

## Scoil Ursula N.S.

- **Title: Drama Policy**

- **Introductory Statement and Rationale**

- a. **Introductory Statement**

*The staff of Scoil Ursula met on the 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2010 to formulate this policy. It was adapted to the current format in accordance with the guidelines of the School Development and Planning Support Service and is in line with the requirements of the Revised Curriculum. It was disseminated to the wider school community through the Board of Management and ratified by the Board on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, 2011.*

- b. **Rationale**

Educational drama, as it is envisaged in the curriculum, is a creative process that allows children to explore the full potential of drama as a learning experience. It is improvisational in nature and has as its aim a quest for knowledge that involves every aspect of the child's personality: spiritual, moral, emotional, intellectual and physical. In making this drama the child can explore in a unique way conflicts, issues, consequences, attitudes, emotions, concerns and preoccupations that are important to the understanding of real life. The importance of drama in our school is exemplified by the unique contribution it can make to the development of the child. Its purposes, and the particular character of its activity, provide the means by which the child can achieve an enhanced awareness of self and can experience a unique mode of learning.

- **Vision and Aims**

- a. **Vision**

The characteristic spirit of our school is enshrined in our Mission Statement, which promotes the provision of a safe, child-centred learning environment where the holistic development of the child is catered for. Drama plays a crucial role in this provision by giving each child the opportunity to approach new knowledge through the dimension of imaginative activity and experience, to explore

aspects of life closely enough to afford effective examination but distant enough to provide safety for the child and to assimilate a changing environment through allowing him/her to transcend immediate experience by trying out other worlds.

b. **Aims**

- To enable the child to become drama literate
- To enable the child to create a permanent bridge between make-believe play and the art form of theatre
- To develop the child's ability to enter physically, emotionally and intellectually into the drama world in order to promote questing, empowering and empathetic skills
- To enable the child to develop the social skills necessary to engage openly, honestly and playfully with others
- To enable the child to co-operate and communicate with others in solving problems in the drama and through the drama
- To enable the child to understand the structures and modes of drama and how they create links between play, thought and life
- To enable the child to acquire this knowledge of drama through the active exploration of themes drawn from life (past and present), whether they have their source in other curricular areas or in general areas relevant to the child's life
- To enable the child to begin the process of translating a knowledge of drama into the active exploration of life themes from drama literature, leading to the appreciation of world drama culture
- To form the criteria with which to evaluate the drama texts, written or performed, to which he/she is continually exposed.

## • **Curriculum Planning**

### **1. Strands and Strand Units**

The content of the drama curriculum is set out in four levels: infant classes, first and second classes, third and fourth classes, and fifth and sixth classes. The strand units and content objectives for the relevant class levels are covered to ensure a continuum of learning throughout the school. Teachers choose from the range of content objectives in all strand units appropriate to all class levels. Where and when it is appropriate, a thematic approach is adopted to ensure drama is consistent throughout the school. Stimuli such as stories; poetry; pictures/photographs; objects; issues from SPHE curriculum; aspects of life in the past, present, future; needs/concerns of pupils are used to develop these themes at each class level.

The content is presented in one strand at each level:

***Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding.***

The title of the strand defines the nature of drama. The learning experience encompasses both the cognitive and the affective abilities of the child and involves an exploration that will lead to a greater understanding of himself/ herself and of the world.

### **Strand units**

Within the strand the detailed elements of content are presented in three strand units, which describe aspects of drama exploration, experience and activity. The strand units are:

- Exploring and making drama
- Reflecting on drama
- Co-operating and communicating in making drama.

## **2. Approaches and Methodologies**

The approaches and methodologies for the teaching of drama in the classroom involve a consideration of the essential components of process drama and of the means by which these can be incorporated in practical drama activities. A key principle that should inform all process drama activity in the school is the fostering of the child's spontaneous impulse for make-believe play and its preservation in a fulfilled experience of drama activity throughout the primary school.

The essential components of process drama are:

- **The strand units of the curriculum (see above)**
- **The three prerequisites for making process drama**
  1. Content
  2. The Fictional Lens
  3. A Safe Environment

### **The eight elements of drama.**

1. Belief
2. Role and Character
3. Action
4. Place
5. Time
6. Tension
7. Significance
8. Genre

The sources that form the basis for choosing drama may include some aspect of life and/or the child's experience and/or the content of some other curriculum area. An appropriate and effective fictional lens is chosen to reflect the content while drawing the pupils' attention to the reality and the fiction of each dramatic activity.

