

# English

This document is a statement of the aims and objectives, principles and strategies for teaching and learning English at Lisnafunchin National School.

It was originally drawn up in the 2001-2002/2003-2004 school years and amended regularly to reflect the introduction and development of our School Improvement Plan in English Literacy, the introduction of the Aistear playbased methodology in the Junior Classroom and most recently at the introduction of the ‘Primary Language Curriculum’. The latest Review was carried out in 2022.

## Rationale:

Language is at the heart of children’s learning. Through language they receive much of their skills. Language enables children both to communicate with others effectively for a variety of purposes, and to examine their own and others’ experiences, feelings and ideas, giving them order and meaning.

## Language also has an important bearing on the mental, emotional and social development of the child: it is the base on which successful teaching and learning in other areas must stand, not only at primary, but at all levels. Our School attaches a high priority to giving pupils a command of the English language and the ability to use it appropriately and concisely to convey meanings. Aims:

We endorse the aims of the Primary Language Curriculum:

**1. Children and their lives**   
The Primary Language Curriculum aims to support teachers to

* enable children to build on prior knowledge and experience of language and language learning to enhance their language learning
* encourage children to embrace Irish positively, and promote our cultural identity through the use of the Irish language
* encourage children of different languages and cultures to be proud of and to share their heritage
* recognise the wide variation in experience, ability and language style which children bring to language learning in school as a first step in enabling them to engage in relevant and meaningful communicative relationships.

**2. Children’s communications and connections with others:**

The Primary Language Curriculum aims to support teachers to

* embrace children’s uniqueness by nurturing  
  their appreciation of their home language, their understanding of language and diversity, and their ability to use different languages, gestures and tools to communicate with people in a variety of contexts and situations
* encourage and enable children to communicate effectively in both the first and second language of the school and to communicate in their heritage language for a variety of purposes
* enable children to fully engage with and enjoy a wide range of relevant and meaningful linguistic and communicative experiences with peers and adults.

**3. Children’s language learning and development**

The Primary Language Curriculum aims to support teachers to

* promote a positive disposition towards communication and language by fostering within children a lifelong interest in and a love of language learning for personal enjoyment and enrichment
* broaden children’s understanding of the world through a rich variety of language experiences and through fostering an awareness and appreciation of other languages and cultures in an enriching learning environment
* encourage children to engage personally with and think critically about a broad range of spoken, gesticulated, written and multimodal texts
* support children to develop their literacy skills and enable them to progress at their own learning pace in oral language, reading and writing
* nurture within children an awareness of language, allowing them to appreciate and understand the content and structure of languages and acquire  
  a basic understanding of the history of languages and other cultures.

## Principles:

The following principles guide the implementation of the English Curriculum in our school:

* The integration of oral language, reading and writing in a coherent language process
* The complementary outcomes of language learning and learning through language
* The central place given to oral language throughout the curriculum
* The development of reading skills through language experience and a range of word identification strategies and the use of a wide range of reading material to satisfy children’s reading needs
* A concentration in the writing process on helping the children to become independent writers

## Content:

The Primary Language Curriculum

## • integrates English and Irish and includes all children and the language knowledge and experiences that children bring to school • engages teachers and learners and supports children to develop positive dispositions toward language and literacy • supports teachers to help children to progress in their language learning and development through the primary years • is more than functional, so that it enables children to make and explore meaning as well as receive and create it.

## Lisnafunchin National School follows the structure of the The Primary Language Curriculum, using the Strands (Oral Language, Reading and Writing), Elements (1. Developing communicative relationships through language, 2. Understanding the content and structure of language, 3. Exploring and using language), Learning Outcomes and Progression Continua as a basis for teacher individual and school-wide planning.

## The full content of the Primary Language Curriculum can be found in the Primary Language Curriculum Handbook for teachers. Each teacher in Lisnafunchin school has access to either a digital or hard-copy of this this book as well as access to [curriculumonline.ie](http://curriculumonline.ie) to aid with planning

## Organisation of Teaching and Learning:

English learning goes on throughout the curriculum.

English is taught formally for 5 hours per week except in Infant classes where the time allocation is 4 hours.

The predominant mode of working in English is whole class teaching, with group work and individual tuition where appropriate.

Girls and boys are expected to achieve equally in all aspects of English.

There is natural linkage and integration with other subjects eg Drama for oral language work and SESE subjects in the areas of reading and writing.

## Multi-Class Organisation and Children with Different Needs:

The English programme aims to meet the needs of all the children in the school.

