

# St. Francis' Primary School

## 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.**

## **INTRODUCTION:**

At St. Francis' Primary School, 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 Primary Language Framework.

At St. Francis' Primary School, we intend that, by the end of Key Stage 2, a child 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:

**In the Foundation Stage** children should be given opportunities to:

- talk and listen and represent ideas in their activities;
- use communication, language and literacy in every part of the curriculum;
- become immersed in an environment rich in print and possibilities for communication.

**At Key Stage One (Years 3 and 4)**, children should learn to speak confidently and listen to what others have to say. They should begin to read and write independently and with enthusiasm. They should use language to explore their own experiences and imaginary worlds.

**At Key Stage Two (Years 5-7)**, children 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:**

We aim to provide for all children so that they reach their full potential in Literacy 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. The SEN Co-ordinator will liaise with the English Co-ordinator and class teachers to ensure that the individual needs of pupils with special needs are met and that appropriate targets are set and are regularly reviewed.

Any Individual Education Plans (IEPs) will be linked, where appropriate, to the suitable Year and Term objectives from the Northern Ireland Curriculum. Teachers will be mindful of the literacy needs of the children and differentiate questions and activities to allow all children access. Please also refer to the SEN Policy.

### **How and when pupils are identified**

Pupils will be assessed using a variety of assessment tools which may include:

These include:

- Criterion-referenced tests
- Standardised tests
- Baseline Assessment on entry to P1
- Screening and diagnostic tests
- Statutory end of Key Stage Assessment
- Classroom observation
- Information from other professionals e.g. psychologists, speech therapists etc.
- Parental concerns.

**In-class strategies used to ensure all pupils are being challenged and able to achieve targets set for them.**

Teachers will be mindful of the literacy needs of the children and differentiate questions and activities to allow all children access. These will include:

- Differentiated group work
- using texts that children can read and understand□
- using visual and written materials in different formats□
- using ICT, other technological aids and taped materials□
- using alternative communication such as signs and symbols□
- Extension activities / research projects

### **The role of the Classroom Assistant**

Where resources permit, it will be the school's policy for Classroom Assistants to provide extra support for the SEN Literacy group or individual child.

### **Involvement of parents**

Parents will be informed through curriculum meetings, parent teacher meetings and written reports of the expectations and achievements of their child. They will be involved in paired reading and drawing up and support of IEP's as required. Parents will be asked to support homework activities and reading for leisure and enjoyment.

### **Range and variety of resources used, including uses made of technology.**

(See the school's Literacy Scheme of Work)

- Oxford Reading Tree, Big cat and PM plus books will be used as the core reading schemes - they are banded, stored centrally and accessed by the teacher when changing their books. New Way, Young, Wellington Square and Shortie reading schemes are used as additional readers.
- Big Books are available for all year groups in both key stages including Early Years.
- Oxford Reading Tree, Ginn 360 PM starters and PM plus fiction and Non-fiction are some of the books used for Guided Reading in KS1. Oxford Reading Tree and Big Cat Fiction and Non-fiction, are used for Guided Reading in KS2.
- A variety of class novels are used in KS2 to encourage reading for enjoyment.
- Fiction and non-fiction texts are available in the school library and class libraries for all children and children will borrow from these libraries on a weekly basis. Children are also encouraged to make use of the public library.
- The use of ICT will be built into the delivery of the Literacy programme wherever possible. Language, activities for can be demonstrated through use of the Interactive Whiteboard (IWB). A variety of literacy based programmes / activities are used. (See appendix 1)

## **Intervention programmes - See Special Needs Policy**

### **Which pupils are targeted**

Pupils are targeted using a variety of standardised test e.g. MIST, NFER and INCAS. Pupils may also be targeted if concerns are raised by a parent or teacher.

### **When pupils are identified for intervention**

The special needs co-ordinator works with small groups of children in withdrawal groups. Teachers and SENCO work together to draw up IEP's where necessary. (See special needs policy and SENDO) Teachers will target different groups within the class at different times of the year. Monitoring and evaluation will be ongoing throughout the process.

