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Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna
na Gaillimhe agus Ros Comáin
Galway and Roscommon
Education and Training Board



Cuan na Gaillimhe CNS

Whole School English Plan

Primary Language Curriculum

Introductory Statement

At Cuan na Gaillimhe CNS, our vision for the Primary Language Curriculum is to provide a rich and engaging learning environment where every child develops a strong foundation in English, fostering a love for language, literacy, and communication. We aim to create a supportive and inclusive atmosphere where all students feel confident expressing themselves, think critically, and appreciate the diversity of language and culture.

In our school, English literacy is deeply intertwined with the development of imagination, creativity, and a strong connection to the natural world. From oral storytelling and sound awareness in the early years to more structured writing and grammar in the later classes, the aim is to foster a lifelong love of language that is both creative and academic. Through a combination of storytelling, creative play, reading, writing, and hands-on activities, children are gradually guided to mastery over language in a way that respects their developmental stages.

Rationale

The rationale behind our Primary Language Curriculum is grounded in the belief that language is much more than a set of rules and structures; it is a vital tool for learning, social interaction, and personal expression. By providing a holistic approach to language development, we seek to enable students to engage with English in a way that is meaningful, enjoyable, and purposeful.

Our Vision

We envision a school where every child becomes a confident, creative, and effective communicator in English. Through a balanced approach to speaking, listening, reading, and writing, we strive to equip our students with the skills they need to understand and engage with the world around them. Our language curriculum promotes lifelong learning and curiosity, ensuring that our children develop both the academic and social language skills needed to succeed in a global society.

Aims:

We aim to help all children articulate their thoughts clearly and confidently, listen actively, and engage meaningfully with others in both informal and formal contexts.

We are committed to making English an exciting and inspiring subject. Through diverse, creative, and interactive learning experiences, we aim to instill a lifelong love of reading, writing, and storytelling.

Our curriculum aims to strengthen children's understanding of grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and sentence structures, ensuring they can read, write, and speak with fluency and accuracy.

We seek to inspire our students to think critically about language, using it as a tool for problem-solving, creative expression, and personal reflection.

Through our curriculum, we want our children to appreciate and respect the diversity of language and cultures around them, understanding that language is not just a tool for communication, but also a bridge to understanding different perspectives and ideas.

Language is key to forming connections with others. We aim to help our students use English to express their thoughts, ideas, and emotions while respecting and listening to others in all types of social interactions.

Objectives:

Speaking and Listening:

- Develop children's ability to speak confidently and express themselves clearly.
- Encourage listening and responding with thoughtfulness, engaging in meaningful discussions, debates, and conversations.

Reading:

- Provide a variety of texts that stimulate imagination, support comprehension, and challenge children's understanding.
- Foster independent reading skills through guided reading sessions, as well as promoting enjoyment through storytelling and literary exploration.

Writing:

- Ensure students can write for a range of purposes and audiences, from creative to factual writing, while developing their understanding of structure, style, and tone.
- Foster creativity in writing, allowing children to explore their unique voices and ideas through various written forms.

Grammar and Syntax:

- Equip children with a solid understanding of grammar and sentence structure to ensure clarity and accuracy in both written and spoken English.

Vocabulary and Spelling:

- Focus on expanding vocabulary, with an emphasis on using new words in context and building spelling accuracy.

Collaboration and Reflection:

- Encourage students to collaborate in pairs and groups, reflecting on their language use and offering constructive feedback to peers.

Through this plan, we aim to nurture confident, capable communicators who can successfully navigate the academic world and interact meaningfully with the broader community. Our approach ensures that every child's unique needs and talents are addressed, fostering an inclusive environment where every child's voice is heard, valued, and celebrated.

Aims & Objectives of Primary Language Curriculum

Aims

- To enable children to express themselves effectively and confidently in speaking, listening, reading, and writing.
- To foster an understanding of the structure and features of the language, including grammar, vocabulary, and syntax.
- To inspire children to appreciate language and literacy, engaging them with stories, poems, songs, and other forms of literature.
- To help children use language as a tool for personal expression and for interacting with others in social and cultural contexts.
- To encourage children to think critically and creatively about language and its uses, developing problem-solving skills and fostering imagination.
- To help children appreciate different cultures, perspectives, and ways of communicating, fostering empathy and respect for diversity.

Objectives:

Speaking and Listening:

- To enable children to speak clearly and audibly, using appropriate tones and vocabulary for different situations.
- To develop active listening skills, encouraging children to engage in discussions, ask questions, and respond appropriately.

Reading:

- To support children in reading with understanding, recognizing different texts, and developing a love for reading.
- To enhance fluency in reading by recognizing words, phrases, and sentence structures, and encouraging comprehension through discussion and analysis.

Writing:

- To enable children to write coherently and creatively for different purposes, such as storytelling, factual writing, and instructions.
- To develop an understanding of punctuation, spelling, and grammar rules in writing.

Vocabulary Development:

- To expand children's vocabulary by introducing new words and phrases in context, allowing them to use more varied and precise language.

Grammar and Syntax:

- To ensure children have a solid understanding of basic grammar and sentence structures, allowing them to build sentences correctly and clearly.

Spelling and Phonics:

- To teach children the skills of spelling and decoding words through phonics, aiding both reading and writing development.

Engagement with Literature:

- To introduce children to a variety of literature, including fiction, non-fiction, and poetry, fostering an understanding of different genres and authors.

Writing for Different Purposes and Audiences:

- To encourage children to adapt their writing for different purposes (e.g., storytelling, explaining, informing) and audiences (e.g., peers, teachers, the wider community).

Literacy Plan using Steiner Pedagogy

In Steiner education, literacy development is intertwined with the unfolding of the child's intellectual, emotional, and spiritual capacities. The themes covered in each class are rooted in the developmental needs of the children, with oral language, writing, and reading being integrated into a broader curriculum of artistic, intellectual, and moral development. Below is an overview of the themes covered in each class for literacy in Steiner education, emphasising how they evolve with each year

1st Class Foundation of Language

Themes:

- Introduction to oral language through fairy tales, folk stories, and fables.
 - Sound-symbol correspondence: Children are introduced to letters through stories and images, with each letter and sound represented by an element of the story (e.g., the letter "b" could be introduced with a story about a bear).
 - Focus on vivid storytelling and imaginative spoken language (through verse, rhythm, and chants and drama).
 - Picture writing: Children begin writing letters as pictures or symbols, and stories are illustrated.
 - Memory: Developing memory through repetitive storytelling, recalling, drama and song recitation.
 - Introduction to written language: Students start to read and write simple words and sentences.

Key Activities:

- Recitation of verses and rhymes.
- Illustrated main lesson books with pictures and words.
- Oral storytelling: Children listen to and retell stories in their own words.
- Form drawing to support fine motor skills, sense of direction and writing.

2nd Class Language and Sentence Construction

Themes:

- Continued work with letters and sounds through stories, poems, and visual representations.
- Developing written language

- Fairy tales and animal stories: These stories continue to captivate, fostering a connection to themes of good versus evil, bravery, and virtue.
- Exploration of sentence structure: Simple sentence construction using a subject, verb, and object.
- Spelling: Reinforcement of phonics and sound-letter correspondence, focus on spelling rules.

Key Activities:

- Reciting stories and poems aloud.
- Writing simple sentences related to the stories they hear.
- Drawing illustrations to accompany written work.
- Own expression and imagination communicated verbally and in simple written form.

3rd Class Practical Language Use and Grammar

Themes:

- The focus shifts towards practical life skills, such as farming, building, and domestic life. The children encounter Hebrew or Old Testament stories, which offer moral and practical life lessons.
- Grammar: Focus on grammatical concepts (nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.) is connected to the themes of the stories.
- Storytelling from the Old Testament: Simple, rich stories such as those of Adam and Eve, Noah, and the Tower of Babel.
- Writing: Creative writing and sentence structure become more complex, and students begin to develop descriptive writing skills.
- Expanded Vocabulary: Vocabulary increases through engagement with practical stories and tasks.

Key Activities:

- Creative storytelling and independent story creation.
- Write and illustrate personal stories connected to farming, building, or natural life themes.
- Introduction of simple grammar lessons through storytelling.
- Class plays and dramatic performances based on themes from the stories.

4th Class Myths and Legends; Enhancing Writing

Themes:

- Norse mythology and legends, particularly those of the Norse gods, heroes, and creatures, are introduced. These stories provide themes of courage, transformation, and the mystery of the world.
- Refining Writing: Writing takes on more structure, and students start writing longer stories with a clear narrative arc.
- Descriptive writing: Describing places, people, and emotions through the lens of the myths and legends.
- Creative expression: Story writing continues, and children begin using more complex sentence structures.