Our school is a two-teacher school, with Jun Inf. to 2nd Class being taught in one room and 3rd – 6th Class being taught in the other. In the multi-class situation a strand and element in English is often undertaken by all of the pupils in the classroom. Teachers are aware of the wide range of skills, interests, levels of understanding, abilities and maturity of their pupils and expect different outcomes for different pupils. This will be achieved by teachers varying the pace, content and methodologies to insure learning for all pupils. In order to do this we will consider:

* Making an effort to create opportunities for hands on practical activities
* Using a mixture of whole class teaching, focussed group work or paired work, grouping children across the classes eg in teaching of specific skills like Comprehension
* Employing a variety of methodologies in the classroom
* More able pupils will be encouraged to carry out research in certain topic areas
* Offering a variety of recording methods eg digital projects like podcasts, slideshows, photostory type projects
* The SET teacher may be used in a team-teaching scenario where the SET teacher will work with the class teacher to support comprehension skills.

This will be recorded in the teacher’s yearly/short-term notes.

## Aistear Framework

Children of a young age learn best through active and hands on materials; discovery and self-exploration are central to this method.

Aistear is a playbased methodology which is used in the junior classroom as a key teaching tool. Aistear focuses primarily on the child. It promotes independence and self-assessment, therefore enabling natural differentiation to occur. Our aim with Aistear in the classroom is to allow learning to happen through play, encouraging a stimulating and motivating environment where children’s learning thrives.

Since September 2016, the Aistear framework is being implemented in the Junior Class. This enhances the child's experience of the English language from their first day in our school. The Junior Class teacher plans Aistear lessons carefully to give pupils the opportunity to learn about the world around them through play.

Children use oral language to interpret experiences, to solve problems, and to clarify thinking, ideas and feelings. In the Aistear play sessios, pupils use a variety of mark-making materials and implements in an enjoyable and meaningful way giving them pre-writing and writing opportunities

Aistear time is cross curricular and resources to encourage pre writing are incorporated throughout. Aistear promotes the development of *oral language, imaginative play and writing*, development of motor skills, development of mathematical concepts, the aims of the SPHE curriculum, visual arts and many concepts which are outlined in the SESE Curricula.

## Homework:

Homework is used to support English through tasks such as:

Phonic work, Grammar Spelling

Reading exercises

Writing assignments – free writing in activities such as '999 Things to Write About'

See also School Policy on homework

## Role of Parents:

We acknowledge the crucial role that parents play in their children’s language development and the following strategies are employed to enhance such involvement.

New infant parents are met each June. At these meetings the school approach to language is outlined and parents are encouraged and affirmed in their role in this area.

Parental collaboration is also encouraged through inspection and checking of homework, and in the encouragement of their children to join the local Castlecomer Library, and to read books from the school library.

A school handbook which includes an outline of how parents can help in developing children's language is given to new parents each year:

## Information and Communication Technologies

ICT's are used in the school to enhance language teaching and learning, in the following ways:

Use of computers and ipads involve reading on-screen instructions

Children read stories in digital format - eg. The BFG, The Breadwinner and Fallons Rainbow scheme on ipad

Children learn punctuation and grammar by correcting text from Proof-reading and Editing Internet activities

Encyclopedia and the Internet are used as reference sources

Pages for ipad is used in children's drafting, editing and re-drafting of stories, poems and project work.

E-mail is employed from time to time to foster communications skills

Microsoft Photo Story/ 30 Hands / Little Bird Tales/ Keynote develops oral and written language presentation

## Spellings/Phonological Awareness Training:

PAT Levels 1-3 are used across the school from 1st - 3rd Class

**1st/2nd:** Level 1; Level 3: Stage 1, 2

**3rd:** Level 2: Worksheets 1-13; Level 3: Stage 3 - Syllables;

**3rd-6th:** Spelling Lists from Fallons Spelling Book

## Handwriting

The style of handwriting adopted by this school will be based on script writing with encouragement given to pupils who wish to develop cursive (3rd - 6th Class).

Junior Class:

'Write Here' Jun Inf - 2nd Class

'Better Handwriting' educate.ie

'First Steps - Beginning to Write'

Children are introduced to genres of writing and are taught the format of the genres of: Report, Narrative, Recount, Procedure, Explanation, Persuasive, and Writing to Socialise.

Pupils are allowed the use of pens in 5/ 6 Class.

**Reading/Comprehension:**

Comprehension strategies will be explicitly taught from infants to sixth class. The following strategies will be introduced in the Junior room;

* Prediction
* Making Connections
* Questioning
* Creating Images
* Summarising
* Scanning
* Skimming
* Inferring

The skills taught at Junior level will be reinforced and the following skills will be introduced:

* Comparing
* Synthesising
* Questioning
* Determining importance

## Accelerated Reading Programme

The Accelerated Reading programme is in place for the 2nd - 6th Classes in our school. Each child is tested. using the 'Star' testing app. at the beginning of each half-term, and then reads books specifically aimed at his level (within his 'Reading Range').

