

Scoil Ursula N.S.

• Title

English Policy

• Introductory Statement and Rationale

a. Introductory Statement

This plan was formulated in consultation with the whole staff of Scoil Ursula and has been approved by the Board of Management and representatives of the parents of the school. In drawing up this plan the teachers carried out a review of English as it is taught in the school. Priorities for English were then decided upon and a committee of teachers from all areas within the school drew up the plan. It was disseminated to the wider school community through the Board of Management and ratified by the board on the 17th of January, 2011.

b. Rationale

It was decided to focus on this area for development:

- To benefit the teaching and learning in our school
- To conform to the principles outlined in the Revised Primary School Curriculum (1999)
- To review and update the existing plan for English

• Vision and Aims

a. Vision

In preparing this plan the ethos of the school has a central role. It focuses on the development of the pupil in a spiritual, moral and intellectual where a positive climate is used to motivate the pupil and every effort is made to enhance the child's self-image and to foster a friendly and supportive atmosphere, conducive to learning.

b. Aims

We endorse the aims of the Primary School Curriculum for English

- To promote positive attitudes and develop an appreciation of the value of language - spoken, read and written
- To create, foster and maintain the child's interest in expression and communication
- To develop the child's ability to engage appropriately in listener-speaker relationships
- To develop confidence and competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing
- To develop cognitive ability and the capacity to clarify thinking through oral language, writing and reading
- To enable the child to read and write independently
- To enhance emotional, imaginative and aesthetic development through oral, reading and writing experiences
- To gain pleasure and fulfilment from language activity

• Curriculum Planning

Strands and Strand Units

- All teachers are informed and aware of the strands and strand units pertaining to each class level.
- Teachers are in constant collegial consultation with others in the same class groupings
- New teachers and teachers who change class levels will each have a copy of the school plan and will have their own set of the curriculum documents to maintain awareness of the strands and strand units of each level.
- In a multiclass situation the class teacher will decide on the levels most appropriate to the needs of the children in the class.

Strand units	Strands <i>The abbreviation 'C' is used to refer to the English Curriculum</i>			
	Receptiveness to language	Competence and confidence in using language	Developing cognitive abilities through language	Emotional and imaginative development through language
Oral language	Infants: C 16 1 st /2 nd : C 24 3 rd /4 th : C 36 5 th /6 th : C 48	Infants: C 18 1 st /2 nd : C 27 3 rd /4 th : C 38 5 th /6 th : C 50	Infants: C 20 1 st /2 nd : C 29 3 rd /4 th : C 41 5 th /6 th : C 53	Infants: C 21 1 st /2 nd : C 31 3 rd /4 th : C 44 5 th /6 th : C 56
Reading	Infants: C 16 1 st /2 nd : C 25 3 rd /4 th : C 36 5 th /6 th : C 48	Infants: C 18 1 st /2 nd : C 27 3 rd /4 th : C 39 5 th /6 th : C 51	Infants: C 20 1 st /2 nd : C 29 3 rd /4 th : C 42 5 th /6 th : C 54	Infants: C 21 1 st /2 nd : C 31 3 rd /4 th : C 44 5 th /6 th : C 56
Writing	Infants: C 17 1 st /2 nd : C 26 3 rd /4 th : C 37 5 th /6 th : C 49	Infants: C 19 1 st /2 nd : C 28 3 rd /4 th : C 39-40 5 th /6 th : C 52	Infants: C 20 1 st /2 nd : C 30 3 rd /4 th : C 43 5 th /6 th : C 55	Infants: C 21 1 st /2 nd : C 32 3 rd /4 th : C 45 5 th /6 th : C 57

Oral Language

- Most pupils who enter the school have previously attended a playschool or a Montessori type setting. Many of the children have a rich and varied language experience.
- Other pupils whose first language is not English avail of Language Support within the school.
- Initially Junior and Senior Infants pupils who are identified as possibly having special needs would be examined through the staged approach and any resources or supports needed would be put in place (*e.g.: Learning Support, diagnostic testing, referral to speech and Language therapy...See Learning Support Policy for further details*)
- The content and methodologies re: Oral Language that are used in our school can be found in Appendix I of this document.

