



Primary School
Curriculum

Curaclam na
Bunscoile

English

Language

DUBLIN
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4-5 HARCOURT ROAD
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(Tel: 01-6476834-5; Fax: 01-4752760)
or through any bookseller

Design Consultancy:	Bradley McGurk Partnership
Designed by:	The Identity Business
Typesetting:	Spectrum Print Management
Printed by:	Mozzon Giuntina - Florence and Officine Grafiche De Agostini - Novara



English

Curriculum

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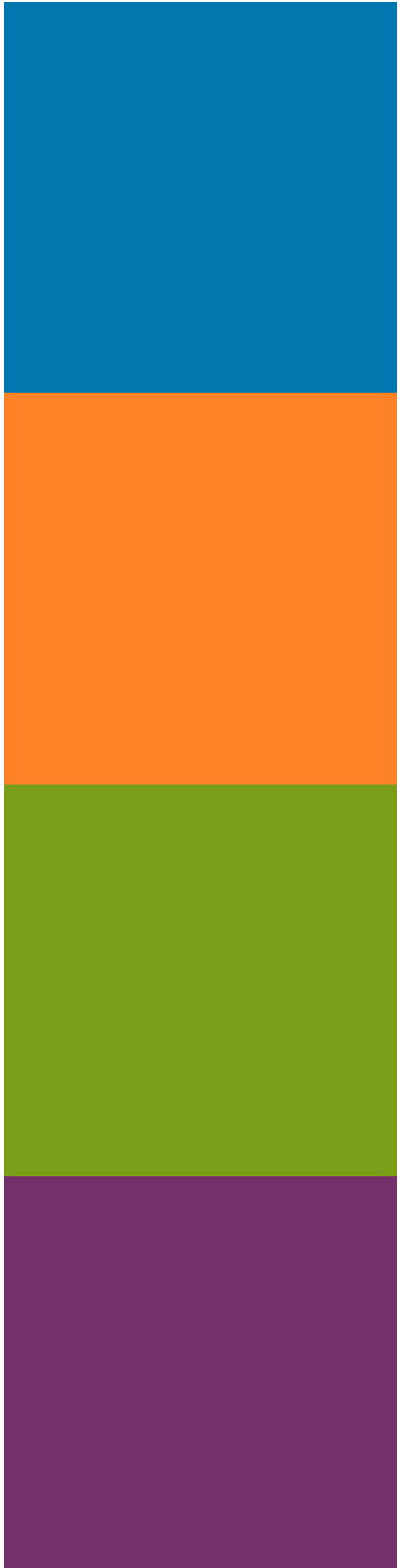
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Introduction

English

Language acquisition is a developmental process. It begins from birth and continues throughout the primary school and beyond. The child comes to school with considerable verbal facility. This is achieved not in any formal learning or teaching situation but in the day-to-day social context of the home, and its most important characteristic is the engagement of the child in a stimulating and challenging way. This process of language learning is linked inextricably with a growing knowledge of the world. Language, therefore, is also a central factor in the expansion of the child's conceptual framework and body of knowledge.

A large part of the child's language experience is verbal and it is through oral language activity that much of his/her learning takes place, both in and out of school. The potential of oral language activity as a learning and teaching medium is acknowledged in the key role it is given throughout the curriculum.

The ability to read effectively is an essential requirement if the child is to benefit fully from the educational process, to develop his/her potential, and to participate appropriately as a citizen in society. This is a crucial element in the child's language learning.

The acquisition of literacy is a principal concern of the English curriculum and this reflects stated national policy. It is important that reading, comprehension and writing skills are acquired systematically and that children with particular learning needs are identified at an early stage and provided with adequate remedial support.

Writing has an equal contribution to make to the child's language development. The ability to write clearly and expressively provides him/her with a skill that can greatly enhance personal, social and vocational experience. Furthermore, through the process of expressing thoughts and feelings he/she can clarify concepts and explore emotions. The child's writing experience in school can, therefore, contribute greatly to his/her cognitive, emotional and imaginative development.

Language learning is an integrated process in which it is difficult to separate the functions of oral language, reading and writing. All three are intimately related and each interacts with the others in a myriad of ways. For example, the child's ability with oral language can be a determining factor in the speed and effectiveness with which he/she learns to read, just as his/her experience of reading can enrich vocabulary and improve command of sentence structure.

Similarly, there is a close relationship between competence in reading and expressiveness in writing. Each draws from and feeds into the other in a host of interconnections to form an integrated process of language learning.

Because of its pervasive influence, English is not just concerned with language learning but also with learning through language. In the process of acquiring language skills and in developing the ability to use language other crucial elements of the child's personality and potential are cultivated. For instance, the learning of a new word, or an extended meaning of a word already known, can entail more than extension of vocabulary. It can interact with ideas already familiar to the child in a way that broadens and deepens understanding. Likewise, in attempting to express emotional or imaginative experience, the act of putting feelings and intuitions into language can give them a focus that deepens the child's knowledge of himself/herself and of the world.

To give expression to these two principles the curriculum is structured in four strands:

- *Receptiveness to language*
- *Competence and confidence in using language*
- *Developing cognitive abilities through language*
- *Emotional and imaginative development through language.*

Although no one strand is concerned exclusively with either principle, the first two, *Receptiveness to language* and *Competence and confidence in using language*, are aimed primarily at language learning while the other two, *Developing cognitive abilities through language* and *Emotional and imaginative development through language*, contribute to more general aspects of the child's development.

Each strand is divided into three strand units, reflecting the contribution oral language, reading and writing make to that particular facet of the child's development, and the strand units contain the detailed elements of curriculum content. A number of these elements reflect activities and experiences that, because of the nature of language, will recur from level to level and throughout the strands. To avoid repetition particular elements of content may be mentioned at just one level although they may involve activities and experiences that are appropriate to every level. Teachers will readily recognise these as they become familiar with the curriculum.

Receptiveness to language

Language development is very complex. Hearing or reading words and knowing what they mean may not amount to understanding. We must make many other connections to bridge the gap between what we know and what we hear or read. We need an awareness and an appreciation of

- context
- grammar
- tone of voice
- gesture and facial expression.

Above all we need the ability to listen, to attend and to be alert to all of these, and to the way they interrelate with one another to create meaning. That willingness and ability to listen, to attend and to be aware of the possibilities and the potential of language can be summed up in the word receptiveness. It is a facility that is crucial to the child's mastery of language and is the first of the four strands that comprise the English curriculum. It involves developing an appreciation of the listener-speaker relationship, learning to attend actively, and responding to all the verbal and non-verbal cues that are used to convey meaning.

It may not be immediately obvious that writing can contribute to the development of receptiveness. Writing is primarily an expressive process; yet the very act of attempting to express himself/herself in writing, whether to communicate with others or to clarify ideas, can make the child more aware of the possibilities of language and hence more receptive to it.

Receptiveness to language also comprises the development of literacy. This includes acquiring an appreciation of the conventions of text, a knowledge of the terminology and conventions of books, and the ability to use a range of reading and comprehension skills. In the curriculum, the acquisition of this knowledge and the development of these skills are approached in the context of the child's overall language development.

Competence and confidence in using language

If the strand *Receptiveness to Language* is concerned with developing the child's awareness of language in all its forms, this strand is directed towards enhancing his/her ability to use it as a speaker, a writer and a reader. The two are, of course, interdependent. The more receptive a child is to language the better he/she will use it; and the more successfully a child engages with language the more open he/she will be to its potential.

In achieving competence with language the child develops oral fluency and expressiveness, and, in the process, learns to initiate and sustain conversations and to take turns in a classroom environment that promotes tolerance for the views and opinions of others. He/she also learns to use language for the purpose of everyday social interaction, performing social functions such as greeting, expressing appreciation, expressing sympathy and concern, and welcoming visitors with confidence.

Building on a growing mastery of reading and comprehension skills, the child can be led to appreciate the usefulness and pleasures of reading. Through having access to a wide range of texts, by being encouraged to read silently on a regular basis, and in having the freedom to choose reading material he/she can develop personal tastes and interests. In turn, this will help to cultivate habits that can lead to a perception of reading as a continuing source of pleasure and satisfaction.

The experience of reading in its functional and recreational roles should also be a part of reading experience. As the child progresses through the school he/she should be given the opportunity to engage with an ever more varied range of expository and diagrammatic text, including forms, menus, recipes, timetables, newspapers, magazines and text on screen.