### **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.



### 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.

## **Subject organisation**

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

- There is one class of P1. - P7.

The following range of organisational strategies will be employed:

- whole class teaching
- small group teaching (size, flexibility and composition of the groups will be given consideration - e.g. peer, ability, mixed ability, friendship groups, etc.)
- paired work - similar ability, less experienced pupil working with more experienced pupil
- individual - one-to-one tuition by teacher or classroom assistant
- independent work
- Work is differentiated by ability grouping however children may find themselves in mixed ability groups according to the lesson being taught.
- Classroom Assistants may work with groups or individual children as directed by the teacher.

## **Planning**

Planning for literacy consists of long, medium and short term planning in the areas of Reading, Writing and Talking and listening. - See planning policy

- Class teachers review and evaluation of work on a daily basis.
- Literacy co-ordinator reviews long term plans to ensure continuity and progression.
- Staff come together to review book scoops and to set whole school targets based on the findings.

## Talking and Listening

### Approaches to talking and listening

The strands of talking, listening, group discussion and interaction and drama pervade the whole curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to listen attentively and to speak clearly, confidently, fluently and appropriately for a variety of different audiences and purposes.

We recognise that talking and listening are fundamental skills upon which the educational development of our children depends. Our overall aim is for children to become efficient language users. This will be achieved by devoting time, energy and resources to the development of oral communication. Through purposeful interaction with teachers, children will be provided with experiences that develop their skills in talking and listening. Talking and listening will be taught partly via Literacy lessons and partly through other curricular areas. It will also be school policy that all teachers should be aware of and capitalise on opportunities, which will arise every day, for children to develop their talking and listening skills across the curriculum.

In the Foundation Stage pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop:

- Attention and Listening skills
- Phonological awareness
- Social use of language
- Language and thinking
- An extended vocabulary

In Key Stage One pupils will be provided with opportunities to:

- listen and respond appropriately and effectively to a range of stimuli, including multimedia.
- speak clearly with clear pronunciation and intonation, appropriate to the needs of their listeners.
- learn to use language in imaginative ways.
- structure their talk, using it to develop and clarify their thinking.

In Key Stage Two pupils will be provided with opportunities to:

- develop the ability to listen and respond in a range of contexts, thinking about what has been said and the language used.
- speak coherently and confidently for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- develop their ability to communicate and capture the interest of listeners.

In St. Francis' we aim to establish an environment where children feel relaxed, accepted and affirmed therefore they feel comfortable to express opinions and talk openly. All children are given an opportunity to speak and we affirm to the children that all contributions are valued

Teaching Approaches to promote T & L

- Talk is planned in many areas of the curriculum
- Experiences and activities are planned to promote a wide range of types of talk e.g. class discussion, role-play etc
- T & L is promoted as a social, communicative and a cognitive process
- We use pairs, small and larger groups, varying the composition and roles within groups.
- The teacher consistently models oral language.
- Resources and displays are used for T & L.
- Talking is promoted during shared and guided reading lessons.
- Teachers are constantly working on their questioning technique to encourage deeper thinking and improved talking.
- Drama strategies are used to encourage children to engage in a range of creative and imaginative role-plays.

## **Reading**

### **Approaches to reading**

#### **A Classroom Environment which promotes reading**

We aim to provide a classroom environment which promotes a love of books and reading where children feel inspired to read. Each classroom is a language rich environment with lots of environmental print, labels, posters, information, children's work etc. Books are given their rightful place throughout the school. Each room has a class library where books are displayed in a variety of ways. Frequently a display of topic books are easily accessible to the children. We have a library area for which we ensure there is a wide variety of suitable texts including fiction, nonfiction, comics, magazines, newspapers, leaflets etc.