Discrete Oral Language Time:

- Oral language is taught at all class levels in an informal and formal way. It is at the discretion of the class teacher how much time is to be devoted specifically to oral language per week/day. The pivotal role that has been given to oral language, both for its own sake and as a crucial integrating factor in the English programme, has considerable implications for curriculum planning. Although some of the activities suggested presuppose their own time allocation, much oral language activity can be accomplished by integrating it with other activities both in the language programme and in the curriculum generally.

Oral Language Across the Curriculum

- Oral Language is used in a wide variety of ways in many different subjects across all class levels and in a learning support capacity: for example:

Subject	Objective from OL Curriculum
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|-------------------|---|
| ○ <i>Maths:</i> | Problem solving skills, discussing different possible solutions to simple problems, mathematical terminology |
| ○ <i>Drama:</i> | Miming and interpreting gesture, describing everyday event and feelings, re-creating stories and poems in drama |
| ○ <i>P.E.:</i> | Use of terminology, use of sports event to promote language development |
| ○ <i>Science:</i> | Use of terminology, problem solving skills, talk and discussion around investigations, processes and findings |
| ○ <i>Music:</i> | Listening to and responding to sounds, using descriptive language, using clapping/ instruments to develop a sense of rhythm |

Reading

In planning for the teaching of reading it is important that the school provides each child with a reading

experience appropriate to his/her needs and abilities. Although this policy recognises a role for a structured reading scheme, such a scheme is only regarded as one among a number of sources necessary to provide an adequate reading experience for the child. We will endeavour to ensure that it is complemented by a wide range of other reading material encompassing a variety of narrative, expository and representational text. Other issues that we will take into consideration in organising the approach to reading would be:

- the need to co-ordinate the planning and work of the learning support teacher and other members of staff
- the need to ensure that the particular curriculum and organisational decisions on the teaching of reading are implemented
- the need for the principal or a member of staff to act in a liaison capacity to monitor any difficulties that might arise.
 - The starting point for any language development begins with the language needs of each individual child
 - A range of strategies and approaches to reading are used in each class so that different children's learning needs are catered for in as much as is possible
 - Strategies and approaches to reading are differentiated based on each child's needs
 - Approaches to reading are implemented in the school in conjunction with oral and written activities
 - In providing for an appropriate print rich environment
 - The school: uses labels and posters for greetings, descriptions of paintings, and naming places and things in the common areas in the school environment
 - The class teacher: uses labels, posters, books, newspapers, charts flashcards, language experience charts, story charts, ICT resources, poems and examples of children's own work appropriate to each child's class level
 - A list of reading schemes and other resources can be found in Appendix II of this document
 - In a multi-class situation the reading scheme used is generally the one in use for the higher class level
 - Parallel/ supplementary reading schemes are used at the discretion of the class teacher. In the main these are graded readers chosen by the teacher for each child based on their needs. Also, Learning Support (LS) teachers sometimes use these schemes for paired reading/ tutoring sessions in different classes. *E.g.: Fuzzbuzz, Wellington Square, Sunny Street, Oxford Reading Tree, Sails, Go Books*
 - Paired reading schemes are implemented and managed by the class teacher and in some instances with the support of LS teachers
 - Novels are in use in the school, mainly in the middle and senior end and this is at the discretion of the teacher and his/ her planning
 - The home is supported by the school in its role in relation to the emergent reader by such strategies as: use of log books, letters from school on the importance of reading, reading activities as homework, checking of reading that is done at home with the help of the parents
 - The LS/ Resource/ EAL teachers supports the reading programme through extra work and lessons with selected children, through assistance in paired/ peer tutoring and also in team teaching
 - There is an annual Book Fair held in the school during the second term to encourage reading and facilitate a reading culture at home and school
 - Each class learns, recites and writes poetry at the appropriate level and it is hoped that a Scoil Ursula Anthology of Poetry will be compiled in the near future

Key Elements of Emergent Readers in Infant Classes

- The school supports the emergent reader through a variety of methodologies (See Appendix I

for more details)

- Nursery rhymes, poems, songs, big books, graded readers, language games, action songs are all used at this stage
- Word identification strategies are built up throughout the year from simply identification of individual letters and sounds to using pictorial clues in books/ stories
- The Jolly Phonics programme is going to be followed next year in Infant classes and will then continue on up into 1st and 2nd classes.
- The Dolch list of basic sight words is used as a gauge for measuring children's sight vocabulary up until 1st class. Key words from the different class readers are also used in this regard.