In the context of growing competence with language the child will develop as a writer. Starting with scribbles and pictures, he/she will, with support, progress to words and phrases and then to sentences. Later, through a consistent experience of attempting to write stories and more elaborate descriptions, the ability to write in continuous prose can develop. The child should write for a growing range of audiences and in a variety of genres and have a consistent experience of the process of drafting, editing and rewriting. The topics for writing, whether chosen by the child or given by the teacher, should, as far as possible, reflect the real concerns, interests and preoccupations of the individual. In this way he/she can become an independent writer, attaining the competence to write for sustained periods.

In developing competence in using language the child will engage in activities that are directed towards extending vocabulary, developing a command of sentence structure, and mastering the conventions of grammar, punctuation and spelling. These are included in the strand *Competence and confidence in using language*, but they should be a concern of the work in every strand. Vocabulary extension, for example, will be a daily feature of many language activities.

Some of the elements of grammar are addressed formally in this curriculum, particularly in senior classes. It is envisaged that the child will have gained a knowledge and control of some of the principal elements of grammatical convention by the time he/she finishes primary school. However, it is not intended that these be taught in isolation. As with punctuation and spelling, they should be approached in the context of general language learning.

Although the child's confidence in using language will be determined largely by success as a speaker, a writer and a reader, it is important also that in all language activities his/her efforts are respected, supported and praised.

Developing cognitive abilities through language

In this strand the thrust is towards using language to learn. Although the activities suggested in it will involve language learning, since the two are indivisible, its main concern is to exploit the complex relationship that exists between language and thought. The importance of this cannot be overstated.

Much of what the child learns and the way he/she learns it comes from the interaction of language and experience. Through naming, describing, classifying and modifying things and ideas, knowledge is extended and the command of language developed. In this way language subsumes experience. Words, in their multilayered meanings and interconnections, become the bank in which a growing fund of knowledge and concepts is stored. As the child matures this store is expanded and enriched. More and more new ideas and information are linked to it and form increasingly sophisticated connections within it. Thus, language is the medium through which new learning is assimilated and defined.

It is important that he/she is helped to use language to learn.

In the curriculum this is encapsulated in activities that will lead the child

- to use questions in order to gain maximum information
- to seek and to give explanations
- to discuss different possible solutions to problems
- to argue a point of view
- to persuade others
- to examine fact and fiction, bias and objectivity.

Much of the work will be based on day-to-day experience in and out of school and will involve oral language activity, reading, writing, play and drama. In the early years play and drama will have a crucial role to play in helping the child to use his/her imagination to construct symbolic representation. As the child gets older reading will become an increasingly important context for the development of cognitive abilities. This will involve the child's engaging with a growing range of expository and representational text and will be intimately concerned with the development of comprehension skills. Cognitive abilities will also be developed through reading and responding to fiction and poetry. This is dealt with in the fourth strand, *Emotional and imaginative development through language*.

The development of information retrieval skills and the ability to use information technology will provide the child with the means of gaining access to new knowledge. Furthermore, the way he/she is encouraged to question and use this knowledge can play a significant role in the development of cognitive abilities.

Much of this oral and reading experience will dovetail readily with the child's writing. The strand unit is entitled 'Clarifying thought through writing' and speaks for itself. It will have a direct connection with work in oral language and reading, and through the process of drafting a piece of writing and then editing and re-drafting it the child can be encouraged to give a more structured and considered form to his/her thoughts. Furthermore, in developing as a writer the child will gradually be required to learn new forms of thinking that are different from those associated with speech. This will lead the child to explore the potential of words and sentence structure in expressing more precisely what he/she means.

Emotional and imaginative development through language

This strand deals with very special features of the human psyche. Through emotional and imaginative responses the child will often reflect what is most individual and complex in his/her personality. The child's emotional life is concerned with feelings, instincts and reactions that complement the rational self and account for much of what is intuitive in human behaviour. In exploring it the child can come to a better understanding of self and relationships with others. Through the imaginative life the child can explore the infinite possibilities of the human condition and gain a perception of experiences he/she may never know directly.

In developing these most important facets of a child's personality equal emphasis is placed on what he/she experiences and on what he/she expresses. The child is encouraged to explore everyday experiences and feelings through talk, writing, play and drama. Through expressing them he/she can come to understand them better, and give order to emotions and to reactions to people and events. A further dimension of this exploration is made possible through the child's reading and listening experience.

Stories and literature can bring the child into contact with a wide variety of emotional life and, through talking and writing about responses, he/she can come to a better understanding of human motivation and feeling.

Through literature the child can also explore the world of the imagination and at the same time come to appreciate how language makes it vivid. It is important, therefore, that the child enjoys a consistent engagement with a rich selection of the best literature appropriate to his/her stage of development. Poetry should have a special place in listening and reading experience. The heightened and often compressed expression of thought and feeling and the music, rhythm and rhyme in the language can provide unique and striking glimpses into aspects of the human experience. Through it the child's enjoyment of language can be fostered and his/her aesthetic response and sense of beauty awakened.

Information and communication technologies

The ability to use information and communication technologies can also help to enhance the child's language development. It can be an important resource in developing reading, comprehension and information retrieval skills. The facility of word-processing can not only encourage and help the child in drafting, editing and rewriting but can underline the fact that this operation is an intrinsic part of the writing process. Because language is a feature of every curriculum area these and other applications of information and communication technologies to learning and teaching can have a relevance for the child's development throughout his/her school experience.

Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning in English as in other areas of the curriculum. The section on assessment outlines how a continuum of assessment techniques ranging from less structured to more structured methods can assist in enriching the learning experience of the child and provide useful information for pupils, teachers, parents and others.

Aims

The aims of the English language curriculum are to

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

Broad objectives

When due account is taken of intrinsic abilities and varying circumstances, the English language curriculum should enable the child to

- gain pleasure and fulfilment from language activity
- develop the skill of listening actively and appreciate the significance of tone of voice, facial expression and gesture
- learn to understand the conventions of oral language interaction and use oral language in a variety of social situations
- expand his/her vocabulary and develop a command of grammar, syntax and punctuation
- become fluent and explicit in communicating ideas and experiences
- explore and develop ideas and concepts through talk, directed discussion and writing
- identify and evaluate the key points, issues and central meaning of a text or oral presentation and organise efficiently the information gained
- justify and defend opinions and present a coherent argument orally and in writing
- use oral language to manipulate images in problem-solving
- express intuitions, feelings, impressions, ideas and reactions in response to real and imaginary situations through talk, discussion and writing
- organise, clarify, interpret and extend experience through oral language activity and writing
- explore and express reactions to poetry, fiction and the arts, and refine aesthetic response through oral language activity and writing
- create, develop and sustain imaginary situations through talk, discussion and improvisational drama
- compose, relate and write his/her own stories and poems
- explore, experiment with and enjoy all the playful aspects of language

- develop print awareness, an understanding of the purposes of print, and a control over the different ways meaning is derived from print
- develop a range of reading skills and abilities that would include phonemic awareness, word identification strategies and a growing sight vocabulary
- develop an appropriate range of comprehension strategies
- develop an awareness of the richness and diversity of reading material available and read from a variety of texts of gradually increasing complexity
- choose his/her reading material and engage in and enjoy sustained silent reading
- develop a sense of discrimination with regard to the use of language and images in the media
- write for different purposes and different audiences
- write in a variety of genres appropriate to school and outside needs
- learn to edit and refine writing and develop a sense of appropriate presentation
- develop a personal style of writing and learn to distinguish and to use appropriate levels of formality
- share writing and responses to reading experience with other children and adults
- use computer technology in learning to write and for information retrieval
- enhance reading and writing development through the involvement of parents or guardians.

Infant classes

Overview

infant classes

Strands

Strand units

Receptiveness to language

- **Oral** developing receptiveness to oral language
- **Reading** developing concepts of language and print
- **Writing** creating and fostering the impulse to write

Competence and confidence in using language

- **Oral** developing competence and confidence in using oral language
- **Reading** developing reading skills and strategies
- **Writing** developing competence, confidence and the ability to write independently

Developing cognitive abilities through language

- **Oral** developing cognitive abilities through oral language
- **Reading** developing interests, attitudes and the ability to think
- **Writing** clarifying thought through writing

Emotional and imaginative development through language

- **Oral** developing emotional and imaginative life through oral language
- **Reading** responding to text
- **Writing** developing emotional and imaginative life through writing

Strand: Receptiveness to language

Strand unit Oral language: developing receptiveness to oral language

The child should be enabled to

- experience, recognise and observe simple commands
look, listen, watch
- listen to a story or description and respond to it
- hear, repeat and elaborate words, phrases and sentences modelled by the teacher
- use and interpret tone of voice expressing various emotions
- learn to adopt appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviour to secure and maintain the attention of a partner
establishing eye contact
using appropriate head movements, gestures and facial expressions
ensuring audibility and clarity
- mime and interpret gesture, movement and attitude conveying various emotions.