Key Activities:

- Writing extended narratives and detailed character descriptions.
- Drama and role-play based on Norse myths.
- Journaling with personal reflections and creative writing.
- Recitation and memorisation of more complex stories and poems.
- Presenting work.

5th Class Classical Myths, Geography, and Historical Writing

Themes:

- Introduction to Classical Irish and Greek myths, focusing on tales of gods, heroes, and journeys such as The Iliad and The Odyssey. These stories engage students in understanding human nature, destiny, and the world around them.
- Geography writing: Students write descriptions of different countries and regions, often weaving in literary and historical narratives.
- Poetry: Focus on poetic forms, writing original poetry, and exploring meter, rhythm, and rhyme.
- Research and report writing: A shift towards more structured writing, the students begin to research and report on topics like geography, animals, or ancient civilizations.

Key Activities:

- Writing historical reports and geographical descriptions.
- Poetry creation and exploration of different poetic forms.
- Class readings of myths and classical stories.
- Composing short plays or dramatic pieces based on Greek and Irish mythology.
- Writing genres such as narrative, recount, procedural, report, explanation and persuasive.

6th Class Historical Biographies, Research, and Structured Writing

Themes:

- Historical biographies: Children read and write about the lives of famous historical figures, such as Julius Caesar, Cleopatra, Alexander the Great, and other significant individuals from history.
- Geological writing: Writing about natural history, including the formation of the Earth, the ages of geological time, and the history of life on Earth.
- Essay writing: More emphasis on structured essay writing, including the introduction, body, and conclusion. Students learn to create arguments and present their ideas clearly.
- Research skills: Students conduct research on historical or geographical topics and present their findings in written form.

Key Activities:

- Writing essays on historical or scientific topics.
- Biographical sketches of famous figures.
- Class projects and research papers.
- Public speaking: Presentation of research or historical findings to the class.
- Use of technology for research, writing and publishing work.

In each year, literacy in Steiner education is deeply connected to artistic expression, storytelling, and moral development, with each theme encouraging the child to engage with language not just intellectually, but also emotionally. Literacy is not a skill taught in isolation but is integrated with the child's full development of the head, heart, and hands.

Curricular Planning

Oral Language

Junior & Senior Infants-Oral Language

Element	Learning Outcome	Description
Developing Communicative Relationships through Language	Engagement, Listening, and Attention	Children show interest, listen attentively, and respond appropriately in conversations.
	Social Conventions and Awareness of Others	They learn turn-taking in conversations and develop awareness of social norms.
Understanding the Content and Structure of Language	Sentence Structure and Grammar	Children begin forming simple sentences and understanding basic grammar.
	Acquisition and Use of Vocabulary	They expand their vocabulary and learn to use new words appropriately.
	Comprehension	Children develop the ability to understand and respond to spoken language in various contexts.
Exploring and Using Language	Experimentation with Language	Children use language creatively in different contexts (e.g., storytelling, role-play).
	Expressive Language Development	They gain confidence in expressing ideas, feelings, and opinions.

1st & 2nd Class-Oral Language

Element	Learning Outcome	Description
Developing Communicative Relationships through Language	Engagement, Listening, and Attention	Children show interest in and demonstrate active listening during communicative activities, responding appropriately to others.
	Social Conventions and Awareness of Others	They use social conventions appropriately to initiate and engage in conversations, demonstrating awareness of the listener's needs and perspectives.
Understanding the Content and Structure of Language	Sentence Structure and Grammar	Children understand and use correct sentence structure and grammar in their spoken language, enhancing clarity and coherence.

Element	Learning Outcome	Description
Exploring and Using Language	Acquisition and Use of Vocabulary	They expand their vocabulary and use new words appropriately in various contexts, enriching their oral expressions.
	Comprehension	Children comprehend and interpret spoken language, demonstrating understanding through appropriate responses and actions.
	Experimentation and Play with Language	They experiment with language forms and play with sounds, words, and sentences to create meaning and express themselves creatively.
	Application of Language in Various Contexts	Children apply their oral language skills in diverse situations, adapting their communication to suit different purposes and audiences.

3rd & 4th Class-Oral Language

Element	Learning Outcome	Description
Developing Communicative Relationships through Language	Engagement, Listening, and Attention	Children show interest in and demonstrate active listening during communicative activities, responding appropriately to others.
	Social Conventions and Awareness of Others	They use social conventions appropriately to initiate and engage in conversations, demonstrating awareness of the listener's needs and perspectives.
Understanding the Content and Structure of Language	Sentence Structure and Grammar	Children understand and use correct sentence structure and grammar in their spoken language, enhancing clarity and coherence.
	Acquisition and Use of Vocabulary	They expand their vocabulary and use new words appropriately in various contexts, enriching their oral expressions.
	Comprehension	Children comprehend and interpret spoken language, demonstrating understanding through appropriate responses and actions.
Exploring and Using Language	Experimentation and Play with Language	They experiment with language forms and play with sounds, words, and sentences to create meaning and express themselves creatively.
	Application of Language in Various Contexts	Children apply their oral language skills in diverse situations, adapting their communication to suit different purposes and audiences.

5th & 6th Class-Oral Language

Element	Learning Outcome	Description
Communicating	Engagement	Children show interest in, demonstrate joint attention, and respond appropriately during oral interactions.

Element	Learning Outcome	Description
Understanding	Social Conventions	Children use appropriate social conventions in various oral interactions, such as greetings, turn-taking, and polite expressions.
	Sentence Structure and Grammar	Children construct sentences using correct grammar and varied sentence structures to convey meaning effectively.
	Vocabulary	Children acquire and use a broad vocabulary, understanding word meanings and using words accurately in context.
	Comprehension	Children listen attentively and demonstrate understanding of spoken language by recalling information, making inferences, and responding appropriately.
	Requests and Clarifications	Children make requests for information and seek clarification when needed during oral interactions.
Exploring and Using	Purposes and Genres	Children recognize and adapt their oral language for different purposes and genres, such as storytelling, explaining, and persuading.
	Presentation Skills	Children plan and deliver structured oral presentations, using appropriate language, tone, and body language to engage the audience.
	Reflective Listening	Children listen reflectively, considering the speaker's perspective, and provide constructive feedback.

Methodologies:

Talk and Discussion

- ❖ Think-Pair-Share: Encourages individual thinking, peer discussion, and whole-class sharing.
- ❖ Circle Time: Fosters social and emotional expression, turn-taking, and respectful listening
- ❖ Debates: Develops persuasive speaking, logical thinking, and active listening skills
- ❖ Hot-Seating: Role-play strategy where one student answers questions in character
- ❖ Conscience Alley: A drama technique encouraging persuasive speaking and moral reasoning. Discussions linked to reading & writing
- ❖ Speaking about a given topic.
- ❖ Questioning-Literal, inferential, evaluative and deductive
- ❖ Public Speaking

Drama and Role-Play

- ❖ Improvisation and Scripted Plays: Enhance fluency, creativity, and confidence.
- ❖ Story Dramatisation: Retelling stories through performance to strengthen comprehension and expression.

Oral Language Games

- ❖ Word Association, 20 Questions, Barrier Games, and Guess Who: Promote vocabulary, questioning, and descriptive language.
- ❖ Sound discrimination games: Particularly useful in junior classes to develop phonological awareness.

Storytelling and Narrative Skills

- ❖ Personal Recounts: Encouraging students to share real-life experiences.
- ❖ The teacher tells rich, age-appropriate stories from memory, using gesture, tone, and expression to fully engage the class. These include fairy tales (1st Class), legends (2nd Class), myths (3rd Class), and historical narratives (4th, 5th & 6th Class).
- ❖ Retelling stories: After hearing a story, children are invited to retell it in their own words. This may be done orally to the teacher, to a peer, or to the whole class. Gradually, the children learn to internalise and express longer narratives using visual support like beeswax, felt characters, story maps or puppets.
- ❖ Story Starters and Picture Prompts: Used to spark imagination and structure narratives.
- ❖ Sharing at Whole School Assemblies

Integrated Approach

- ❖ Oral language skills are developed across the curriculum:
- ❖ Science: Describing processes or experiments.
- ❖ History: Recounting events or presenting research.
- ❖ SPHE: Expressing feelings and discussing ethical scenarios.
- ❖ Maths: Explaining reasoning and problem-solving.
- ❖ Handwork and craft: instruction-following and verbal expression.
- ❖ Art and music: expression through sound, movement, song and rhythm

Listening and Responding

- ❖ Explicit teaching of active listening skills.
- ❖ Use of oral stories and listening comprehension tasks.
- ❖ Teaching students how to give feedback, ask clarifying questions, and summarize.