#### **Teaching Approaches to promote reading**

- modelled, shared, guided, silent, paired and independent reading takes place in each class. We ensure children are exposed to a wide range of reading material across the genres, including print and digital media.
- In P.1, children will move from non-ability groups to emergent groups towards guided reading groups.
- Books are banded in Foundation and Key Stage One to provide a breadth of reading.
- Children are read to frequently in all classes.
- Phonics are taught through the Linguistic Phonics scheme throughout the school.
- We encourage independent reading from P3 and above.
- In P4-P7, we have Silent Reading times.
- A range of novels are read from P4 and above
- Reading boxes are available for children in Foundation and Key Stage One levelled according to ability - to encourage reading during 'spare time'
- We use classroom assistants to support reading.

### **Reading for information**

Reading for the purposes of study requires specific skills. It is linked to the skill of managing information (Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities) whereby pupils access, select, record and communicate information.

We encourage children in Key Stage Two to:

- Extract information from books using the contents page or index
  - Use a dictionary and a thesaurus
  - Use a search engine on the internet
  - Use reference material eg encyclopaedias, atlases etc
  - Scan a text to search for specific information
  - Make notes, selecting what is relevant and appropriate
  - Distinguish between fact and opinion
- 
- Use CD Roms
- 
- Parents are informed about reading lessons during our curriculum meetings. In KS1 a reading record is sent home with each child for a parents comment and in KS2 the children keep an independent reading record.
  - Book Fairs are held and parents are given the opportunity to attend these with their children .

## **Writing**

### **Approaches to writing**

Children write to express their emotions, to convey their thoughts and opinions and to present evidence of research. By developing these skills, we can equip our children to use writing across a range of curricular activities in which they are involved.

We aim to develop within our children an ability to write effectively in various genres according to purpose and audience. They will be encouraged to develop as independent writers, learning over time to use conventional spelling, punctuation, grammatical organisation and handwriting.

### **A Classroom Environment which promotes writing**

- We strive to provide an environment where children are inspired to write.
- We have a writing area in the Foundation Stage and writing is encouraged during play not only in the writing area but in the role play area.
- Word banks and or dictionaries and thesauruses are available for the children in all keystages.
- Classroom displays also contain language which children may require in their writing.
- Each classroom is a 'writing rich' environment where teacher's writing is displayed alongside children's writing.
- Books are compiled of children's writing and these are displayed and used in library areas.
- Anthologies of poems and stories are put together.

### **Teaching Approaches to promote writing**

- Modelled, shared, guided and independent writing sessions take place across all age groups and all genres of writing
- Children write for themselves, for peers, for a parent, for displays, etc
- Children enter writing competitions
- From P4, children are encouraged to redraft their writing
- Children are encouraged to have a go and try and spell words for themselves
- Children are taught to frequently read back over their writing to make sure it makes sense
- Feedback is consistently given to children on their writing - either verbal or written.

Pupils in all year groups will be encouraged 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, eg. reading as a writer and writing as a reader.

Resources used to support the teaching of writing

- writing frames
- IWB
- Literacy schemes 'Focus on Literacy, On target English'
- Poetry anthologies
- involvement in the Writers in Schools project.

### **Handwriting**

'From the earliest mark-making, children are showing an understanding that messages can be recorded. As they realise that print carries a constant message, they recognise the need for more conventional forms of handwriting which other people can read.'

### **Handwriting in the Foundation Stage**

Children progress through a variety of developmental stages before they have the necessary hand eye co-ordination, fine motor skills and visual discrimination to produce a conventional handwriting style.

In St. Francis', we aim to promote handwriting which develops from an early print to a joined style to an individual writing style which is neat and legible. Handwriting should demonstrate knowledge of lower and upper case letter formation, size and spacing.

### **A Classroom Environment which promotes writing**

- Throughout the classroom, we aim to have a variety of handwriting displayed.
- Children need to see examples of good handwriting so teachers and classroom assistants should model suitable handwriting at every opportunity.
- Children need to experience different fonts so that they recognise letters in different styles, so when computer generated signs, posters and labels are being produced a variety of fonts should be used.