Strand unit Reading: developing concepts of language and print

The child should be enabled to

- listen to, enjoy and respond to stories, nursery rhymes, poems and songs
- become an active listener through the development of a range of listening activities based on stories read or told
telling and retelling a story in sequence
recalling and relating a simple story or event,
asking questions, role-playing
- play with language to develop an awareness of sounds
language games, phoneme and morpheme sound relationships, nursery rhymes, chants
singing games, action songs and poems
a wide variety of rhythms
attempts at writing words appropriate to a particular need such as the child's own name
- develop a sense of rhythm and rhyme
songs, nursery rhymes, jingles,
clapping and dancing to syllabic rhythms
- become familiar with a wide range of environmental print, beginning with print in the classroom
- learn about the basic terminology and conventions of books
author and title, left-to-right orientation,
top-to-bottom orientation, front-to-back orientation
- read texts created by himself/herself and by other children in collaboration with the teacher
- learn to recognise and name the letters of the alphabet
- develop an awareness of some letter-sound relationships.

Strand unit Writing: creating and fostering the impulse to write

The child should be enabled to

- experience and enjoy a print-rich environment
- receive help from the teacher, who will sometimes act as scribe to assist with accuracy and presentation
- write and draw frequently
scribbling, making attempts at writing, letters and symbols, captions, words and sentences
- write for different audiences
oneself, teacher, other children, family, visitors
- see personal writing displayed
*on worksheets
as part of arts activities
on a writing shelf or in a writing corner
in class-made collections*
- read personal writing aloud and hear it read.

Strand: Competence and confidence in using language

Strand unit Oral language: developing competence and confidence in using oral language

The child should be enabled to

- talk about past and present experiences, and plan, predict and speculate about future and imaginary experiences
- choose appropriate words to name and describe things and events
- experiment with descriptive words to add elaborative detail
- combine simple sentences through the use of connecting words
- initiate and sustain a conversation on a particular topic
- use language to perform common social functions
 - introducing oneself and others*
 - greeting others and saying goodbye*
 - giving and receiving messages*
 - expressing concern and appreciation.*

Strand unit Reading: developing reading skills and strategies

The child should be enabled to

- experience the reading process being modelled
- handle books and browse through them
- encounter early reading through collaborative reading of large-format books and language-experience material
- build up a sight vocabulary of common words from personal experience, from experience of environmental print, and from books read
- learn to isolate the beginning sound of a word or syllable
- learn to isolate beginning and final sounds in written words
- learn to isolate the part of a word or a syllable which allows it to rhyme with another word or syllable
- use knowledge of word order, illustration, context and initial letters to identify unknown words
- engage in shared reading activities
 - stories, poems, plays, picture books.*

Strand unit Writing: developing competence, confidence and the ability to write independently

The child should be enabled to

- learn to form and name individual letters using various materials
plasticine, sand, soft letters, magnetic letters, writing instruments
- write and draw
scribbles, shapes, signs, letters, numerals
- understand the left-right, top-bottom orientation of writing
- develop a satisfactory grip of writing implements
- copy words from signs in the environment
- copy letters and words informally as part of class activities
- write his/her name
- use labels to name familiar people and things
- write letters and words from memory
- become aware of lower-case and capital letters and the full stop
- develop the confidence to use approximate spelling
- begin to develop conventional spelling of simple words
- see the teacher model writing as an enjoyable experience
- choose subjects for drawing and writing
- choose the form of expression he/she finds appropriate
scribbles, shapes, pictures, letters, words.

Strand: Developing cognitive abilities through language

Strand unit Oral language: developing cognitive abilities through oral language

The child should be enabled to

- provide further information in response to the teacher's prompting
- listen to a story or a narrative and ask questions about it
- focus on descriptive detail and begin to be explicit in relation to people, places, times, processes, events, colour, shape, size, position
- discuss different possible solutions to simple problems
- ask questions in order to satisfy curiosity about the world
- show understanding of text.

Strand unit Reading: developing interests, attitudes and the ability to think

The child should be enabled to

- re-read, retell and act out familiar stories, poems or parts of stories
- recall and talk about significant events and details in stories
- analyse and interpret characters, situations, events and sequences presented pictorially
- predict future incidents and outcomes in stories
- differentiate between text and pictures
- understand the function of text
become aware that text says something.

Strand unit Writing: clarifying thought through writing

The child should be enabled to

- draw a picture and write about it
a name, a caption, a sentence
- draw and write about everyday experience or about something just learned
pictures and scribbles
- write naming words and add descriptive words
- rewrite sentences to make the message clearer.

Strand: Emotional and imaginative development through language

Strand unit Oral language: developing emotional and imaginative life through oral language

The child should be enabled to

- reflect on and talk about a wide range of everyday experience and feelings
- create and tell stories
- listen to, learn and retell a rich variety of stories, rhymes and songs
- respond through discussion, mime and role-playing to stories, rhymes and songs heard and learnt
- use language to create and sustain imaginary situations in play
- listen to, learn and recite rhymes, including nonsense rhymes
- listen to, learn and ask riddles
- create real and imaginary sound worlds
- recognise and re-create sounds in the immediate environment
- experiment with different voices in role-playing
a favourite story, a cartoon character.

Strand unit Reading: responding to text

The child should be enabled to

- associate print with enjoyment through listening to stories and poems read aloud
- respond to characters, situations and story details, relating them to personal experience
- perceive reading as a shared, enjoyable experience
- record response to text through pictures and captions
- pursue and develop individual interests through engagement with books.

Strand unit Writing: developing emotional and imaginative life through writing

The child should be enabled to

- draw and write about feelings
happiness, sadness, love, fear
- draw and write about things he/she likes and dislikes
- draw and write about sensory experiences
hot, cold, bright, dark, sweet
- draw and write stories
- hear a rich variety of stories, rhymes and songs and draw and write about them
- use mime and role-playing to create imaginary situations and then draw and write about them.

First
and second
classes

Overview

first and second classes

<i>Strands</i>	<i>Strand units</i>
Receptiveness to language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oral developing receptiveness to oral language• Reading developing strategies• Writing creating and fostering the impulse to write
Competence and confidence in using language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oral developing competence and confidence in using oral language• Reading reading for pleasure and information• Writing developing competence, confidence and the ability to write independently
Developing cognitive abilities through language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oral developing cognitive abilities through oral language• Reading developing interests, attitudes and the ability to think• Writing clarifying thought through writing
Emotional and imaginative development through language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oral developing emotional and imaginative life through oral language• Reading responding to text• Writing developing emotional and imaginative life through writing

Strand: Receptiveness to language

Strand unit Oral language: developing receptiveness to oral language

The child should be enabled to

- experience challenging vocabulary and sentence structure from the teacher
- listen to stories, descriptions, instructions and directions and respond to them
- listen to sounds and respond to them
- become more adept in using appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviour in order to secure and maintain the attention of the listener
 - eye contact, facial expression, audibility and clarity of enunciation, tone of voice*
- use gesture and movement to extend the meaning of what he/she is saying
- express in mime various emotions and reactions, and interpret the emotions and reactions of others.

Strand unit Reading: developing strategies

The child should be enabled to

- continue to experience the reading process being modelled
- engage in shared reading activities
- visit the school library and the local library
- continue to build a sight vocabulary of common words from books read and from personal experience
- engage in activities designed to increase awareness of sounds

focusing on the sounds associated with letters and letter-clusters, patterns of sounds in words

- learn about the sounds associated with the part of a word or syllable that allows it to rhyme with another word or syllable

*d - ock t - able
s - ock c - able
cl - ock f - able*

- learn about the sounds associated with the beginning of a word or syllable

- learn to connect the beginnings of words and syllables with their rhyming parts as an auditory and visual exercise

*'onset and rime': r - at c - at m - at
different onsets*

single consonants r - at

consonant blends pl - an

digraphs ch - at

different rimes

vowel digraphs tr - ee

vowel-consonant

combinations h - and

- learn about common word endings, word families and roots of words
- use knowledge of letter-sound relationships (grapho/phonic cues), grammar and syntax (syntactic cues) and surrounding text (contextual cues) when attempting to identify unfamiliar words
- self-correct reading errors when what he/she reads does not make sense
- develop reading skills through engaging with reading material appropriate to his/her stage of development
- adapt his/her reading style for different purposes

browsing, simple scanning and skimming.