Language Experience Approach

Especially in early years or EAL settings: Use of shared experiences e.g., baking, nature walk, followed by structured talk and written recounts.

Verse, Rhyme, and Recitation

Daily repetition of seasonal verses, poems, and rhymes enhances articulation and fluency and develops vocabulary and language. Class recitations are often performed as a group to build confidence and collective rhythm.

Circle Time

At the start of each day, students participate in circle time with movement, songs, rhythmic clapping, and spoken verses. These are often thematic and seasonally inspired.

Dialogic Conversations and Nature-Based Discussions

Conversations arise organically during nature walks, forest activity, gardening, handwork, and main lesson reviews. Teachers model respectful questioning and elaboration, encouraging children to expand on their ideas.

This cross-curricular approach reinforces oral language learning and language use in real, meaningful contexts.

Differentiation Strategies

Use of visual support, sentence stems, language scaffolds, and peer modelling.
Targeted oral language groups for support or enrichment.
EAL supports translation apps, visuals, and buddy systems.

Assessment of Oral Language

Teacher observation and checklists.
Anecdotal records and language samples.
Self-assessment and peer-assessment strategies.

Review and Evaluation

Regular staff collaboration to evaluate effectiveness.
Use assessment data to inform future planning.
Incorporate feedback from students and parents.

Resources and Programmes for Oral Language

The following resources, programmes, and supports are used at a whole-school level to develop oral language competence and confidence across all class levels. These resources reflect the IPLC's three strands: *Oral Language*, *Reading*, and *Writing*, with a strong focus here on the Oral Language strand and its *elements* (Communicating, Understanding, Exploring and Using).

Department-Recommended and National Programmes

Primary Language Curriculum Support Materials (NCCA & PDST)

- ❖ Digital and print materials aligned with the IPLC.
- ❖ Includes sample learning experiences, videos, and progressions of learning.
- ❖ <https://curriculumonline.ie>

PDST Oral Language Development Resources

- ❖ Strategy booklets, video tutorials, and teacher guides.
- ❖ Supports methodologies such as questioning, discussion, and language scaffolding.
- ❖ www.pdst.ie

Language Curriculum Toolkit (NCCA)

- ❖ Interactive online tools to support planning, teaching, and assessment of oral language.

- ❖ Includes learning outcomes progression steps and classroom examples.

Teacher-Made Resources

Teacher-made resources include picture and photo prompts, oral language games, talking stick, bingo, odd one out, barrier games, vocabulary/word walls and resources for debates.

Support for EAL and SEN

- ❖ **Up and Away: A Resource Book for English Language Support Teachers (NCCA)**
Thematic units with oral vocabulary and activities for EAL learners.
SEN-friendly platforms that support oral and written language development.
- ❖ **Visual Timetables & Communication Boards**
Used to support non-verbal pupils or those with communication challenges.

Cross-Curricular Links

- ❖ **Science Investigations**
Use of oral prediction, description, and explanation.
- ❖ **History / SESE Projects**
Encourage oral presentations, timelines, and storytelling.
- ❖ **SPHE / Circle Time**
Developing emotional vocabulary, active listening, turn taking, sharing and respectful speaking.

Reading

Junior & Senior Infants-Reading

Element	Learning Outcome	Description
Communicating	Engagement	Children attend to, take part in, and enjoy listening to reading and discuss the meaning and interpretation of written words and illustrations with others, recognizing themselves as readers.
	Motivation and Choice	Children develop an awareness of the variety of reading material available and choose texts for enjoyment and information.
Understanding	Comprehension	Children understand the relationship between text and illustration, and use prediction, questioning, visualization, and prior knowledge to interpret texts.
	Phonological and Phonemic Awareness	Children recognize and play with sounds, syllables, and rhymes in words, developing an understanding of sound patterns.
	Word Recognition	Children identify and recognize familiar words, including high-frequency words, and use a range of strategies to decode new words.

Element	Learning Outcome	Description
Exploring and Using	Vocabulary	Children develop a broad and rich vocabulary through exposure to and engagement with a variety of texts.
	Purpose, Genre, and Voice	Children experience a range of texts and develop an awareness of various purposes, genres, and voices in writing.
	Response and Author's Intent	Children express personal responses to texts and begin to recognize the intent of the author.

1st & 2nd Class-Reading

Element	Learning Outcome	Description
Communicating	Engagement	Children attend to, take part in, enjoy listening to, reading, and discussing the meaning and interpretation of written words and illustrations with others, recognizing themselves as readers.
	Motivation and Choice	Children develop an awareness of the variety of reading material available and choose texts for enjoyment and information.
Understanding	Comprehension	Children use prediction, questioning, visualization, and prior knowledge to interpret texts, understanding the relationship between text and illustration.
	Phonological and Phonemic Awareness	Children recognize and play with sounds, syllables, and rhymes in words, developing an understanding of sound patterns.
	Word Recognition	Children identify and recognize familiar words, including high-frequency words, and use a range of strategies to decode new words.
Exploring and Using	Vocabulary	Children develop a broad and rich vocabulary through exposure to and engagement with a variety of texts.
	Purpose, Genre, and Voice	Children experience a range of texts and develop an awareness of various purposes, genres, and voices in writing.
	Response and Author's Intent	Children express personal responses to texts and begin to recognize the intent of the author.

3rd & 4th Class-Reading

Element	Learning Outcome	Description
Communicating	Engagement	Children attend to, take part in, enjoy listening to, reading, and discussing the meaning and interpretation of written words and illustrations with others, recognizing themselves as readers.
	Motivation and Choice	Children develop an awareness of the variety of reading material available and choose texts for enjoyment and information.

Element	Learning Outcome	Description
Understanding	Comprehension	Children use prediction, questioning, visualization, and prior knowledge to interpret texts, understanding the relationship between text and illustration.
	Phonological and Phonemic Awareness	Children recognize and play with sounds, syllables, and rhymes in words, developing an understanding of sound patterns.
	Word Recognition	Children identify and recognize familiar words, including high-frequency words, and use a range of strategies to decode new words.
	Vocabulary	Children develop a broad and rich vocabulary through exposure to and engagement with a variety of texts.
Exploring and Using	Purpose, Genre, and Voice	Children experience a range of texts and develop an awareness of various purposes, genres, and voices in writing.
	Response and Author's Intent	Children express personal responses to texts and begin to recognize the intent of the author.

5th& 6th Class-Reading

Element	Learning Outcome	Description
Communicating	Engagement	Children attend to, participate in, and enjoy listening to reading materials, discussing meanings and interpretations with others, and recognizing themselves as readers. ↗cite↗turn0search2↗
	Motivation and Choice	Children demonstrate motivation to read by making independent choices about reading materials, genres, and topics, reflecting personal interests and preferences.
Understanding	Comprehension	Children listen attentively and read with understanding, recalling information, making inferences, and respond appropriately to texts.
	Vocabulary	Children acquire and use a broad vocabulary, understanding word meanings and using words accurately in context.
	Text Structure and Features	Children recognize and understand various text structures and features, such as headings, paragraphs, and graphical elements, to aid comprehension.
Exploring and Using	Purpose, Genre, and Voice	Children identify and adapt their reading for different purposes and genres, exploring various texts and developing an understanding of the author's voice.
	Reading Strategies	Children apply appropriate reading strategies, such as skimming, scanning, and predicting, to enhance understanding and engagement with texts.
	Reflective Reading	Children reflect on and discuss their reading experiences, considering personal responses and making connections to other texts and contexts.

Methodologies:

The teaching of reading is grounded in a holistic, developmental approach, respecting the child's natural rhythm and readiness. Literacy is introduced through rich oral language, imaginative storytelling, and artistic engagement, leading to reading that is meaningful, joyful, and integrated with the child's inner life. This methodology aligns with the Primary Language Curriculum's emphasis on fostering motivation, comprehension, fluency, and critical engagement with texts.

In the Steiner pedagogy, reading is typically introduced later, usually toward the end of 1st Class, allowing oral language and imagination to develop fully first. Reading arises out of storytelling, artistic creation, and meaningful context. Literacy engages thinking, feeling, and doing, making it a lived and embodied experience. Reading is not a separate subject but woven through Main Lessons and artistic activities.

❖ **Letter Introduction through Story and Image (1st Class)**

Each letter is introduced through a story and an image that captures the letter's sound and form (e.g., "M" is introduced through a story about a mountain, and the letter's shape is derived from a mountain drawing). Strong emphasis is placed on multi-sensory practice, systematic phonemic awareness and phonics instruction.

