork returns, tend to foster feelings among teachers of being more functionaries than professionals." (D.E.S. International Section, O.E.C.D. Attracting Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers).

Special Education Teachers write their short-term plans on a weekly basis. We have agreed the common features to be included in planning. They are:

- IEP Targets / New learning (content objectives, learning outcomes or content)
- Learning experiences (methodologies, skills used)
- Assessment (monitoring or demonstration of learning). Preparation for teaching and learning (2021).

We are conscious that; "It may be more practical to record the focus of new learning in your own words." Preparation for teaching and learning p17.

If a teacher chooses to create their own system of planning and it is effective their professional judgement should be respected. The National Educational Psychology Service quote Morrow and Gambrell from their work on Best Practices in Literacy Instruction; "No matter how well a particular practice is shown to be effective by research, optimal literacy teaching and learning can only be achieved when skilful, knowledgeable and dedicated teachers are given the freedom and latitude to use their professional judgement to make instructional decisions that enable students to achieve their full literacy potential." (A Balanced Approach to Literacy Development in Early Years, N.E.P.S.)

Assessment:

Assessment is provided for in our Assessment Policy and in our Special Education Policy.

Conclusion:

The P.L.C. is both a live document and a reference book. Teachers refer to it to assess the merit of programmes or initiatives and to direct their own planning. The support materials on line will be added to by the N.C.C.A. making the P.L.C. a live document. We believe that the P.L.C. used on a whole school basis as we have provided for in this policy "supports teachers as skilled professionals with the autonomy to make key decisions about teaching and learning," (Circular 45/2019) in St. Ronan's N.S.

Through acknowledging the experience, expertise and professionalism of teachers in facilitating them using their own discretion in preparing and planning lessons we maintain the collaborative culture between teachers that is necessary for a school to be effective. We also promote the collaborative culture between schools and the Inspectorate, PDST, NCCA,

NCSE, PDST, TUSLA, parents and the BOM that is necessary for schools to be effective. We are conscious that “one of the biggest challenges to promoting collaborative culture is a schools fear of failure as opposed to its willingness to take risks.” Harold Hislop (Reflections from Inspections 2019). This policy is designed to make our teachers comfortable handling the curriculum with no “fear of failure”, but rather a can do attitude assessing where the curriculum can guide and complement their craft.

This policy should be read with our Primary Language Curriculum for Gaeilge document. The P.L.C. covers all language acquisition. While we have chosen to highlight certain aspects of language acquisitions in each plan what is true for learning a primary language is either true or relevant to learning another. Both policies need to be read to gain a full understanding of how we implement the P.L.C.

Implementation

This plan will be fully implemented by June 2024.

Ratification & Communication

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management on 15th May and communicated to parents thereafter.

Review Timetable

This plan will be reviewed in three years time and amended as necessary by means of a whole school collaborative process.

Signed: Fr. Joseph Caulfield
Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 15th May 2023