Strand unit Writing: creating and fostering the impulse to write

The child should be enabled to

- experience a classroom environment that encourages writing
 - personal writing collections*
 - class library*
 - writing corner*
 - displays of writing*
- observe the teacher as he/she models writing stories
- seek help from the teacher in order to achieve accuracy and an appropriate standard presentation
- experience how a story structure is organised by reading and listening to fiction
- write regularly for different audiences
 - personal purposes*
 - the teacher*
 - other children*
 - the family*
- choose topics to write about
- explore different genres
 - a story*
 - an invitation*
 - a letter*
- work with other children when writing
- have writing valued
 - hearing it praised*
 - having it displayed*
 - sharing it with others.*

Strand: Competence and confidence in using language

Strand unit Oral language: developing competence and confidence in using oral language

The child should be enabled to

- talk about and reflect on past and present experiences, and plan, predict, anticipate and speculate about future and imaginary experiences
- experiment with more elaborate vocabulary and sentence structure in order to extend and explore meaning
 - experimenting with descriptive words*
 - combining simple sentences*
 - elaborating simple sentences*
- experiment with word order and examine its implications for meaning and clarity
- focus on the subject under discussion and sustain a conversation on it
- initiate discussions, respond to the initiatives of others, and have practice in taking turns
- engage in real and imaginary situations to perform different social functions
 - greeting others*
 - receiving and giving compliments*
 - using the telephone*
 - making requests for information.*

Strand unit Reading: reading for pleasure and information

The child should be enabled to

- read from a range of children's literature, choosing material for reading during silent reading periods
- engage in personal reading
- learn to find books in a classroom or school library
- read aloud to share a text with an audience
- find information and share it with others
- perform simple information retrieval tasks
 - using a table of contents*
 - using a simple index.*

Strand unit Writing: developing competence, confidence and the ability to write independently

The child should be enabled to

- experience an abundance of oral language activity when preparing a writing task
- realise that first attempts at writing are not necessarily the finished product and learn to undertake second drafts in order to improve writing
- understand that the conventions of punctuation help to make meaning clearer in writing
 - full stops, capital letters*
- spell words in a recognisable way based on an awareness of the most common spelling strings and patterns
 - simple words with short vowel rimes:
dog, mill, rock*
 - simple words with regular patterns:
street, came, float*
 - two-syllable words with regular patterns:
robber, happen*
 - words with common prefixes and suffixes:
display, wonderful*
- use approximate spelling as an interim measure in mastering the conventions of spelling
- spell correctly a range of familiar, important and regularly occurring words, and use a variety of sources as aids to spelling
 - words displayed in class*
 - words compiled in personal dictionaries*
 - words learned in reading*
- choose topics for writing after conferring with the teacher
- have regular opportunities to write for himself/herself or for others
- decide whether or not to re-draft a piece of writing
- confer with the teacher and others on the quality of presentation
- write notes and messages to different audiences
 - teacher*
 - friends*
 - parents.*

Strand: Developing cognitive abilities through language

Strand unit Oral language: developing cognitive abilities through oral language

The child should be enabled to

- give a description, recount a narrative or describe a process, and answer questions about it
- listen to other children describe experiences and ask questions about their reactions to them
- become increasingly explicit in relation to people, places, times, processes and events by adding elaborative detail to what he/she describes and narrates
- listen to a story or narrative and ask questions about it
- engage in real and imaginary situations involving language use
 - explain, persuade, enquire, report, agree, dissent, discuss a point of view, justify opinions*
 - provide solutions to problems*
- ask questions that will satisfy his/her curiosity and wonder
 - who? where? what? when? why? how? what if?*

Strand unit Reading: developing interests, attitudes and the ability to think

The child should be enabled to

- pursue individual interests through independent reading of fiction and non-fiction
- adopt an active approach to a text by posing his/her own questions
- give recommendations to and receive recommendations from the wider community of readers on the choice of reading material
 - parent, teacher, librarian, other children*
- develop comprehension strategies
 - recalling details and events*
 - assimilating facts*
 - retelling stories*
- perform alphabetical order tasks
- predict future events and outcomes in a book that is being read aloud
- express a more formal response by giving a considered personal opinion of a book in oral or in written form
- use information technology to increase motivation to read and to enhance reading development.

Strand unit Writing: clarifying thought through writing

The child should be enabled to

- write in a variety of genres
stories, diaries, poetry, charts, lists, captions, cards, invitations, simple letters
- write a version of a story told by the teacher
- write about something that has been learned
- write the significant details about an event or an activity
a game I played
my birthday
- write an explanation for something
- re-read work, confer with the teacher or others about it, and then rewrite it
- write a simple sentence and add words to it to extend its meaning
- listen to a story and write down questions to ask about it
- write answers to questions asked by the teacher.

Strand: Emotional and imaginative development through language

Strand unit Oral language: developing emotional and imaginative life through oral language

The child should be enabled to

- describe everyday experiences and events
- express feelings in order to clarify them and explain them to others
- tell stories in his/her own words and answer questions about them
- listen to, read, learn and recite a varied and appropriate repertoire of rhymes and poems
- re-create stories and poems in improvisational drama
- use play and improvisational drama to sustain imaginary situations
- listen to and say nonsense words and unusual words
- listen to, learn and tell riddles and jokes
- clap the rhythms of poems and rhymes
- listen to, read, learn and recite more sophisticated nonsense verse and rhymes
- recognise and re-create sounds in the environment
- create real and imaginary sound worlds
- use imaginative play to create humorous characters and situations.

Strand unit Reading: responding to text

The child should be enabled to

- continue to listen to and enjoy stories and poems being read aloud
- engage in spare-moment reading and browsing by having ready access to reading material
- engage with a wide variety of text
picture books, poetry, stories, informational material
- experience enhanced levels of self-esteem through success in reading
- listen to entire stories read aloud in instalments
- respond to characters and events in a story
talk and discussion, writing, drama, visual arts
- explore different attitudes and feelings by imagining what it would be like to be certain characters
- engage frequently in informal discussion of books with teacher and others.

Strand unit Writing: developing emotional and imaginative life through writing

The child should be enabled to

- express feelings in writing
 - happiness*
 - sadness*
 - excitement*
 - pride*
 - anticipation*
- write about experiences
 - enjoyable*
 - funny*
 - annoying*
 - frightening*
- listen to the experiences of others and express reactions to them in writing
- draw and write about sensory experience
 - sight*
 - hearing*
 - taste*
 - touch*
 - smell*
- write about feelings experienced in drama activities
- draw and write stories and poems
- express in writing likes and dislikes about events and characters in stories and poems
- listen to music and write about it.

Third
and fourth
classes

Overview

third and fourth classes

<i>Strands</i>	<i>Strand units</i>
Receptiveness to language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oral developing receptiveness to oral language• Reading developing strategies• Writing creating and fostering the impulse to write
Competence and confidence in using language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oral developing competence and confidence in using oral language• Reading reading for pleasure and information• Writing developing competence, confidence and the ability to write independently
Developing cognitive abilities through language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oral developing cognitive abilities through oral language• Reading developing interests, attitudes, information retrieval skills and the ability to think• Writing clarifying thought through writing
Emotional and imaginative development through language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oral developing emotional and imaginative life through oral language• Reading responding to text• Writing developing emotional and imaginative life through writing

Strand: Receptiveness to language

Strand unit Oral language: developing receptiveness to oral language

The child should be enabled to

- experience the teacher's use of challenging vocabulary and sentence structure
- listen to, retell and tape a narrative or a description, taking turns giving the account
- give and follow instructions on how to perform a particular task or process
- become increasingly aware of the importance of gesture, facial expression, tone of voice, audibility and clarity of enunciation in communicating with others
- use mime to convey ideas, reactions, emotions, desires and attitudes
- discuss the use and effect of music, sound effects and non-verbal clues in audio tapes, video tapes and film clips.

Strand unit Reading: developing strategies

The child should be enabled to

- use more than one strategy when reading unfamiliar text
grapho/phonic, syntactic, contextual
- identify unfamiliar words by reference to word parts, prefixes and suffixes
- continue to self-correct reading errors
- become an increasingly independent reader
- understand the relationship between text and illustration
- refine his/her listening skills through hearing the teacher read aloud.