❖ **From Drawing to Writing to Reading**

Before children read, they draw, explore and write letters and words based on their own stories and experiences. They read back what they have written, fostering authorship before decoding.

❖ **Repetition and Whole Language Patterns**

Reading material is drawn from familiar verses, songs, and main lesson stories that have been spoken and written together. Texts are predictable, rhythmic, and patterned to support whole-word recognition and fluency, integrating phonics into reading and spelling practice.

❖ **Levelled Readers and Class Texts**

Teachers use levelled class readers using stories generated during lessons or written by the teacher. These are read chorally and individually. Texts are linked to decodable words, sentences and books.

❖ **Choral and Echo Reading**

Children first hear the teacher, or class read a passage aloud, then echo or join in reading as a group. This continues until individual confidence grows.

❖ **Reading Aloud with Meaning and Expression**

Children are encouraged to read aloud expressively, bringing meaning to the text. This follows much modelling by the teacher and recitation work.

Resources and Programmes

This section outlines the key resources, programmes, and supports used to develop pupils' reading skills across all class levels as a cumulative approach to consolidate prior learning. It ensures continuity and progression in reading instruction while promoting comprehension, fluency, enjoyment, and critical thinking in line with the IPLC's strands and elements.

National and Department-Supported Resources

- NCCA Primary Language Curriculum Support Materials
- PDST Reading Resources
- Primary Language Toolkit (NCCA & PDST)
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Whole School Reading Programmes and Approaches

Guided Reading

- ❖ Implemented from 1st to 6th Class.
- ❖ Levelled Readers including Oxford level system, Snap Dragon, medium to higher level PM readers, Songbirds and DCode.
- ❖ Explicit comprehension strategy instruction embedded in each session.

Shared Reading

- ❖ Focused on modelling reading behaviours and comprehension strategies.
- ❖ Big books and picture books.
- ❖ Story books, fiction and non-fiction.

Paired Reading

- ❖ Older pupils paired with younger pupils (buddy system) to foster fluency and confidence.
- ❖ Also used at home with parent involvement.

Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) Time

- ❖ Whole-school initiative promoting reading for pleasure.

Class Novels

- ❖ In infants, teacher reads a selection of picture books.
- ❖ All Classes, Informal exploration of class library.
- ❖ Novels are used from 2nd–6th class to develop prediction, summarisation, inferencing, and discussion skills.
- ❖ Includes differentiated support, vocabulary pre-teaching, and oral language links.

Poetry

- ❖ Children study a range of poetry from nursery rhymes in infants to thematic, seasonal and festival poems from a range of sources including the Waldorf Book of Poetry, A Child's Seasonal Treasury, Spring, Summer, Autumn & Winter-Waldorf collection of poems, songs and stories and A Journey through Time in Verse rhymes and verses.

Reading Scheme Resources

Levelled Reading Schemes

- ❖ PM Readers, Oxford level system, Songbirds, Snap Dragon and Barrington Stokes
- ❖ Used for independent and guided reading; monitored through running records and reading assessments.

Decodable Readers

- ❖ DCode Books used for differentiated support, particularly with EAL or struggling readers.

Phonics and Word Recognition Programmes

- ❖ **Sound it Out** Programme in Junior-1st Class
- ❖ **Mr Straight & Mr Curve & The Alphabet:** *how Pine Cone and Pepper Pot, with the help of Tiptoes Lightly and Farmer John, learned Tom Nutcracker and June Berry their letters*
- ❖ **Roadmap to Literacy**
 - Follow the Roadmap to Literacy for 1st to 3rd Class for phonics, decoding, word families and spelling
 - Chapter 3.1-The Alphabet, Chapter 3.3 Phonological and Phonemic awareness: The key to encoding and decoding, 3.4 Encoding & Decoding, 3.5 Symbol Imagery-The Key to sight words, 3.6 Sight Words
- ❖ **Word Families**
- ❖ **UFLI** in 1st & 2nd Class and support teaching in SET or EAL contexts.
- ❖ **Newell Reading Programme, SNIP programme and Toe by Toe.**

Comprehension Strategy Programmes

Building Bridges of Understanding

- ❖ Whole-school comprehension programme based on key strategies: Predicting, Making Connections, Visualising, Inferring, Clarifying, Questioning, and Summarising.
- ❖ Visual prompts, bookmarks, and explicit strategy teaching from 2nd–6th class.

Roadmap to Literacy

- ❖ Follow the Roadmap to Literacy for 1st to 3rd Class- Chapter 3.7 Concept Imagery: The Key to Comprehension & Chapter 3.8 Language & Reading Comprehension

Literacy Lift-Off & Literacy Stations

- ❖ Intensive early intervention approach (1st & 2nd Class)
- ❖ Rotational stations include:
 - Familiar reading
 - Word work
 - New book
 - Writing
 - Comprehension strategy work

The Comprehension Box– Prim Ed.

School Library and Reading Environment

Classroom Libraries

- ❖ Age-appropriate, high-interest fiction and non-fiction selections in every classroom.

School Library System

- ❖ Managed borrowing and tracking system in place.

Reading Corners & Book Nooks

- ❖ Each class includes designated, comfortable space for independent or paired reading.

Inclusive Reading Supports

High-Low Readers

- ❖ Barrington Stoke books

Graphic Novels & Wordless Books

- ❖ Used with both EAL and SEN pupils to promote visual literacy and oral discussion.

Assessment Tools for Reading

Running Records - Oxford Readers

- ❖ Used in guided reading to track decoding, fluency, and comprehension progress.

MIST & Micra T Reading Tests (English)

- ❖ Standardised assessment for 2nd, 4th & 6th Class
- ❖ MIST in 1st Class

Teacher Observation and Anecdotal Notes

- ❖ Observation of strategies used during shared, guided, or independent reading.
- ❖ Monitoring pupil engagement, fluency, expression, and use of reading strategies.

Teacher-Designed Tasks

- ❖ Cloze procedures
- ❖ Comprehension questions (literal, inferential, evaluative)
- ❖ Vocabulary assessments
- ❖ Reading response tasks (written or oral)

❖ Diagnostic Tools

- GILL Dyslexia Assessment – We can't diagnose
- NRIT – Specialist dyslexia teacher/qualified assessor is required to administer.
- Running Records: Assess decoding, self-correction ratio, fluency, and comprehension.
- YARC (York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension)

Formative Assessment Strategies

- ❖ One-to-one reading discussions between teacher and pupil.
- ❖ Summaries, reflections, and personal responses.
- ❖ Story maps, KWL charts, prediction trackers.

Self and Peer Assessment

Pupils use:

- ❖ Checklists (e.g., “Did I use expression?”)
- ❖ Rubrics (age-appropriate)
- ❖ “Two Stars and a Wish” format
- ❖ Group discussion protocols after shared texts

Recording and Tracking

Pupil progress is tracked using:

- ❖ Paper-based Reading Profiles

Using Assessment to Inform Teaching

Assessment results are used to:

- Group pupils for guided reading or Literacy Lift-Off.
- Identify pupils for SET support under the Continuum of Support.
- Inform school self-evaluation (SSE) in literacy.
- Adjust text selection, strategy instruction, and phonics focus.

Assessment for Pupils with Additional Needs

Assessment is adapted to suit the learning profiles of pupils with SEN or EAL:

- ❖ Simplified texts or visual supports
- ❖ Oral responses in place of written ones
- ❖ Use of assistive technology, supporting dyslexia and struggling readers e.g., Immersive reader, book maker, TTRS (Touch Type Read Spell), apps and tools,, voice typing.

Pupil Voice in Reading Assessment

Pupils reflect on:

- ❖ Their reading preferences
- ❖ Challenges and goals (“I want to read more nonfiction”)
- ❖ Book recommendations
- ❖ Used as part of class reading culture and individual target setting.

Writing

Junior & Senior Infants-Writing

Element	Learning Outcome	Description
Communicating	Engagement	Children attend to, take part in, and enjoy mark-making, drawing, and writing, across languages where appropriate, to communicate with others.
	Motivation and Choice	Children demonstrate motivation and choice in engaging with writing activities.
Understanding	Conventions of Print and Sentence Structure	Children develop an understanding of the conventions of print and sentence structure in their writing.
	Spelling and Word Study	Children engage in spelling and word study to enhance their writing skills.
Exploring and Using	Vocabulary	Children expand their vocabulary to enrich their writing.
	Purpose, Genre, and Voice	Children explore different purposes, genres, and voices in their writing.
	Writing Process and Creating Text	Children engage in the writing process and create texts for various purposes.
	Response and Author's Intent	Children develop responses to texts and consider the author's intent in their writing.
	Handwriting and Presentation	Children develop handwriting and presentation skills to effectively communicate their writing.