Key Elements of Instructional reading in the school

- Continuity and progression are ensured throughout the school by classes revising and extending the work done in the previous year at the start of each school year. The aim for the reading schemes over the next few years is that they would all follow the same scheme to ensure greater progression and continuity.
- Children are exposed to narrative, expository, diagrammatic and representational texts through the use of fictional stories, novels, news media, factual books such as encyclopaedia and also through the examination of maps, tables, figures etc.
- Word identification strategies in use throughout the school include: using the look & say approach, use of phonological/ contextual/ pictorial/ syntactic clues
- Fictional stories are also used as a springboard for experiencing other curricular areas and topics.

Key Elements of independent reading in the school

- *Infants:* Experience the reading process being modelled; Handling books and browsing through them; Building up sight vocabulary from personal experience; Learning to isolate the beginning/ ending sound of a word or syllable; Using knowledge of word order, context & pictures to help identify words
 - *Middle:* Choosing their own books from a range of children's books and engage in personal and silent reading; Continue to build up sight vocabulary and use of different word ID strategies; Exploring new interests and experiences through the reading of different materials
 - *Senior:* Provision of a broad range of texts to enable more personalised reading choices; Use of paired/ shared and Buddy reading programmes
 - The print rich environment is enhanced at this stage through more age appropriate print in use and the reading and use of different forms of text in the environment
 - Paired, buddy and shared reading programmes operate in a number of classes throughout the school at different times each year.
 - Novels are generally used from third class onward. Each child is responsible for their own book and the novel is usually read at the same pace using different formats e.g.: reading aloud/ in pairs/ at home etc.

In planning the strand of reading of the English policy Scoil Ursula endeavours to implement the content and use the methodologies listed in Appendix I.

Writing

At all class levels the pupils are encouraged in their writing using different strategies at the appropriate class and individual pupil levels e.g.: teacher acting as scribe, seeing personal writing displayed; reading personal writing aloud and hearing it being read; working with other children; exploring

different genres and having personal writing valued

At different levels the pupils are encouraged to write and present their writing to different audiences, to choose their own topics for their writing and in some cases they compile class/ school anthologies and also make use of co-operative stories and peer-editing

Oral language is paramount to the writing experience whether those interactions regarding their writing are with the teacher or with other pupils. This usually happens before during and after the writing takes place. Topics are generally decided on for writing in different ways at the different levels throughout the school from the simplified form of teacher choice to interaction between teacher and pupil to decide the topic and also from pupils' personal experiences and cross curricular activities

The conventions of grammar/ punctuation are experienced, developed and progressed through the school as they arise in the class readers and other texts and in conjunction with the content of the Revised Primary Curriculum. Poetry is used to expose children to a different form of writing and through class work and personal reading they will be enabled to explore and use a variety of forms of poetry also.

Children are encouraged to clarify their thoughts through writing in many ways, including:

- Draw a picture and write about it
- Write in a variety of genres
- Write a version of a story told by the teacher
- Read a story and write it in their own words
- Read a narrative or expository piece and summarise it
- Argue the case in writing for a particular point of view

For a full list of the content and methodology in use please see Appendix I

Key Elements in the early writing stage in school

The school's approach to early writing involves the use of the following strategies:

- Experiencing a print-rich environment and early reading
- Letters are introduced in the order as followed in the Jolly Phonics programme
- Drawing patterns as a precursor to letter formation
- Use of writing as captions for pictures
- Teacher acting as scribe
- Learning to write his/ her name
- In many instances writing is done in sheets which are stored in folders specific to each child
- A variety of materials and media are used for early writing- crayons, chalk, chubby stumps, paint, pencils and marla.

Children are introduced to the concept of writing in the early stages through the experience of the print-rich environment and early reading also. The use of the above strategies also forms the introduction to the writing concept.

Key Elements in the development of handwriting skills in the school

- The joined script handwriting style is the one in use in Scoil Ursula
- Various resources are used throughout the school and these are listed in Appendix II
- The three fingered pencil grip is the recommended grip in the school
- Large chubby pencils are recommended in Infant classes
- The time allocated to handwriting practice is set by each individual teacher according to the needs of the class and the child
- Initially correction of handwriting is done by the teacher modelling the correct formation of letters which evolves through the classes into self correction and editing both by the writer and peers. Teacher correction is also necessary at this stage.