Strand unit Writing: creating and fostering the impulse to write

The child should be enabled to

- experience a classroom environment that encourages writing
 - class library*
 - writing corner*
 - displays of writing*
 - anthologies of his/her and others' writing*
 - captioned drawings*
 - posters*
- observe the teacher modelling different writing genres
 - writing about a personal experience*
 - writing a letter*
 - writing a description*
- use personal reading as a stimulus to writing
- write stories that explore a variety of genres
- re-read his/her writing for pleasure
- choose the audience for which to write
- choose both the subject and form of his/her writing
- receive and give positive responses to writing
- see his/her writing valued
 - constructive comment*
 - having it displayed*
 - having it included in class anthologies*
 - reading it aloud.*

Strand: Competence and confidence in using language

Strand unit Oral language: developing competence and confidence in using oral language

The child should be enabled to

- give and take turns in speaking and experience a classroom environment in which tolerance for the views of others is fostered
- initiate conversations and respond to the initiatives of others in talking about experiences and activities
- present ideas that are relevant to the subject in a logical sequence
- summarise and prioritise ideas
- discuss the meanings and origins of words, phrases and expressions with the teacher
- become aware of new words and new connotations of words through his/her reading and writing experience
- play synonym and antonym games
- become familiar with the functions of words without necessarily using technical grammatical terms
noun, verb, adjective, adverb, pronoun, preposition
- practise the common social functions in the everyday context of class and school and through improvisational drama
introducing others to the class group or another pupil
expressing appreciation
expressing approval and disapproval
engaging in simple commercial transactions
expressing concern
asking questions to elicit views and feelings
expressing support
giving directions
- make lists of local expressions and words
- use improvisational drama to re-create well-known characters
- hear, discuss and react to local storytellers.

Strand unit Reading: reading for pleasure and information

The child should be enabled to

- have access to a plentiful supply of books both in the classroom and in the school library
- use library facilities outside school
- select personal reading material and develop personal taste in reading for pleasure and information
- experience different types of text
- engage with a wide variety of poetry and verse on a regular basis
- develop basic information retrieval skills
 - using table of contents, chapter headings and index*
 - interpreting diagrammatic information*
 - scanning and skimming*
- use simple dictionaries effectively
 - find words*
 - find the meaning of words*
 - check spelling*
 - find the pronunciation of words.*

Strand unit Writing: developing competence, confidence and the ability to write independently

The child should be enabled to

- write regularly, and gradually extend the period over which a writing effort is sustained
- engage with the writing of one piece over a period
 - a week, a number of weeks, a term*
- experience varied and consistent oral language activity as a preparation for writing
- learn to use questions as a mechanism for expanding and developing a story
 - who? where? when? why? what? how?*
 - what if?*
- give sequence to ideas and events in stories
- develop an appreciation of how the intended audience should influence the nature of a piece of writing
 - a birthday invitation*
 - a letter seeking information for a project*
- develop an awareness of the difference between written language and oral language
- learn to revise and re-draft writing
 - reading it over*
 - conferring and discussing with the teacher*
 - conferring and discussing with others in the class*

- learn to use a wider range of punctuation marks with greater accuracy as part of the revision and editing process
- learn to write with increasing grammatical accuracy through the process of revision and editing.
- use a range of aids and strategies, including the use of approximate spelling, to improve his/her command of spelling
 - dictionaries, word lists, word searches, spelling checkers, anagrams, regular word patterns*
- write in a legible joined script with confidence and fluency
- develop his/her ability to write using information technology
 - word-processing*
- regularly select his/her own topics for writing
- choose to write for himself/herself only
- decide, after conferring with the teacher and others, who the audience for a piece of writing should be
- decide the quality of presentation in relation to the purpose and audience of a piece of writing
- co-operate in writing a record of class activities
 - a single topic*
 - a theme*
 - a timetable.*

Strand: Developing cognitive abilities through language

Strand unit Oral language: developing cognitive abilities through oral language

The child should be enabled to

- discuss issues that directly affect his/her life
 - in school*
 - outside school*
 - in other areas of the curriculum*
- discuss a story being read and predict future events and likely outcomes in it
- discuss different possible solutions to problems
- discuss what he/she knows of a particular topic or process as a basis for encountering new concepts
- discuss causes and effects in relation to processes and events and predict possible outcomes
- listen to a presentation and discuss and decide which are the most important questions to ask
- learn how to use the basic key questions
 - why? how? where? when? what? what if?*
- make presentations to the class about his/her own particular interests
- justify personal likes and dislikes
- argue a point of view and try to persuade others to support it
- explore historical events through improvisational drama
- explore reactions to ideas through improvisational drama.

Strand unit Reading: developing interests, attitudes, information retrieval skills and the ability to think

The child should be enabled to

- extend participation in listening and silent reading activities
- read short books in one sitting to experience success in reading
- explore new interests and perspectives through reading
poetry, non-fiction, newspaper articles
- read books independently
- seek recommendations for books to read and recommend books to others
- continue to use information technology to increase motivation to read and to enhance reading development
- know the structure and terminology of books
cover, spine, illustration, dedication, table of contents, introduction, page, chapter
- develop skills in locating and handling books through using well-stocked school and classroom libraries
- continue to develop a range of comprehension strategies to deal with narrative, expository and representational reading material
assimilation (what did I learn?), deduction (what can I conclude?), inference (what may I conclude?), analysis (what are the details and how do they come together?), prediction (what might happen next?), evaluation (what do I think of this?), summarising (how can I give a brief account of the main points?)
- use a knowledge of printing conventions as an aid to expression and comprehension
bold type, punctuation marks, capital letters
- keep a record of his/her reading in various forms
keeping a list of books read, keeping written comments on books in a folder.

Strand unit Writing: clarifying thought through writing

The child should be enabled to

- write in a variety of genres with greater sophistication
 - stories*
 - diaries*
 - records of what has been learned*
 - reports*
 - letters*
 - notices*
 - menus*
 - lists*
- read a story and write it in his/her own words
- read a narrative or expository piece and summarise it
- write about an idea to explain it to someone else
- write about why he/she finds an idea attractive
- write about ideas encountered in other areas of the curriculum
- write down directions on how to perform a particular process
- write a list of questions about a particular topic and prioritise them
- write a sentence and elaborate on it by adding one or more ideas to it
- expand and clarify his/her thoughts on a particular idea or topic through drafting and re-drafting.

Strand: Emotional and imaginative development through language

Strand unit Oral language: developing emotional and imaginative life through oral language

The child should be enabled to

- describe everyday experiences to the class or group and discuss them
- discuss favourite moments, important events and exciting characters in a story, play or poem
- express reactions to events and characters in stories
- discuss reactions to poems
- create and tell stories to the class or group, and retell them after questioning, comparing the versions
- express feelings and attitudes through improvisational drama
- create and sustain imaginary contexts through improvisational drama
- react to poems through improvisational drama
- dramatise stories
- experience and enjoy playful aspects of language
 - asking riddles and telling jokes*
 - experimenting with funny-sounding words*
 - playing word association games*
 - reading and listening to examples of humorous literature*
 - composing rhymes and verses*
 - appreciating how words interact—how a word can trigger a humorous reaction.*

Strand unit Reading: responding to text

The child should be enabled to

- extend and develop his/her response to increasingly challenging reading material
 - discussion, poetry, writing, drama, visual arts, movement, dance*
- engage in talk about books
 - setting, plot, character, motive, favourite authors*
- talk about choice of books and the reasons for choices
- recognise and discuss differences in reading tastes
- share responses with other children and with adults to cultivate a community of readers
- experience a shared response to fiction through the use of a class novel
- read aloud with expression.

Strand unit Writing: developing emotional and imaginative life through writing

The child should be enabled to

- express his/her reactions to particular experiences in writing
- write about experiences and feelings in diary form
- write about feelings experienced in improvisational drama
- create stories and poems
- write extended stories in book form
- write about favourite moments, characters and events in stories
- express in writing his/her reactions to poems
- express in writing his/her reactions to personal reading
- use his/her own artwork and that of others as a stimulus to writing.

Fifth
and sixth
classes

Overview

fifth and sixth classes

<i>Strands</i>	<i>Strand units</i>
Receptiveness to language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oral developing receptiveness to oral language• Reading developing strategies• Writing creating and fostering the impulse to write
Competence and confidence in using language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oral developing competence and confidence in using oral language• Reading reading for pleasure and information• Writing developing competence, confidence and the ability to write independently
Developing cognitive abilities through language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oral developing cognitive abilities through oral language• Reading developing interests, attitudes, information retrieval skills and the ability to think• Writing clarifying thought through writing
Emotional and imaginative development through language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oral developing emotional and imaginative life through oral language• Reading responding to text• Writing developing emotional and imaginative life through writing

Strand: Receptiveness to language

Strand unit Oral language: developing receptiveness to oral language

The child should be enabled to

- experience from the teacher a growing elaboration and sophistication in the use of vocabulary and sentence structure
- listen to expressions, reactions, opinions and interpretations and retell or summarise them
- listen to radio broadcasts and discuss what has been learned
- follow detailed instructions or directions from others in order to test their accuracy
- take part in games in which unseen objects are identified from descriptions given by other pupils
- be continually aware of the importance of gesture, facial expression, audibility and clarity of enunciation in communicating with others
- use mime to convey ideas, reactions, emotions, desires and attitudes
- interpret mood, attitude, emotion and atmosphere in video extracts, advertisements, paintings and photographs
- listen to or watch sound tapes, videos and films and discuss how sound effects enhance the content
- listen to authors reading and discussing their own work.