1st& 2nd Class-Writing

Element	Learning Outcome	Description
Communicating	Engagement	Children engage in purposeful writing activities, demonstrating interest and enjoyment in the process of writing.
	Motivation and Choice	Children make independent choices about writing topics and genres, showing motivation to write for various purposes.
Understanding	Conventions of Print and Sentence Structure	Children understand and apply conventions of print, including sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization, to communicate meaning effectively.
	Spelling and Word Study	Children use knowledge of phonics, spelling patterns, and word study strategies to spell familiar and unfamiliar words accurately.
	Vocabulary	Children expand and use a rich vocabulary to express ideas clearly and creatively in their writing.
Exploring and Using	Purpose, Genre, and Voice	Children write for different purposes and audiences, exploring various genres and developing their unique writing voice.
	Writing Process and Creating Text	Children engage in all stages of the writing process, including planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing, to create coherent texts.

Element	Learning Outcome	Description
	Response and Author's Intent	Children reflect on and respond to their own writing and the writing of others, considering the author's intent and the effectiveness of the communication.
	Handwriting and Presentation	Children develop legible handwriting and present their written work neatly in various formats.

3rd & 4th Class-Writing

Element	Learning Outcome	Description
Communicating	Engagement	Children engage in purposeful writing activities, demonstrating interest and enjoyment in the process of writing.
	Motivation and Choice	Children make independent choices about writing topics and genres, showing motivation to write for various purposes.
Understanding	Conventions of Print and Sentence Structure	Children understand and apply conventions of print, including sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization, to communicate meaning effectively.
	Spelling and Word Study	Children use knowledge of phonics, spelling patterns, and word study strategies to spell familiar and unfamiliar words accurately.
	Vocabulary	Children expand and use a rich vocabulary to express ideas clearly and creatively in their writing.
Exploring and Using	Purpose, Genre, and Voice	Children write for different purposes and audiences, exploring various genres and developing their unique writing voice.
	Writing Process and Creating Text	Children engage in all stages of the writing process, including planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing, to create coherent texts.
	Response and Author's Intent	Children reflect on and respond to their own writing and the writing of others, considering the author's intent and the effectiveness of the communication.
	Handwriting and Presentation	Children develop legible handwriting and present their written work neatly in various formats.

5th & 6th Class-Writing

Element	Learning Outcome	Description
Communicating	Engagement	Children engage in purposeful writing activities, demonstrating interest and enjoyment in the process of writing.
	Motivation and Choice	Children make independent choices about writing topics and genres, showing motivation to write for various purposes.
Understanding	Conventions of Print and Sentence Structure	Children understand and apply conventions of print, including sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization, to communicate meaning effectively.

Element	Learning Outcome	Description
Exploring and Using	Spelling and Word Study	Children use knowledge of phonics, spelling patterns, and word study strategies to spell familiar and unfamiliar words accurately.
	Vocabulary	Children expand and use a rich vocabulary to express ideas clearly and creatively in their writing.
	Purpose, Genre, and Voice	Children write for different purposes and audiences, exploring various genres and developing their unique writing voice.
	Writing Process and Creating Text	Children engage in all stages of the writing process, including planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing, to create coherent texts.
	Response and Author's Intent	Children reflect on and respond to their own writing and the writing of others, considering the author's intent and the effectiveness of the communication.
	Handwriting and Presentation	Children develop legible handwriting and present their written work neatly in various formats.

Methodologies

The Primary Language Curriculum's emphasis on purposeful writing, voice, fluency, accuracy, and audience aligns seamlessly with Steiner pedagogy's child-centred and integrated approach. Writing is not treated as a discrete skill, but as a living expression of thought, experience, and creativity, emerging from the child's relationship with the world.

- ❖ Writing emerges from images and stories created by the teacher and children. The teacher first tells a story, children draw it, then they write a letter, sentence or phrase that reflects their drawing.
- ❖ Explore new letters in a multi-sensory way.
- ❖ Teachers model writing by composing text on the board, with children contributing ideas orally. Teachers may also scribe for children until they build confidence to write independently.
- ❖ Children create Main Lesson books which they fill with their own writing, drawings, and illustrations from daily lessons. These books are carefully crafted and aesthetically valued.
- ❖ As children mature, they begin to write original stories, descriptions, and reports based on myths, nature, biographies, and personal experiences.
- ❖ Spelling, Grammar, and Handwriting are taught within the context of the child's own writing and class texts as well as explicitly. Dictation is used to reinforce spelling patterns.
- ❖ Children write their own poems, seasonal verses, or rhythmic compositions based on classroom themes or festivals.

Writing Genres

1st Class-Recount, Narrative & Procedure

2nd Class- Recount, Narrative, Explanation, Description, Procedure, Poetry & Correspondence

3rd-6th Class- Recount, Narrative, Explanation, Description, Procedure, Correspondence, Persuasive & Poetry

Key Components:

- ❖ **Genre Focus:** Each term or half term features one or more specific writing genres, such as:
 - Narrative (stories, personal recounts)
 - Recount (diaries, news articles)
 - Report (information texts)
 - Explanation (how and why something happens)
 - Persuasive (adverts, opinion pieces)
 - Procedural (instructions, recipes)
 - Poetry (variety of forms)
- ❖ **Progression Across Years:**
 - Younger classes (Junior–1st) focus more on oral storytelling, simple recounts, and introducing basic structures.
 - Middle classes (2nd–4th) explore more genre variety with guided structure and vocabulary.
 - Senior classes (5th–6th) refine genre techniques, write more independently, and integrate critical thinking.
- ❖ **Spiral Approach:**
 - Genres are revisited in increasing complexity across years to reinforce and consolidate prior learning and deepen understanding.
- ❖ **Integration:**
 - Links with other subjects like History (recounts), Science (reports), and SPHE (persuasive writing).
 - Oral language and reading tasks support each writing genre.

Reference: PDST Booklet 7 step writing genre approach

- Familiarisation – showing the children lots of examples of this genre
- Discovery (direct model) – engaging in focused talk and discussion, questioning, etc. (analysing text) - breaking down the text into its various subheadings, etc.
- Modelled writing
- Shared writing – teacher writes the children’s ideas
- Guided writing - using frameworks devised by teacher or the resource book
- Independent construction
- Presentation to audience (reading it for different classes, hall display, school website, class book, parish newsletter, competition entry, bringing it home, etc.)

Free Writing

Free writing supports creativity, personal expression, and fluency. It fosters a love for writing, helping pupils develop their individual voice, vocabulary, and confidence without the pressure of correction or grading.

Free writing is independent and self-directed. Pupils choose their own topics and formats, with an emphasis on process over product. It is typically uncorrected and informal.

Implementation by Class Level

Junior & Senior Infants

- ❖ Focus on emergent writing: mark-making, drawings, and oral storytelling.

1st Class

- ❖ Teachers model children's language in written form.
- ❖ Dedicated drawing & writing area.

2nd Class:

- ❖ Weekly sessions (10–15 minutes).
- ❖ Use of personal writing journals.
- ❖ Emphasis on enjoyment; pupils read, share, and illustrate their work.

3rd to 6th Class:

- ❖ Regular dedicated time (15–30 minutes).
- ❖ Exploration of varied genres (poetry, letters, stories, etc.).
- ❖ Use of journals/notebooks; optional sharing via Author's Chair or displays.
- ❖ Focus on fluency, stamina, and developing voice.

Teacher's Role

- ❖ Model enthusiasm and create a safe, non-judgmental space.
- ❖ Provide prompts as needed while prioritising pupil choice.
- ❖ Encourage sharing and celebrate creativity.
- ❖ Avoid formal correction; focus on encouragement.

Assessment

- ❖ Not formally assessed, formative only.
- ❖ Occasional self-selection of pieces for publishing or portfolios.
- ❖ Teachers observe progression in voice, fluency, and confidence.

Resources

- ❖ Writing journals, word banks, drawing materials, vocabulary walls, class libraries, and visual prompts.

Inclusion & Differentiation

- ❖ Supports for EAL and SEN pupils include visual aids and native language use in early years.

Integration

- ❖ Strong links to oral language, SESE, Visual Arts, SPHE, and Irish writing tasks.

Handwriting

Handwriting is introduced as an artistic and embodied practice. It is taught not simply as a mechanical skill, but as a form of expression that supports thinking, creativity, and connection to language. The process honours the developmental readiness of each child and integrates movement, rhythm, and form to foster fluency and confidence in writing.