The Development of Spelling Skills

- Formal spelling starts in 1st class in our school. Prior to that spelling is based on phonics work, sounding out words, blending sounds and rhyming words
- Resources, content and methodologies in use are varied and are listed in Appendix I

Assessment and Record Keeping

A variety of assessment methods are used throughout the school reflecting the stages and needs of the school and individual children including:

- Teacher observation
- Teacher designed tasks/ tests
- Checklists/ portfolios
- Standard and diagnostic testing

Usually diagnostic testing would be used in a Learning Support environment, while standardised testing is carried out from Senior Infants onwards. The MIST assessment is used in Senior Infants with MICRA-T in use in all classes further on from that. The standardised tests are carried out in the third term every year.

The assessment results are used to influence and guide teaching and learning and are also communicated to parents each year. The records are generally stored safely in hardcopy for one year and in digital format thereafter. These electronic records are usually kept in two secure sources. Records will be kept by the school until the pupils in question reach 18 years of age. The teachers and principal always have access to these files. If a third party requests such information the principal in conjunction with the school partners would have the final say on the matter.

Children with Different Needs

Children with special needs, learning difficulties or speech and language difficulties encounter a myriad of difficulties in participating in class work. Teachers and the special education team work together to combat these difficulties through different methods including:

- Team Teaching
- Referral to Learning Support or Resource teachers
- Differentiation of work given and expectations
- Use of different learning methods/ tools/ resources

The class teacher has the ultimate responsibility for the child's learning needs. The learning support team always aim to work collaboratively so that the child is enabled to reach their full potential. The special needs assistant is there to support the teachers and the child in the teaching and learning process specific to the child's needs.

In compiling IPLPs and IEPs the class teacher, learning support teacher and parents are all involved in setting specific targets to suit their needs which are reviewed at different times during the year.

Children of exceptional abilities are often identified through the standard testing that takes place in the class. They are dealt with in class through extension and enrichment of the specific areas in which they are exceptionally able.

For additional details in this area please refer to the SEN Policy.

• Organisational Planning

Timetable

The timetabling of English in Scoil Ursula follows the guidelines of Revised Curriculum regarding the

amount of time spent each week for the teaching and learning of English. It is up to individual teachers to allocate the appropriate time for the teaching of English each week.

Homework

Scoil Ursula follows a Homework policy in which guidelines are given to teachers regarding the amount of time children should be spending on homework each night and it is up to the discretion of the teacher to set appropriate homework for English.
Please refer to Homework policy for additional details.

Library

Each class has a small class library which is stocked and resourced each year. Pupils are encouraged to use this library as well as the County Library to foster a love of reading and to supplement class and parallel readers in use in the classroom.

Resources and ICT

Our classrooms are all equipped with interactive whiteboards which are used to present, enhance and extend lessons being taught. All classes have computers in situ in the classroom where children can experience and develop their ICT skills in relation to English through specific activities, software and internet games.

Individual Teachers' Planning and Reporting

Teachers plan for English using long term plans and short term fortnightly plans. When planning teachers may incorporate lessons based around a theme or topic which is often integrated with other subject areas. The Cuntais Miosúila are in use in the school and teachers give these to the principal at the end of each month where they are stored securely.

Staff Development

The staff endeavour, as in all subject and curricular areas, to further their knowledge and skills through professional development courses as a whole staff and on an individual basis as the need arises.

Parental Involvement

As partners, parents play a key role in the development of literacy with their children. Through homework and other activities done in conjunction with the teachers parents extend and assist the work of the school. Teachers keep parents informed of their children's progress and any areas of concern and vice versa.

• Success Criteria

Our success criteria will be based on the achievement of our objectives. We will use teacher observation and assessment as our benchmark for success or otherwise of the policy.

• Roles and Responsibilities

The school principal in conjunction with the 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. The school principal will be responsible for initiating the review of the policy.

• **Timeframe for Implementation & Review**

This revised policy will implemented in September 2011 and will be reviewed in 2013.

• **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 N.S. policies are available for inspection in the school and at scoilursula.com