Strand unit Reading: developing strategies

The child should be enabled to

- achieve proficiency in word identification by refining the different word identification skills
grapho/phonic, syntactic and contextual
- improve his/her ability to recognise and understand words by using root words, prefixes, suffixes, syllabication
- engage with an increasing range of narrative, expository and representational text
- become self-reliant, confident, independent readers, having time in class for sustained, silent reading.

Strand unit Writing: creating and fostering the impulse to write

The child should be enabled to

- experience a classroom environment that encourages writing
 - class library*
 - writing corner*
 - displays of writing for visitors*
 - anthologies of his/her writing*
 - anthologies of the writing of others*
 - books written by him/her and others*
 - captioned charts, pictures and posters*
- observe the teacher model a wide variety of writing genres
 - narrative*
 - expository*
 - letters*
 - poems*
 - project work*
 - fiction*
- express and communicate reactions to reading experiences
- experience interesting and relevant writing challenges
- write for an increasingly varied audience
- receive and give constructive responses to writing
- see his/her writing valued
 - class anthologies*
 - displays of personal writing*
 - printed examples of writing*
 - writing exhibitions*
- experience a level of success in writing that will be an incentive to continue writing.

Strand: Competence and confidence in using language

Strand unit Oral language: developing competence and confidence in using oral language

The child should be enabled to

- acquire the ability to give detailed instructions and directions
- converse freely and confidently on a range of topics
- give and take turns in an environment where tolerance for the views of others is fostered
- practise and use improvisational drama to acquire a facility in performing more elaborate social functions
 - welcoming visitors*
 - showing them the work of the class*
 - making formal introductions*
 - proposing a vote of thanks*
 - expressing sympathy*
 - making a complaint*
- discuss the positive and negative effects of jargon, slang and cliché, and express examples of them in his/her own language
- understand the functions and know the names of the parts of speech
 - noun, verb, adjective, adverb, pronoun, conjunction, preposition, article, interjection*
- learn about and name the basic properties of nouns and verbs
 - common, proper, gender, case*
 - tense, voice, person, number*
- become familiar with compound and complex sentences, and know and understand the terms 'phrase' and 'clause'
- explore the possibilities of language and sentence structure in expressing increasingly complex thoughts
- discuss the meaning, effect and diversity of local words and expressions
- hear accents and dialects other than his/her own on tape and on video and discuss them
- use improvisational drama to learn how local idiom, accent and dialect can influence the effect of language in particular situations.

Strand unit Reading: reading for pleasure and information

The child should be enabled to

- read widely as an independent reader from a more challenging range of reading material, including stories, poems, myths, legends, novels and non-fiction texts appropriate to his/her age and reading ability
- engage with books in group or in whole-class settings
- learn about the structure and appreciate the function of the component parts of a newspaper
editorial, news, feature, review, sport, obituary, crossword, advertisement, schedule of radio and television programmes
- participate in organised visits to the public library and avail of the mobile library service
- read to satisfy personal interests.

Strand unit Writing: developing competence, confidence and the ability to write independently

The child should be enabled to

- write regularly on chosen topics
- write for a sustained length of time
- engage in the writing of one piece over a period
 - a week, a number of weeks, a term*
- experience varied and consistent oral language activity as part of the pre-writing process
- observe the teacher improving writing
 - drafting, revising, editing*
- write independently through a process of drafting, revising, editing and publishing
- write, without re-drafting, on a given or chosen topic within certain time constraints
- observe the conventions of grammar, punctuation and spelling in his/her writing
- use dictionaries and thesauruses to extend and develop vocabulary and spelling
- explore the possibilities of syntax and sentence structure in reading and writing
- choose a register of language appropriate to subject and audience
 - writing to a friend*
 - writing for a display*
 - writing to seek information*
- choose a form and quality of presentation appropriate to the audience
- help others with editing their writing
- take part in co-operative writing activities
 - projects*
 - writing and publishing a class newspaper*
 - writing and publishing compilations of stories and poetry*
- write fluently and relevantly in other areas of the curriculum
- develop a legible, fluent, personal style of handwriting
- develop skills in the use of information technology.

Strand: Developing cognitive abilities through language

Strand unit Oral language: developing cognitive abilities through oral language

The child should be enabled to

- discuss issues of major concern
- discuss ideas and concepts encountered in other areas of the curriculum
- use a discussion of the familiar as the basis of a more formal or objective grasp of a topic or concept
- use the basic key questions and checking questions as a means of extending knowledge
- listen to a presentation on a particular topic, decide through discussion which are the most appropriate questions to ask, and then prioritise them
- argue points of view from the perspective of agreement and disagreement through informal discussion and in the context of formal debates
- justify and defend particular opinions or attitudes and try to persuade others to support a particular point of view
- respond to arguments presented by the teacher
- discuss the value, truth or relevance of popular ideas, causes and proverbs
- explore and express conflicts of opinion through improvisational drama
- explore historical contexts through improvisational drama.

Strand unit Reading: developing interests, attitudes, information retrieval skills and the ability to think

The child should be enabled to

- listen to, read, learn, recite and respond to a challenging range of poetry
- have access to a wide range of reading material in the classroom and/or school library
magazines, newspapers, fiction and non-fiction books, books written by other pupils, collections of material related to hobbies and interests, reference material, poetry anthologies
- continue to keep a record of personal reading in various forms
- use comprehension skills such as analysing, confirming, evaluating, synthesising and correlating to aid deduction, problem-solving and prediction
- develop study skills such as skimming, scanning, note-taking and summarising
- retrieve and interpret information presented in a variety of ways
flowchart, table, diagram, list, web, survey, question, read, recall and review (SQ3R)
- support arguments and opinions with evidence from the text
- read and interpret different kinds of functional text
forms, menus, timetables, recipes
- explore appropriate non-fiction texts for various purposes
*furthering a personal interest
pursuing a topic raised in class
completing a project*
- use information retrieval strategies in cross-curricular settings
- distinguish between fact and opinion, and bias and objectivity, in text and in the media
- use the school, classroom and public libraries to develop greater insight into book location, classification and organisation
- find information relevant to his/her purpose in non-fiction texts, graphs and pictorial and diagrammatic data, and through the use of information technology
graphical and electronic media.

Strand unit Writing: clarifying thought through writing

The child should be enabled to

- write in a wide variety of genres
 - narrative prose*
 - poetry*
 - instructions*
 - diaries*
 - learning logs*
 - reports*
 - letters*
 - summaries*
 - forms*
 - recipes*
- examine the characteristics that differentiate written and oral language
- write for a particular purpose and with a particular audience in mind
- reflect on and analyse ideas through writing
- refine ideas and their expression through drafting and re-drafting
- express and communicate new learning
- relate new ideas to previous learning
- use notes to summarise reading material and write an account from the notes
- sketch an ordered summary of ideas and draft a writing assignment based on it
- argue the case in writing for a particular point of view
- argue the case in writing for a point of view with which he/she disagrees
- explore the use of compound and complex sentences in expressing thought.

Strand: Emotional and imaginative development through language

Strand unit Oral language: developing emotional and imaginative life through oral language

The child should be enabled to

- discuss with others his/her reactions to everyday experiences and to local, national and world events
- discuss the concerns of other children
- discuss ideas, concepts and images encountered in literature
- discuss personal reading and writing
- express individual responses to poems and literature and discuss different interpretations
- discuss plays, films and television programmes
- experience and enjoy playful aspects of language
 - experimenting with sequences of words*
 - discussing the origins and effects of unusual words*
 - hearing and reading aloud humorous literature*
 - telling riddles and jokes*
 - playing word association games.*

Strand unit Reading: responding to text

The child should be enabled to

- hear the teacher model a response to poems, fiction, plays and parts of plays
- respond to poetry and fiction through discussion, writing, drama, the visual arts and dance
- relate personal experience to the ideas and emotions conveyed in the text
- appreciate issues in fiction
 - the development of character*
 - sense of time and place*
- examine similarities and differences in various types of text
- continue to share response to an ever-increasing variety of texts with the wider community of readers
- browse through, handle, discuss, recommend and select books for independent reading
- develop individuality as a reader by experiencing success and the enhancement of self-esteem through reading
- read aloud from a personal choice of texts to entertain and inform an audience
- listen to books or extracts from books and poetry read aloud or presented on tape, radio or television.