The Primary Language Curriculum supports this approach by recognising handwriting as both a foundation of written communication and a skill to be taught developmentally and meaningfully, with an emphasis on clarity, legibility, and the integration of writing with thinking and learning.

Handwriting in the Steiner education is not just a skill, it is a discipline of beauty, form, and self-expression. Writing begins with form drawing, which lays the spatial and motor groundwork for letter formation. Letters are introduced through stories, images, and drawings, giving shape and meaning to written forms. Gross and fine motor development are cultivated through movement, painting, and drawing, supporting handwriting readiness. Children are not rushed into formal writing; fluency develops through care, repetition, and aesthetic engagement.

Move to Write, Cross Lateral and BRMT Exercises

- ❖ Move to Write is a motor skills development program that helps children improve handwriting through movement-based activities. It strengthens core muscles, fine motor skills, and coordination to support writing readiness.
- ❖ Cross-lateral exercises involve movements that cross the midline of the body, helping to integrate brain hemispheres. These exercises improve coordination, body awareness, and the neural connections needed for handwriting development.
- ❖ Bloomberg Rhythmic Movement BRMT uses repetitive, rhythm-based motor activities to support neurological development and integrate reflexes. It enhances balance, coordination, and sensory integration, which are essential for pencil control and handwriting readiness.

Form Drawing as a Foundation (1st Class)

- ❖ Before formal letters are introduced, children engage in form drawing—geometric and flowing patterns that develop spatial awareness, pencil control, and symmetry.

Story-Based Letter Introduction (1st Class)

- ❖ Each letter is introduced through a narrative and an image (e.g., the letter “B” emerges from a story about a butterfly, which the children draw). The shape of the letter is derived from the story image.

Writing by Hand from the Beginning

- ❖ Writing is introduced by hand, using beeswax blocks and then to beeswax crayon, to support muscle development and sensory engagement. Children begin with capital letters and lowercase in a print script.
- ❖ Focus on fine motor development, print script, correct grip, and formation basics.

Handwriting in Main Lesson Books

- ❖ Children write into their Main Lesson books, where handwriting is treated as a craft. Titles are written in decorative form, and text is carefully arranged on the page with illustrations and borders.
- ❖ Emphasis on size, spacing, capital letters, and neatness

Rhythmic Repetition and Practice

- ❖ Handwriting practice is integrated into the rhythm of the day. Children may copy verses, sentences from stories, or their own compositions. Cursive writing is introduced when children are developmentally ready from 2nd & 3rd Class.

Movement and Kinaesthetic Activities

- ❖ Gross motor activities e.g. drawing letters in the air, walking letter shapes, using sand trays or finger writing support children who benefit from kinaesthetic reinforcement.

Fine Motor Development:

Activities like threading, tracing, cutting, and pegboards support grip, control, and hand–eye coordination throughout all classes.

Posture & Grip:

Beeswax Blocks are used at the beginning and then progress onto using beeswax crayon. When ready the child will use pencil in middle classes and pens in higher classes. Correct posture and tripod grip are modelled and reinforced. Tools like pencil grips or writing slopes are used as needed.

Handwriting Script

Folens Handwriting script

Print in 1st Class

Cursive from 2nd-6th Class when ready

Inclusion & Support:

- ❖ Pupils with additional needs have tailored goals and may use OT strategies or assistive technology.
- ❖ Alternative writing materials and supports provided where necessary.

Assessment:

- ❖ Ongoing teacher observation and pupil self-assessment.
- ❖ Progress tracked through samples and portfolios.
- ❖ Presentation considered in feedback, without overemphasis.

Spelling

Spelling is taught in an integrated way, where words are encountered in meaningful contexts and internalised through rhythm, movement, visualisation, and repetition. Spelling instruction is interwoven with oral language, reading, and writing activities.

Spelling through Story and Main Lesson Writing

Spelling words are drawn directly from stories, main lesson content, and class-generated texts.

Rhythm and Repetition: Verses and Dictation

Children regularly recite poems, rhymes, and seasonal verses that contain key spelling patterns. Weekly dictation exercises based on these texts help reinforce accuracy and fluency.

Word Families and Visual Patterning

Spelling patterns are explored through word families (e.g., light, bright, night) and visual patterning. Children create illustrated charts “spelling trees” to show the relationship between words.

Movement and Form Drawing

Letter and word formation is reinforced through form drawing, tracing, walking letters, and kinaesthetic spelling games. These anchor spelling patterns in the body and support children with different learning styles.

Personal Word Lists and Spelling Journals

Each child maintains a personal spelling journal, collecting words that arise from their writing, reading, or oral language experiences. These are practised, reviewed, and integrated into creative work.

Spelling through Artistic and Creative Work

Spelling is reinforced through calligraphy, painting words, clay modelling of letters, and other artistic expressions. Words are seen as living forms, worthy of attention and beauty.

Spellings for Life

From 2nd Class to 6th Class, Spellings for Life will be used. Jolly Grammar Programme can be used as a progression guide of appropriate spelling and grammar rules for each class.

Class-Level Guidelines:

- ❖ *1st Class:* Focus on phonics, high-frequency words, multi-sensory methods. No formal testing.
- ❖ *2nd–3rd Class:* Introduce spelling rules and patterns. Use personal word banks and weekly dictation.
- ❖ *3rd–6th Class:* Teach prefixes, suffixes, morphology, etymology. Emphasis on independent strategies and editing.

General Principles:

- ❖ Spelling is taught explicitly, regularly, and in context during skills practice time.
- ❖ It is integrated with reading, writing, and oral language.
- ❖ Spellings for Life consistent programme is used from 2nd–6th Class.
- ❖ Strategies outlined in Roadmap to Literacy Chapter 3.9 Spelling to be used from 1st–3rd Class.

Class-Level Guidelines:

- ❖ *1st Class:* Focus on phonics, high-frequency words, multi-sensory methods. No formal assessment.
- ❖ *2nd–3rd Class:* Introduce spelling rules and patterns. Use personal word banks and light weekly assessment through dictation.
- ❖ *3rd–6th Class:* Teach prefixes, suffixes, morphology, etymology. Emphasis on independent strategies and editing.

Strategies:

- ❖ Look–Say–Cover–Write–Check, chunking, mnemonics, syllable division, visualisation.
- ❖ Dictation–Teacher dictates, Student repeat, student writes, teacher reads dictation and student proofread, teacher corrects, students review and practice misspelled words.
- ❖ Chanting & Singing spelling
- ❖ Chop, Chop, Sweep (word segmentation)
 - Chop: Each “chop” is a syllable–students’ karate-chop the air or their palm for each beat of the word.
 - Sweep: Sweep arms across the body to “pull” the syllables back together while saying the whole word.
 - This reinforces syllable division and blending.
- ❖ Air Writing
 - Use whole-arm movements to “write” the word in the air, saying each letter aloud.
 - Bigger motion = stronger memory trace.
- ❖ Tap & Step Spelling
 - Assign one physical action per letter: tap a finger on the desk, step side-to-side, or bounce a ball for each letter.
 - End with a bigger gesture (like a clap) when saying the whole word.
- ❖ Body Spelling
 - Students use their bodies to “form” each letter shape, individually or in groups.
 - Works best with short words and can be hilarious, which makes recall stick.
- ❖ Beanbag Pass

- In a circle, one child says the first letter and tosses a beanbag to the next, who says the next letter, etc.
- Can be timed or turned into a cooperative game.
- ❖ Floor Letter Jump
 - Place large letter cards on the floor.
 - Students jump from letter to letter, spelling the word aloud.
 - Great for breaking up desk work.
- ❖ Write & Walk
 - Have children write each letter of the word in chalk on a path.
 - Then walk or hop along it while spelling.

Differentiation

- Tailored programmes (e.g. Spellings for Me) for pupils with SEN.
- Supports: reduced lists, oral assessments, visuals.
- Extension tasks for high achievers.
- Themed vocabulary and visuals for EAL learners.

Assessment:

- *Formative:* Observation, writing samples, dictation.
- *Summative:* Weekly dictation, standardised tests (Micra-T), portfolios.
- *Pupil self-assessment:* Spelling journals.

Integration

Vocabulary teaching linked across subjects including Gaeilge, SESE, and SPHE.

Literacy for children with additional needs

Our approach to supporting children with additional needs in literacy is rooted in a deep respect for the individual developmental journey of each child. We recognise that every learner is unique, and we honour their capacities, interests, and learning rhythms through a carefully considered, holistic approach.

Literacy is introduced in alignment with the child's stage of development. For children with additional needs, this allows a nurturing space where foundational skills can mature without pressure, fostering confidence and joy in learning.