Many and varying approaches are used as a stimulus for drama depending on the age level and ability of the pupils as well as the appropriateness of the situation. Every effort is made to develop the above elements of drama and use them to enrich improvised drama and to maximise learning. Drama strategies are used selectively within the drama and are not seen as the sole basis for a drama lesson. These may include Drama games, Teacher In Role, Freeze framing, Hot-seating, Thought-tracking, Sound-tracking, Conscience Alley.

A safe environment is created to engage in drama by means of a drama contract (see Appendix 1). Children are encouraged to reflect on the drama from both within the drama and after the drama experience through writing, visual arts, speaking, listening, doing, questioning...etc. In so far as is possible, teachers differentiate their approaches to lessons so that all children are provided with the opportunity to access the drama curriculum. This is also true of multi-grade classes where teachers try to ensure that drama is an effective and enriching experience for all children by paying appropriate attention to the varying abilities and experience of the different age groups.

## **3. Children with Different Needs**

Because of its nature and the unique learning experience it has to offer, drama is particularly relevant to children with special needs. It can be of enormous benefit both in terms of affective and cognitive development, both supporting emotional and behavioural needs. The drama experience in general and the activities in the strand unit 'Co-operating and communicating in making drama' provide learning opportunities that are crucial to children with special needs. It can, in particular, contribute to the child's language development in extending vocabulary and expressive ability. The physical dimension of drama will also assist non-verbal expression. In developing the child's concepts of drama, elements such as place and time, spatial awareness and more accurate perceptions of time relationships are cultivated. Furthermore, the story base of process drama help to develop the child's ability to understand and express the sequential nature of events, and the importance of focusing on different aspects of a drama activity foster powers of concentration.

#### **4. Linkage and Integration**

The integration of drama with other curriculum areas is undertaken where appropriate and where it is felt that the drama is going to enhance the learning experience in the area with which it is integrated. This will depend on the nature of the content, the teacher's sensitivity to the spontaneous learning experience that drama can provide and the extent to which drama can overcome particular learning or conceptual difficulties that the class, a group or individual children may have. There is scope for the integration of drama with all other curricular areas.

#### **5. Assessment and Record Keeping**

Assessment in drama is concerned with monitoring the development of the children's drama skills and concepts and the success with which they learn through an engagement with the three strand units of the curriculum.

##### ***Exploring and making drama***

The teacher assesses how successfully the child has preserved the impulse for make-believe play and is able to bring belief and spontaneity to the drama. The teacher also monitors the way children adhere to the 'playing rules' that help to maintain focus in the dramatic action and enhance dramatic activity by including the element of tension.

##### ***Reflecting on drama***

Reflection takes place both during the drama activity itself and through discussion and other activities after the drama activity is over. The success of the children's reflection is monitored as to their ability to create alternative courses for the action that reflect the issues being examined and to the extent to which they recognise the relationship between story, theme and life experience. The quality of the insights they gain from the drama experience, the extent to which they can reach conclusions from it and are to hypothesise in a more general way about people and life, will also indicate the success of their learning through drama.

##### ***Co-operating and communicating in making drama***

Teachers assess the child's ability to co-operate and communicate with others, both in and out of role through discussion during and after the action takes place. The success with which the children develop fictional relationships through interaction with the other characters and their ability to enact scenes with spontaneity and without self-consciousness provides another yardstick for evaluation.

**Assessment Tools** Some or all of the following assessment tools are used:

##### ***Teacher observation***

**Teacher-designed tasks and tests**

**Work samples, portfolios and projects**

**6. Equality of Participation and Access**

In Scoil Ursula teachers promote equal access to drama among boys and girls. A balanced content reflects the interests of both boys and girls and both genders have equal opportunities to play a range of roles, not necessarily gender specific but at the same time taking into account individuals' feelings and willingness to participate.

**Private lessons**

Children who do Speech and Drama privately are given opportunities to demonstrate skills in the classroom during drama activities.

**• Organisational Planning**

**7. Timetable**

As many worthwhile activities can take place in a relatively short space of time, what is of greater importance in any drama lesson is the quality of the learning experience, rather than the quantity of time allocated to it. For this reason, planning plays a critical role in our allocation of time for dramatic activity. Given that an integrated approach will be widely used at all levels, we consider the time allocated to drama and other arts areas over the course of a fairly longer period, such as a month or a term, and identify opportunities for integration well in advance. The following, while providing minimum time allocations, only serves as a general rule of thumb.