Strand unit Writing: developing emotional and imaginative life through writing

The child should be enabled to

- analyse in writing his/her reactions to personal experiences
- express in writing reactions to the experiences of others
- write stories and poems
- write longer stories or a series of related stories in book form
- keep a personal diary
- express a personal reaction to ideas, emotions and images encountered in literature
- express and analyse his/her reactions to poems
- analyse different interpretations of poems in writing
- write about the relationship between poems and personal experience
- write short plays based on activity in improvisational drama
- express in writing reactions to music, artwork, films, television programmes and videos.

Assessment

Assessment

Introduction

Assessment is an essential element of the teaching and learning process. Its principal purpose is to provide the teacher with continuous detailed information about children's knowledge, their grasp of concepts and their mastery of skills. This, in turn, can lead to a greater understanding of the child and his/her needs, and can help the teacher to design appropriate learning activities that will enable the child to gain maximum benefit from the English curriculum. This cyclic process of learning, assessment, identifying individual needs, evaluating teaching strategies and planning future learning experiences is central to effective teaching and learning.

As language is a central feature of the learning process in every area of the curriculum the assessment of the child's language development and his/her learning through language can be monitored not just in English but in many other learning activities. In this way assessment in English contributes to, and is a factor of, assessment in the other curriculum areas and helps provide a holistic view of the child's development.

The role of assessment: why assess?

Assessment can be used to monitor the rate of children's language development and the effectiveness with which they are using language to learn. It provides the teacher with the means of identifying the needs of individual children and enables him/her to modify curriculum content, to create the learning contexts and to adopt the teaching strategies that will facilitate effective learning. Used like this, assessment has a formative role to play in children's development. It can also be used to indicate areas of learning difficulty in particular children. These can include weaknesses in general language development and a failure to acquire language skills. Crucial among these will be the acquisition of literacy skills. In identifying children with such language problems assessment has a diagnostic role to play.

In using assessment for formative and diagnostic purposes the teacher can build a cumulative picture of the child's language development in the four strands of the curriculum. This will contribute to the profile of the child's development and form a basis for reporting to teachers, parents and others. This is the summative use of assessment. The teacher can also use assessment to evaluate his/her mediation of the curriculum to the children. This involves monitoring the effectiveness and balance of curriculum content, and the various strategies, contexts and resources

employed to advance the children's language and literacy development. In this way assessment can help the teacher to plan the most effective learning experiences for the child.

Assessment in the English curriculum: what should be assessed?

Assessment in English is concerned with monitoring the success with which children learn through an engagement with the four strands of the curriculum. This entails a consideration of the wide spectrum of learning that is envisaged in the strands and will include much more than the assessment of what have been traditionally seen as language skills, although these will still constitute an integral part of the assessment process.

The overall aim of the English curriculum is to enable children to learn language and to learn through language. Assessment will, therefore, focus on learning activities that are envisaged in each of the strands.

Receptiveness to language

In gauging the child's receptiveness to language, for example, the teacher will take account of such things as his/her ability to engage in an appropriate listener-speaker relationship, to respond to non-verbal cues, to follow directions and to understand ideas and to appreciate different ways in which language is used.

Competence and confidence in using language

Competence and confidence in using language will be assessed through monitoring the child's mastery of oral language, reading and writing skills.

Oral language ability can be measured in terms of the success with which he/she is able to listen, talk about experiences, present ideas, give and take turns, initiate and conclude conversations, and perform social functions using language.

The success of the child's engagement with reading will be a reflection of his/her mastery of reading skills and strategies, the ability to comprehend text and respond to it, and the range of his/her reading.

The child's competence in writing can be monitored through the competence with which he/she can write clearly and expressively on a range of topics, in a variety of genres, for different audiences and with reasonable control of the conventions of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Developing cognitive abilities through language

The extent to which a child's cognitive abilities are developed through language will be seen in his/her ability to focus on detail and be explicit about it, to use language in order to elaborate, qualify, modify and explain ideas, and to discuss solutions to problems. It will also be apparent in his/her ability to discuss a point of view, to argue, to summarise, to justify opinions and to use questions. The competence with which the child can use comprehension strategies to reconstruct the meaning of text and to use information retrieval skills in order to gain access to new information will also be an indicator of the child's developing cognitive abilities.

Emotional and imaginative development through language

The child's emotional and imaginative development can be monitored through his/her ability to express feelings and reactions and to formulate and articulate imaginative ideas. Other indicators will be the success with which he/she responds to fiction and poetry and relates both of these to personal experience, the quality of personal reactions to literature, and the ability to write stories and poetry.

Assessment tools: how to assess

The above range of learning activity (and it is merely a summary of what the curriculum contains) presupposes a variety of assessment tools. These will form a continuum ranging from the less structured forms of assessment to more highly structured methods and will include

teacher observation
teacher-designed tasks and tests
work samples, portfolios and projects
curriculum profiles
diagnostic tests
standardised tests.

Each of these has a contribution to make in helping to monitor individual children's rates of progress and levels of attainment as they engage with the English curriculum. Used together they constitute a

multi-dimensional strategy which can enable the teacher to identify particular learning needs and design appropriate teaching strategies.

Teacher observation

This is the form of assessment most consistently used by teachers. It involves the informal monitoring of children's progress as the actual learning process takes place. In observing the varying degrees of success with which children acquire and master different skills, concepts and elements of knowledge teachers continually adjust their methodological approaches and modify learning contexts as they teach.

Much of this observation is concerned with detailed and immediate learning activity and is unrecorded. However, it can be useful to make brief notes from time to time about particular learning requirements. This can be a further help to the teacher in taking account of the progress of the class, a group or an individual at any particular juncture and can inform his/her planning of short-term and long-term teaching strategies.

Teacher-designed tasks and tests

A further dimension of this type of continuing assessment is the monitoring of children's performance in various tasks arising from their engagement with the curriculum. For example, the extent to which a child is able to self-correct a piece of writing can indicate the degree to which he/she has attained a control of spelling, grammar and punctuation. Similarly, after discussion of a text, the teacher might ask the children to summarise it. He/she could then evaluate the various summaries and assess the level of the children's mastery of summarisation skills. This could then provide the basis for planning future work in this area.

This type of monitoring will take a more planned form when the teacher sets a test to measure some element of learning. This can arise directly from and, indeed, be a part of a particular learning activity. Alternatively it might take the form of different tests the teacher might design to monitor children's grasp of some concept or their ability to use certain skills. For example, the teacher might choose to test children's ability to use some of the higher comprehension skills by giving them a written test. Similarly, asking senior class children to write without re-drafting on a given topic can indicate the extent to which they are able to write independently.

The teacher will have occasion to use tasks and tests frequently as a means of assessing children's progress in all the strands.

Work samples, portfolios and projects

By compiling samples of the work of individual children in the class a cumulative record of their performance in the different areas of the English curriculum can be created. For assessment purposes, a representative sample of a child's work which would include some of the best examples would be of greatest use. In English, such a portfolio might include such elements as samples of personal writing, records of individual children's reading and their reactions to it, records of oral presentations made, a record of poetry read and written, and projects that have been completed.

The question of manageability will be a significant factor in deciding how much of the child's work might be included, although in English this will be less problematical since the portfolio will consist mainly of items in written form. However, since the child will have similar portfolios in other areas of the curriculum the question of storage will arise. Obviously, circumstances will vary from school to school and the nature, size and management of portfolios will be a factor of school planning.

However such issues are dealt with, work samples and portfolios can contribute to a picture of the child's development over a period and can facilitate discussion between teacher and parent and between teacher and pupil in relation to his/her language activity and learning.

Curriculum profiles

Teachers' continuing informal observation of children's progress can be structured more formally through the use of pupil profiles. These entail short descriptive statements of pupil achievements, behaviour and attitudes in relation to language learning and learning through language. They may be standardised for different levels of competence and used to check children's individual ability in relation to each of the statements. In the case of English they would reflect the child's progress in relation to elements of the four strands, enable the teacher to construct a learning profile of each individual child, and create a reference record of his/her progress.

Children's ability in relation to statements or descriptors like

- understands left-right, top-bottom orientation
- can sustain a conversation
- can use table of contents and index to retrieve information
- can summarise ideas

could be graded as established, developing, or not yet established.