Learning experiences are enriched through storytelling, rhythm, song, movement, drawing, painting, and hands-on activities. These modalities support children with diverse learning needs by offering multiple pathways to literacy acquisition, particularly aiding those with dyslexia, ADHD, and other neurodiverse profiles.

Repetitive oral storytelling, verses, and songs are integral to the daily rhythm and offer consistent, reassuring structures. For children with additional needs, this repetition supports

memory, language development, and the consolidation of phonemic awareness in a gentle, engaging manner.

A strong emphasis is placed on oral storytelling, conversation, and recitation to build vocabulary, listening comprehension, and expressive language skills. This oral-first approach provides scaffolding for children who may not be ready for written expression but are developing their language skills through meaningful, relational experiences.

Support for additional needs is integrated into the life of the class wherever possible. Small group or one-to-one interventions are provided as needed, but always with a focus on connection, relationship, and rhythm, ensuring the child feels secure and included.

Teachers work closely with learning SET and families to co-create individual learning plans that address specific literacy goals. These plans include adjustments to content, pace, and delivery, ensuring that support is tailored, respectful, and holistic.

Ongoing teacher observation forms the basis for understanding each child's progress and needs. Formal testing is used sparingly and only when appropriate, to avoid undue stress and to preserve the child's self-esteem and love for learning.

Stories are carefully selected to reflect themes of resilience, transformation, and inner strength. For children with additional needs, the archetypal journey of story characters can mirror and support their own personal journeys, offering comfort, courage, and meaning.

Frameworks Used:

- ❖ Primary Language Curriculum (PLC)
- ❖ NEPS Continuum of Support
- ❖ EPSEN Act (2004)

Whole-School Practices:

- ❖ Early identification using teacher observation and tools like Micra-T, GILL and NRIT.
- ❖ Support:
 - In-class differentiated teaching.
 - Small group and 1 to 1 withdrawal.
 - Individualised, intensive support.
- ❖ Support plans with SMART literacy targets, reviewed twice yearly.
- ❖ Programmes used include Literacy Lift-Off, Toe by Toe, SNIP, UFLI, Ncode, Newell Literacy Programme, Spellings for Life and Spellings for Me.

EAL Provision

Children learning English benefit from a language-rich environment grounded in oral tradition. Daily storytelling, verse, song, and conversation create an immersive linguistic experience.

Language lives in the rhythms, gestures, and artistic life of the classroom and is structured around daily, weekly, and seasonal rhythms. Repetitive songs, verses, and stories support EAL learners by providing predictable language patterns, aiding in language internalisation and building confidence in listening and speaking.

Teachers use expressive movement, tone, and gesture to communicate meaning, allowing EAL students to access and engage with English in a context that supports understanding without the need for translation. As with all children in our school, formal reading and writing are introduced later, allowing EAL learners the time to first internalise the sound and structure of English through oral experience.

The spoken word is central. Fairy tales, nature stories, and cultural narratives provide both linguistic input and a gentle introduction to the cultural fabric of English-speaking contexts. Storytelling becomes a powerful bridge for EAL learners to connect with language, meaning, and imagination. Home languages and cultural backgrounds are honoured and integrated into the life of the class where appropriate. Songs, stories, and greetings from a child's first language may be shared, fostering belonging and mutual respect.

Mixed-ability groupings and collaborative classroom activities allow EAL students to learn from their peers in a socially rich, non-competitive setting. This supports both language development and social integration. The teacher's role as a storyteller and model of articulate, rhythmic, and expressive English is essential. EAL children learn not just the vocabulary, but the music and soul of the language through imitation and lived experience.

Teachers observe each child's engagement with language across contexts, noting progression in comprehension, participation, and expression. These observations guide differentiated support and ensure that each EAL learner is met where they are, with warmth and sensitivity.

Assessment

Assessment is a process of deep, respectful observation and relationship. It honours the child's individuality and developmental readiness, guiding the teacher's practice and supporting each learner's unfolding capacities. Assessment is embedded within the rhythm of the classroom, prioritising qualitative understanding over numerical measures.

We integrate both Assessment for Learning (AfL) and Assessment of Learning (AoL), using approaches that are age-appropriate, developmental, and human-centred.

AfL is an ongoing, formative process in which teachers observe, guide, and adapt learning experiences in response to the child's needs and responses. In a Steiner context, AfL happens naturally through:

- ❖ Teachers closely observe children's language use in speaking, listening, storytelling, and writing. These insights inform how lessons are shaped and differentiated, ensuring the child is met at the right level

- ❖ Feedback is given orally, through modelling and encouragement, rather than through grades or marks. Children are supported in self-reflection and encouraged to build an inner sense of quality and pride in their work.
- ❖ Teachers engage learners in conversations that reveal understanding and promote deeper thinking, particularly in oral language activities and main lesson discussions.
- ❖ Teachers reflect on children's written work, artistic expression, and layout in their books, guiding future instruction and identifying both strengths and next steps.
- ❖ Teachers share observations and assessments regularly with colleagues to ensure a holistic view of each child's literacy journey, ensuring consistency and collegial support.

AoL refers to summative assessment that provides a broader view of a child's development over time. In Steiner education, AoL is integrated thoughtfully and gently to support understanding of progress while avoiding labels or high-stakes testing. Each child's portfolio includes main lesson books, creative writing samples, dictation (when developmentally appropriate), retellings, illustrations, and verse work. These showcase learning in an authentic, artistic form.

Children are given opportunities to demonstrate expressive language through class plays, recitations, storytelling, and presentations, allowing teachers and peers to witness and celebrate language development. AoL considers broad developmental indicators rather than narrow outcomes. Reading readiness, sentence construction, phonemic awareness, and written expression are assessed considering the child's individual developmental stage. For children with additional needs, AoL is used to monitor progress against individual goals, adjusting support strategies in collaboration with learning support teachers and families.

Types of Assessment

- ❖ *Formative (AFL)*: Teacher observations, checklists, self/peer assessment, running records, writing samples.
- ❖ *Summative (AoL)*: Standardised tests (Micra-T), portfolios, formal presentations.
- ❖ *Diagnostic*: Tools like NRIT, YARC, GILL used for SEN and EAL needs.

Strand-Specific Tools:

- ❖ *Oral Language*: Role-play, oral checklists.
- ❖ *Reading*: Running records, comprehension tools.
- ❖ *Writing*: Portfolios, genre assessment, success criteria, editing checklists.

Pupil Engagement: Pupils reflect using learning logs and peer feedback.

Standardised Testing:

- ❖ Annual for 2nd, 4th & 6th Class, Sigma T and Micra T.
- ❖ Results used to plan interventions and report to parents.

Recording & Reporting:

- ❖ Teachers maintain class-level records

- ❖ Parents informed during meetings and in year-end reports.

Homework

Home-school relationship is considered sacred, and the child's life outside of school is valued as an essential space for rest, play, imagination, and family connection. Homework, when given, is purposeful, developmentally appropriate, and designed to foster joy in learning rather than compliance or pressure.

In early primary years, formal homework is minimal. Ample unstructured time is essential for healthy development. As the child grows in capacity and independence, gentle home-based tasks may be introduced to support literacy in meaningful ways. Homework is never a burden nor excessive. It is intended as a bridge between school and home, a way to invite parents into the child's learning journey, and to offer simple, engaging extensions of what is alive in the classroom.

Especially in the younger years, homework often involves oral storytelling, recitation of verses, poetry, or songs learned in class. These activities deepen memory, enrich language, and support family bonding. As children mature, they may be asked to complete portions of main lesson work at home, learn lines for a class play, read aloud with a parent, and create artistic responses to stories. These tasks nurture responsibility and care for their work, without creating stress.

From 1st Class onward, children are gently encouraged to read at home with or to an adult. Reading for pleasure is prioritised over reading for assessment. Book choices are guided by the child's interests and developmental stage, not rigid reading levels.

Homework may include artistic tasks such as illustrating a scene from a story, writing a short verse, or learning a poem by heart. These help to reinforce literacy through imagination and creativity, rather than rote drills or worksheets.

General Principles:

- From 2nd Class, Homework is assigned regularly, is age-appropriate, and reflects classroom work.
- English homework may be oral, reading-based, or written.
- The focus is on quality, not quantity.
- Reading is a core component of English homework across all class levels.
- Homework is differentiated where needed, particularly for children with additional needs.
- Parents are encouraged to support, not complete, homework.