Junior Classes: 3x 20 minutes

Senior Classes: 2x 30 minutes

**8. Resources**

A variety of resources for drama are used in Scoil Ursula. These include drama books, props for drama, suitable stimuli for drama - music, poetry, stories, visual images, etc. Multimedia technology offers high-tech support to the Drama Curriculum through a range of graphic, textual, sound and Internet resources. A list of updated resources available in the school is included as Appendix 2.

**9. Health and Safety**

When planning for drama in the school, the following health and safety issues are considered:

- the hidden dangers posed by unstable furniture or equipment if children are moving around a classroom
- the storage facilities for equipment, as well as access to and transport of that equipment
- ventilation of the classrooms
- the creation of the Drama Space in a safe manner as per Drama Contract (see Appendix 1)

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

**Planning**

Several issues are considered by the teachers to ensure effective planning. Among these are the needs of the children, the school plan, time, resources, health and safety aspects and cross-curricular links.

Teachers are encouraged to implement the different elements of drama when planning and to consider a

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thematic approach when appropriate.

### **Reporting**

Reporting is done in three ways namely, cuntas míosúil, parent-teacher meetings and school reports. In developing the whole school plan and individual preparation, the cuntas míosúil can serve as reference tool to review and develop future drama approaches.

### **11. Staff Development**

- Teachers have access to reference books, resource materials and websites dealing with drama.
- Information about in-service courses, school visits and drama productions is communicated to all teachers through the staff notice-board.
- Teachers are encouraged to attend in-service courses after which there is a sharing of the expertise acquired at these courses.
- Time is allocated at staff meetings to discuss aspects of the drama curriculum.
- Team teaching is most effective during drama productions, such as during Christmas, Easter and Seachtain na Gaeilge.

### **12. Parental Involvement**

Parents play a crucial role in the implementation of drama policy in the school. They are encouraged to discuss aspects of the work covered in school with their children and to foster positive attitudes to drama in general and to school-based activities in particular. Parents can also contribute effectively to drama in schools by attending school or classroom events, playing the role of critical listeners or supportive audience members or assisting in the supervision of movement of children.

### **13. Community Links**

Several theatre groups arrange productions and workshops for teachers and children at primary level. A variety of these Theatre groups are encouraged to perform in Scoil Ursula each year. This fosters a love of good drama and gives the children a perspective on their own endeavours in the classroom.

### **• Success Criteria**

Our success criteria will be based on the achievement of our aims. We will use staff observation and parental and pupil feedback as our benchmark for success or otherwise of the policy.

### **• Implementation**

#### **a. Roles and Responsibilities**

The school principal & staff will be responsible for the implementation and evaluation of the policy. Any feedback received will be recorded and any problems that arise will be taken into account for the purposes of evaluation and review.

#### **b. Timeframe**

This policy will be implemented fully by 2011 – 2012.

• **Review**

a. **Roles and Responsibilities**

The school principal & staff will be responsible for the review of the policy

b. **Timeframe**

The policy will be reviewed in 2014.

• **Ratification and Communication**

The Board of Management ratified this policy on the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_, (Chairperson, BOM)

Scoil Ursula N.S. does not have adequate resources to disseminate all of its policies to all the concerned members of the wider school community. The policy is communicated to the members of the BOM and is available to the wider school community through the parents' representatives on the BOM. All Scoil Ursula policies are available for inspection in the school and on [scoilursula.com](http://scoilursula.com)

## Appendix 1

### DRAMA CONTRACT

- **DRAMA SPACE:** Set up safely
- **RESPECT:** Have fun but don't make fun of others
- **TAKING PART:** Try to take part but you can opt out sometimes
- **TAKING TURNS:** Take turns and pass if you need time to think
- **LISTENING:** Listen to each other

- **LAUGHING:** Learn to laugh at yourself

## **Appendix 2**

### **Resources**

- 100+ Ideas for Drama - Anna Scher and Charles Verrall
- Another 100+ ideas for Drama - Anna Scher and Charles Verrall



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- Playing the game – Christine Poulter
- Drama Games for older age groups – Tian Dayton
- Concert Items Infants to 6<sup>th</sup> – Margaret Collins-Smith
- The Good Apple Guide to Creative Drama – Kathy Foley

### Drama Websites:

[www.dramaresource.com](http://www.dramaresource.com)

[www.childdrama.com](http://www.childdrama.com)

[www.drama.ie](http://www.drama.ie)

[www.dramanotebook.com](http://www.dramanotebook.com)

[www.seomraranga.com/drama](http://www.seomraranga.com/drama)

[www.creativedrama.com/theatre](http://www.creativedrama.com/theatre)

[www.kinderart.com/drama](http://www.kinderart.com/drama)