Diagnostic tests

Teachers will readily recognise a child who is having difficulty with any particular aspect of language development through day-to-day classroom observation. Early screening tests can be given to children who exhibit language development that is significantly below the norm for their age in order to establish the level of difficulty that the child is experiencing. Detailed information about the child's ability in reading, for example, can be acquired using miscue analysis. This is done by recording the child's miscues when reading a suitable piece of text and using these as indicators of his/her stage of development in reading and comprehension. Such screening should be followed by a range of diagnostic tests that will identify the precise nature of the difficulty. Appropriate remedial support can then be provided to maximise the child's language learning potential.

In the course of the assessment process it is important to identify children who have a language disorder or more general visual or hearing problems. These and children who continue to exhibit difficulties despite optimal teaching and support should be referred, at the earliest opportunity, to the appropriate agency for specialist psychological or medical assessment and treatment.

The early identification and screening of children with language difficulties is very important. It is suggested that the best time for this will be early in the second term in senior infants, when the majority of children have begun to acquire basic reading skills.

Teachers should take into account critical variables such as the age, language competence, physical ability and pre-enrolment record of the child as well as the results of diagnostic testing when deciding on intervention to prevent reading or other language failure. This will entail a process of consultation that will involve the class teacher, the previous class teacher, the remedial teacher, the principal and parents. Parents are a particularly valuable source of information in the initial stages of problem identification. Children's achievement and progress ought to be

monitored regularly and any modifications in remedial intervention that are necessary should be made.

It is essential that the assessment of children with learning difficulties is seen as formative and is, therefore, geared to the development of a programme that will cater for individual needs. It is important that teachers and parents recognise that children perform at different levels and that a child's progress and achievement will not always conform to the norm but vary according to individual strengths and abilities. The use of an appropriate range of assessment tools can indicate these areas of strengths and weaknesses. It is equally important that under-achieving gifted pupils benefit from a learning programme appropriate to their needs in order that they may realise their full potential.

Standardised tests

These tests are already widely used in schools. They are norm-referenced or criterion-referenced and are traditionally associated with reading, comprehension and writing skills. In assessing the child's mastery of these skills the teacher is provided with a measurement of ability that is related either to age or to a standardised percentile scale. In this way they can quantify the extent to which the child is performing in relation to particular language skills and confirm less precise judgements made using the more informal assessment tools. Standardised tests contribute to the accuracy of the teacher's monitoring and help to identify the needs of individual children and the appropriate learning targets they require. School planning and classroom planning should facilitate the standardised testing of children periodically during the course of schooling and as part of a wider assessment process.

A balanced approach to assessment

The principal function of assessment is to provide the teacher with an accurate picture of the child's language development. This will enable him/her to create the learning contexts and design the teaching strategies most appropriate to the needs of individual pupils. A great proportion of the teacher's assessment will involve the use of less structured methods and will be an integral part of the teaching process. Assessment techniques like observation, teacher-designed tasks and tests and the use of work samples and/or portfolios are, by their nature, subjective. It is important, therefore, that teachers moderate their standards and criteria against a broader base of teacher experience. Staff

discussion and school-based in-career development can help to provide the teacher with a wider perspective and more objective standards of reference for these forms of assessment.

In using the more structured forms of assessment and in recording the results of assessment generally it is important to ensure that only a minimum of pupil-teacher time is involved. In particular, the design of curriculum profiles should be such as to facilitate the easy recording of the maximum amount of information. It is important also that children have some experience of doing tests before any information about language development is extrapolated from them.

Recording and communicating

By using an appropriate range of the different assessment tools the teacher can monitor children's language development. If this monitoring process is to be effective it is important that he/she adopts a method of recording the relevant information in an accessible form that is compatible with assessment in other areas of the curriculum. This will facilitate continuing communication with the principal, other members of staff and parents. It will also assist the teacher in eliciting feed-back from parents that will enable him/her to plan more effectively language learning programmes for individual children.

Pupil profile cards

Over a period the teacher can construct a comprehensive profile that will constitute a summative record of an individual child's language development. This should be adjusted and updated on a regular basis. It will help determine long-term learning strategies and ensure consistency in the child's development from year to year. It will also contribute to a cumulative assessment of the child and facilitate communication with parents and with other agencies.

Glossary

Glossary

digraph	a combination of two letters used to represent a single sound
engagement with text	reading, comprehending, reflecting on and responding to a piece of text
expository text	text that describes or explains
grammar	the abstract system of rules in terms of which a person's mastery of a language can be explained
grapho/phonic cues	the information provided in sounds and in combinations of sounds represented by letters and groups of letters that helps to predict words
language-experience material	the creation of text by the teacher in collaboration with the pupils in order to facilitate early reading
large-format books	books that are produced in a format large enough for collaborative reading with groups
literacy	the ability to read and write
morpheme	a speech element having a meaning or grammatical function that cannot be subdivided into further such elements
narrative text	an account of events, experiences etc.
onset and rime	onset is the part of a syllable that precedes the vowel and rime is the remainder of the syllable
phoneme	one of the set of speech sounds in a language that serve to distinguish one word from another
phonemic awareness	the knowledge that words are composed of individual speech sounds
phonological awareness	a range of skills such as the ability to analyse words into their constituent speech sounds, the ability to combine speech sounds, and the ability to detect rhyme and alliteration
representational text	text in the form of diagrams, pictures, graphs etc.
scanning	reading quickly in order to establish the organisation and principal features of a text

semantic cues	the contextual information in a text that will help to predict a word or words
skimming	reading quickly in order to find out the gist of a text
syntactic cues	the information contained in grammar and language use that facilitates the interpretation of text
syntax	the totality of facts about the arrangement of words in a language
text	the entirety of a linguistic communication in written or printed form or through sign, gesture or situation
writing genres	the various forms appropriate to different types of written communication—story, essay, letter, dialogue, recipe etc.

Membership of the Curriculum Committee for English

This curriculum has been prepared by the Curriculum Committee for English established by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

Chairpersons	Declan Kelleher	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
	Bryan O'Reilly	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Committee members	Anne Baxter	Catholic Primary School Managers' Association
	Patrick Burke	Irish Federation of University Teachers
	Mary Cogley	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
	Maureen Costello	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
	Seán Delaney	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
	Robert Dunbar	Church of Ireland General Synod Board of Education
	Margaret Farrar	Management of Colleges of Education
	Gabriel Fitzmaurice	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
	Francis Flanagan	Irish Federation of University Teachers
	Fiona Garvey	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
	Niall Huston	Church of Ireland General Synod Board of Education
	Br Ultan McDermott (<i>to 1992</i>)	Teaching Brothers' Association/Association of Primary Teaching Sisters
	Anne McGough	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
	Sr Nivard McGrath	Association of Primary Teaching Sisters/Teaching Brothers' Association
	Noel Moloney	Management of Colleges of Education
	Deirdre Ní Lideadha	Department of Education and Science
	Éamonn Ó Muircheartaigh	Department of Education and Science
Breandán Ó Murchú	Department of Education and Science	
Anne O'Reilly	National Parents Council—Primary	
Anne O'Shea	Catholic Primary School Managers' Association	
Deirdre Shortall	National Parents Council—Primary	
Co-opted advisers	Áine Cregan	Mary Immaculate College of Education, Limerick
	Finian O'Shea	Church of Ireland College of Education, Rathmines, Dublin
Education officers	Paul Brennan	
	Edward Motherway	

Membership of the Primary Co-ordinating Committee

To co-ordinate the work of the Curriculum Committees, the Primary Co-ordinating Committee was established by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

Chairperson	Tom Gilmore	
Committee members	Sydney Blain <i>(from 1995)</i>	Church of Ireland General Synod Board of Education
	Liam Ó hÉigear ta <i>(from 1996)</i>	Department of Education and Science
	Dympna Glendenning <i>(to 1995)</i>	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
	Fionnuala Kilfeather <i>(from 1995)</i>	National Parents Council—Primary
	Éamonn MacAonghusa <i>(to 1996)</i>	Department of Education and Science
	Fr. Gerard McNamara <i>(from 1995)</i>	Catholic Primary School Managers' Association
	Peter Mullan	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
	Sheila Nunan <i>(from 1995)</i>	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
	Eugene Wall	Irish Federation of University Teachers
Co-ordinator	Caoimhe Máirtín <i>(to 1995)</i>	
Assistant Chief Executive Primary	Lucy Fallon-Byrne <i>(from 1995)</i>	
Chief Executive	Albert Ó Ceallaigh	

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ISBN 0-7076-6323-7



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