Homework Across the Strands:

Oral Language

Oral work may include:

- ❖ Story retelling
- ❖ Practising poems or rhymes
- ❖ Rehearsing presentations or ‘show and tell’
- ❖ Discussing a topic with a family member

Reading

- ❖ *Regular reading practice* is central at all levels.
- ❖ Activities may include:
 - Teacher-assigned readers
 - DEAR time at home (Drop Everything and Read)
 - Library books or novels
 - Paired or shared reading with a parent
 - Reading logs (Senior classes)
- ❖ Parents are encouraged to read with or to their child every evening.

Writing

- ❖ Writing homework may include:
 - Spelling practice (using Look–Say–Cover–Write–Check or other methods)
 - Sentences or short written responses
 - Free writing, diary entries, or creative stories
 - Grammar or punctuation exercises
 - Handwriting practice

Differentiation and Additional Needs:

- ❖ Pupils with support plans may receive modified homework or alternative tasks.
- ❖ Homework is tailored to support learning goals without overburdening.
- ❖ Assistive technology may be used where applicable (e.g. typing instead of writing).

Parental Involvement

The relationship between school and home is seen as a vital partnership. Parents are regarded as the child’s first educators, and their role in nurturing language, imagination, and love of learning is deeply valued. The development of literacy is most powerful when it is supported not only in the classroom but also through warm, conscious engagement at home.

Steiner pedagogy acknowledges that learning is not only academic—it is artistic, social, emotional, and spiritual. Parents support literacy not just by reading books, but by telling stories, listening with presence, engaging in meaningful conversation, and modelling a rich and respectful use of language.

Literacy development is supported by strong rhythms in both home and school life. Regular routines around storytelling, reading aloud, and family mealtimes with conversation help build language fluency, vocabulary, and attentive listening skills. Parents are encouraged to tell

stories from memory, share family histories, sing songs, recite verses, and explore oral traditions. These practices align with classroom activities and support children's inner imagery, memory, and expressive language.

Particularly from 1st Class upwards, parents are invited to read with or to their child regularly. These builds reading fluency and nurtures a lifelong love of books. The focus is not on testing or speed, but on connection, enjoyment, and understanding. Families are invited to attend seasonal festivals, class plays, storytelling evenings, poetry recitations, and exhibitions of student work. These events celebrate language and artistic expression while strengthening the school community.

Teachers maintain open, respectful communication with parents through parent evenings, individual meetings, and written reports. Parents are welcomed as co-observers and supporters in their child's literacy journey. When needed, they are included in collaborative discussions around additional support and individualised plans. Parents are encouraged to create screen-light, book-rich environments that support quiet time for reading, imaginative play, and reflection. These are foundational for deep literacy and thoughtful communication.

Parents are guided to support literacy in a way that honours the child's developmental rhythm and natural curiosity. Encouragement is gentle, not outcome driven. A sense of trust in the child's unfolding capacity is central to the Steiner ethos.

Ways Parents Can Support Literacy at Home

- Read or tell a story each day
- Encourage imaginative play and storytelling
- Attend class and seasonal events
- Model careful, respectful language in everyday conversation
- Share family and cultural stories
- Provide access to quality books and poetry
- Celebrate progress with warmth rather than comparison

Parental involvement in literacy is not about overseeing homework or accelerating outcomes—it is about walking alongside the child with warmth, presence, and wonder. In this way, the home and school together become a vessel that carries the child's language journey with grace and meaning.

Community Links

We see the child not in isolation, but as a being in relationship, with nature, with others, and with the wider cultural life of their community. Language and literacy flourish when children experience their relevance in the living world around them. Through active community engagement, storytelling, and purposeful encounters, we enrich the child's language experience and deepen their sense of belonging.

Community festivals, plays, and poetry recitations allow children to use spoken language in a joyful, meaningful way. These events are not only artistic expressions, but also opportunities to strengthen communication skills and build confidence. Partnerships with libraries, local authors, artists, theatres, and nature centres create real-world contexts for literacy. Excursions, guest workshops, and collaborative projects help children connect language with life and community.

We celebrate the cultural and linguistic diversity of our community. Parents and community members are welcomed to share stories, songs, and texts in their home languages, enriching the literacy environment with global voices.

Some examples:

- Excursions to the local library & community theatre
- Partnering with artists for storytelling and book-illustration workshops
- Intergenerational storytelling with local elders or grandparents
- Performing seasonal plays for families and friends
- Sharing hand-written letters or illustrated stories with pen pals in other countries

The classroom extends beyond its walls. Community links ground learning in purpose, presence, and the joy of shared experience.

Success Criteria

In our school, success in literacy is not defined by standardised benchmarks or competitive performance, but by the child's growing confidence, creativity, and connection to language. Our success criteria are qualitative, developmental, and aligned with the unfolding capacities of the whole child head, heart, and hands.

We recognise that literacy development is a rich and varied journey, and that each child will meet key milestones in their own time. Success is measured not by how fast a child achieves a skill, but by how deeply they engage with the learning process and how authentically they express themselves through language.

Literacy success encompasses oral fluency, listening, comprehension, imagination, artistic expression, and emotional connection to language. We value how children speak, listen, read, write, and live language. Success is seen in the child's steady development over time. Teachers look for growth in understanding, effort, independence, and creative expression.

Success criteria are aligned with the child's stage of development, not just chronological age. Teachers assess readiness and provide support accordingly, especially with key transitions such as learning to read and write. Each child brings unique gifts to their literacy journey. Success includes the ability to express oneself with clarity and originality, engage with language joyfully, and contribute meaningfully to class discussions and storytelling.

Examples of Literacy Success

Oral Language	- Recites verses and songs with rhythm and expression - Participates confidently in storytelling and discussion - Listens attentively to others and retells stories in sequence - Demonstrates interest in books and stories
Reading	- Recognises letter-sound relationships (when ready) - Reads aloud with developing fluency and expression - Shows comprehension through discussion or illustration - Expresses ideas clearly in pictures and words
Writing	- Begins to structure sentences and simple narratives - Writes with increasing confidence, care, and accuracy - Uses descriptive or poetic language when appropriate - Uses imagination to enrich storytelling or writing
Creative Expression	- Creates original poems, stories, or responses to texts - Illustrates work with meaning and attention to detail - Completes work with focus and care
Engagement and Independence	- Takes pride in their main lesson books - Demonstrates increasing independence in reading and writing tasks
Love of Language	- Shows enjoyment in reading, writing, and speaking - Brings language into play and conversation - Engages in reading or storytelling at home

Implementation

Roles & Responsibilities

While each teacher leads their own class, literacy development is seen as a whole-school responsibility. Teachers, leadership, and support staff work in unity to support each child's progress and wellbeing.

Class Teachers

- Deliver the English curriculum through integrated, imaginative, and developmentally appropriate main lessons and practice periods.
- Provide consistent opportunities for oral language, reading, writing, and artistic expression.
- Observe and assess literacy development through narrative, formative, and summative means.
- Maintain comprehensive, well-presented main lesson books that reflect literacy learning.
- Communicate regularly with parents regarding literacy progress and support literacy in the home.

- Work with SET to identify and plan for children with special, additional needs and English as an additional language (EAL).
- Participate in ongoing professional development

SEN Teachers

- Collaborate with class teachers to support students with diverse learning needs in literacy.
- Assist in developing Student Support Plans with targeted literacy goals.
- Provide small group or one-on-one interventions.
- Assist with assessment and documentation of students requiring additional support.
- Maintain communication with parents and external specialists where applicable.

School Management

- Purchase resources for the implementation of this plan.
- Allocate time and resources for collaboration, assessment, and professional development.
- Support communication with families around whole-school literacy goals and philosophy.
- Foster a culture of ongoing reflection and child-centred practice.

Parents and Carers

- Support literacy at home through storytelling, reading, and engaging in meaningful conversation.
- Attend school events, class meetings, and festivals that celebrate language and literacy.
- Communicate with teachers regarding their child's language development and learning needs.
- Uphold screen-light, language-rich environments that align with our school's values.

Timeframe

The Whole School English Plan will be implemented over the course of the school year and reviewed every 3 years.

Ratification & Communication

Cuan na Gaillimhe CNS-A Steiner Education believes that the school community must be involved to successfully implement the English Primary Curriculum. Therefore, the teaching staff will implement this plan with the support of the Board of Management, Parents and the Local Community.

This school plan was worked on and discussed by staff during March & April 2025 and presented to the Board of Management of Cuan na Gaillimhe CNS-A Steiner Education on 15th September 2025. Once it has been ratified by Board of Management, it will be issued to all teaching staff and

copies will be made available for inspection by parents/inspectors and other interested parties on request from school office.

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management on 15th September 2025.

Signed _____ Date: _____
Chairperson

Signed _____ Date: _____
Principal