### **Teaching Approaches to promote handwriting**

- In P.1 children are given plenty of opportunities to develop gross and fine motor skills, hand eye co-ordination and visual discrimination through practical activities
- A good pencil grip is modelled and taught.
- Letter formation is taught in a fun way.
- Children are encouraged to form all letters correctly.
- Neat handwriting is encouraged at every opportunity with focus on formation, size and spacing.
- Children begin to join letters in P.5
- An individual handwriting style is encouraged by term 3 in P.7

### **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.

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 and is detailed in policies and planning in the other areas of study. Each area of the curriculum offers different opportunities and challenges for extending children's experiences. Many of the requirements of the Literacy and Language curriculum can be approached through other areas of the curriculum.

Teachers have an awareness of different styles of learning and the need to encourage pupils to use their visual, auditory and kinaesthetic channels for better learning. Teachers use of a range of active learning strategies in the classroom, including drama strategies and 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.

We aim to make maximum use of I.C.T. across the curriculum to promote the pupils' literacy skills, as well as developing competence in I.C.T. skills. This involves the use of computers, the Interactive White Board and also the possibilities offered by the wide range of audio-visual materials, graphics, radio and television broadcasts available.

Pupils will have ample opportunities to gain confidence in the use of I.C.T., for example in using word processors for drafting, using spreadsheets and databases, and using CD-ROM and the Internet to research and communicate.

The range of I.C.T. resources available include:

- Desktops and Laptops with access to C2K network
- Interactive White Boards
- CD-ROMs
- Internet access
- C.D. players with variety of spoken texts
- T.V., Video, D.V.D. player with variety of material
- Recordable sentence maker whiteboards, microphones
- Podcasts
- Animation

ICT will be used to enhance literacy skills, not just within the programme of study for Literacy and Language, but as an integral feature of all programmes of study.

Staff will continue to access continuing professional development and implement new strategies in their practise.

A variety of literacy based programmes / activities are used. (See appendix 1)

The use of Technology in Literacy is planned based on the 5 E's and monitored by the literacy and ICT Co-ordinators.

## **Monitoring, Evaluating, Assessment and target-setting**

The Literacy Co-ordinator has responsibility for overseeing planning, and will monitor progress through termly planning, which will identify specific learning outcomes.

- Whole school planning makes effective use of the potential contribution of other curricular areas and ensures continuity and progression between year groups, classes and Key Stages.
- Regular communication thus takes place between staff at all levels of planning.
- Planning is done half termly, and literacy planning is an area of review on the SDP.
- Individual records of progress are kept by each class teacher and forwarded to the subsequent teacher.
- Attainment in standardised tests and end of Key Stage Assessments are recorded and filed in the office and stored on SIMS and sgeneral.
- Progress is reported to parents verbally and in written form twice annually.
- Children are encouraged to assess and evaluate their own performance throughout the school.
- Their work will be marked positively and constructively in relation to their own previous performance (see Marking Policy for further details).
- Staff meetings may include discussions of general progress, approaches to planning and analysis of samples of children's work.
- The children's progress and achievement is measured using a range of diagnostic, formative and summative assessment procedures, which both monitor progress and inform future planning, plans may be modified according to pupil progress.

### **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
- 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.

## **Role of the Parents**

We believe that parents have a fundamental role to play in helping their children learn and progress within our school.

We are committed to ensuring that parents are informed about topics we cover, when homework is set and how to help their child. Curriculum meetings for parents and curriculum outlines will be provided for parents throughout the year to support progress.

Parents will be actively encouraged to read with their children, discuss their books with them and help them choose books for reading at home.

Parents will receive a detailed annual report on their child's progress in English

## **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.

Community links are subject to change on a yearly basis but may include:

Local cultural events.

Connecting to local businesses, the town library, local hospital workers, the PSNI, Fire Service, the local book shop, etc.

Having useful and active links with the local post-primary school.

## **CONCLUSION:**

This policy should be in line with other school policies, including:

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

**REVIEW OF POLICY:**

A commitment should be made to the review and monitoring of the policy document on an annual basis.