Pupils then complete quizzes based on each book they read, earning points based on how successful they are in completing the book quizzes, with the aim of achieving a points target for each term.

## Assessment

Teachers will use the Progression Milestones on the Progression Continua informally when assessing where students currently are in their learning, as they prepare lessons.

The school has set up and will continue to use an effective system of monitoring, recording and reporting children’s progress using formal and informal assessment tests and standardised attainment tests as appropriate. Termly reading tests for pupils from 2nd to 6th Class are undertaken using STAR testing. Teacher observation and teacher designed tasks and tests (Friday Spelling/Dictation Tests based on PAT) are other significant elements of our approach to assessment.

Samples of children’s work are also considered, eg checklists for assessing pupils' progress in writing genres in the Senior Class.

The following Standardised tests will be used: -

NewMICRA-T, 2022

MIST in Senior Infants.

Test2r in Senior Infants

The results of these tests will be made available to the Principal and other Teachers, Inspectors (if requested)

and to Parents in the form of a General End of Year Report (1st to 6th Class) or in individual cases if deemed necessary by teachers.

See also the school SET Policy

## Recording and Reporting;

(As set out in Assessment policy)

The results of classroom tests will also be kept in the children’s test copies.

The results of Standardised Tests will be entered on the Aladdin school management system.

These will form the basis for an oral report on each child being compiled by the class teacher for Parent/Teacher meetings.

Star Test results are kept in Accelerated Reader Programme.

## Special Needs

Where children are deemed to have difficulties their strengths and weaknesses in English (reading) are further explored using diagnostic assessment. The importance of early intervention is recognised and support teaching is provided as soon as it is evident that a child is having difficulty. The progress of those attending Support classes is reviewed regularly thus ensuring that those who would benefit most receive appropriate help. See also SET Policy.

## Feedback to Pupils

As set out in Assessment policy;

is achieved by consistently marking and by orally commenting on their Work.

By use of praise and recognition of their work.

## Resources

Textbooks/Workbooks/Schemes:

The Folens’ ‘Reading Zone’ Series, and the Fallons ‘Wonderland’, ‘Rainbow’ reading schemes are used and provide a framework for Reading which is supported by a variety of other activities.

The multi-level Comprehension Box scheme is used in the Senior Class and the school has introduced the Accelerated Reader programme which allows pupils to succeed in reading books suitable at their class level - differentiation.

The Folens ‘Starlight’, Prim-Ed ‘Listening and Speaking’ and EdCo ‘Chatterbox’, forms part of discrete Oral English lessons.

Book collection from ‘Building Bridges of Understanding’ programme.

Picture Books for BookTalk to promote discussion of 'difficult' themes eg, refugees, inclusion, bereavement, gender etc.. in the Senior Class.

## Resources available

Text Books

ipads for ebooks, word processing with 'Pages', animation with 'Toontastic' and oral work based on apps such as 'Rory's Story Cubes'.

Pre-Reading Activities

Class Libraries/Public Library

Pictures

Charts

Posters

Paintings

Photographs

Audio and videotapes

Computers/computer programmes

Brochures

Novels

Fiction/ Non-fiction books

Dictionaries/Thesauruses

Word-banks

Word-lists

Jigsaws

Letterland material/ Jolly Phonics Materials

Workbooks/Worksheets

Remedial Resources

Word games

Visiting authors

***School Improvement Plan, 2013 onwards***

We have decided to concentrate on improving oral language across all classes and comprehension in the Senior Class in a bid to improve overall literacy standards in the school.

Specifically, we have decided to teach a discrete oral language lesson each week in all classes, using resources such as Starlight OLP, .

Debating will be introduced in the Senior Classes.

Also, in Senior Classes the ‘Building Bridges’ programme is used to formally teach Comprehension strategies.

In the school years from 2014 to 2019 we have introduced the Accelerated Reader Programme for pupils from 2nd to 6th Class. This is a focussed effort to encourage children to read at their own individual level allowing for differentiation, and so to become more confident readers and to experience an increased enjoyment of reading.

The Accelerated Reader programme was reviewed in Spring 2017 and it was decided to continue the financial investment in it for three further years.

## Development, Implementation and Review

The progress of the policy and the review process will be co-ordinated by the teachers annually.

A review and amendment of the policy has taken place in August 2019.

Elements of the policy will be discussed as necessary at staff meetings.

The success criteria by which this policy will be judged include the following:

Teacher observation

Classroom assessment including evaluation of assignments

Standardised tests will be averaged and compared with a pre-policy base-line

Parent/pupil/community feedback

Inspector's report

Second level feedback

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Chairperson, on behalf of the Board of Management**

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

