



Scoil Niamh Community National School

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Language Policy Statement

Introduction:

This policy was drafted by the school principal, Mr. Séamus Conboy. It was then discussed at a meeting with all teachers in the school. All suggestions were discussed and taken into consideration. The policy was reviewed by the school's single manager, Mr. Ian Murphy and subsequently ratified. It is hoped that this policy will inform the entire school community of Scoil Niamh's commitment to language development. For EAL pupils this involves both English (L2) and their native tongue (L1) development.

Aim:

The aims of this language policy is the promotion and achievement of:

- Excellent English language skills in all areas (oral language, reading, writing) for both native English speakers and pupils with English as an Addition Language (EAL).
- A positive attitude towards all languages which our children speak.
- A validation of each pupil's unique cultural and linguistic identity
- An appreciation of the linguistic skills of EAL learners

Language Support:

As language underpins all formal teaching, developing English language proficiency for all pupils is imperative to the child's success in school. All elements of the curriculum involves the learning of language and all teachers are, therefore, teachers of language. Given the linguistic diversity in Scoil Niamh where a large proportion of our pupils speak more than one language, the concept of plurilingualism as a means of enhancing language awareness is particularly relevant. In this approach, there is an emphasis on 'commonality' of language through interconnectedness and linkage. When learning English, it is hoped that EAL pupils are not unlearning their other languages. The child's cultural and linguistic identity and status can be enhanced when his/her first language is utilised to allow them to access the curriculum more meaningfully. This approach, which recognises the importance of a child's first language in additional language acquisition, enhances the experiential learning of all pupils.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Whole School Staff

The entire staff is aware of the importance of a child's L1 in enhancing their sense of their personal identity and how it can enable an EAL child to access the curriculum more meaningfully. Parents are encouraged by the staff of the school to maintain and support their children's mother tongue. At the initial meeting in September with the class teacher, the importance of L1 development is emphasised to parents. Practical suggestions are given to teachers to guide them with this approach. (Appendix 1)

Class Teacher

The role and responsibility of the class teacher is to teach the curriculum to all pupils in the class, being mindful of the strengths and weaknesses of the children. It is imperative that the teacher uses the rich linguistic and cultural diversity in his/her class to enrich the learning experience of every child in the class.

Language Support Teacher

The primary responsibility of the language support teacher is to promote the pupil's English language proficiency development to ensure that the curriculum is made more accessible to the pupils under their tutelage. The language support teacher also has a role in getting to know the families of EAL children so that they can become more familiar with the customs, traditions and experiences of the children. This personal information is extremely important in order to provide effective teaching methodologies and content that is relevant to EAL children. Language support teachers in Scoil Niamh take a socio-cultural approach to the teaching of language and draw on the life experiences of the child when exploring various themes. The language support teacher will make every effort to welcome newcomer families to the school and to provide opportunities for parents from linguistic minorities to become familiar with practises and procedures in the school. The language support teacher delivers a programme of English language instruction which is based on what the children need in order to access the Revised Primary School Curriculum (1999) more successfully and in order to socialise better with peers.

As a means of supporting the EAL learner, the Language Support Teacher Should:

- Work in collaboration with the mainstream classroom teacher to set relevant and achievable learning targets for each pupil.
- Prepare the pupil, on an on-going basis to access mainstream learning, initially in part and later more fully.
- Help the pupil to develop appropriate strategies and skills to support future formal education in general.
- Inform the classroom teacher of additional information about the EAL child garnered from parents that may be relevant to the classroom teacher.

The language support and classroom teacher both have a role in:

- Ensuring that newly arrived pupils understand and use the basic language required in the classroom e.g. toilet, lunch, put your hand up, sit in your seat, sit in a circle etc.
- Equipping pupils with knowledge and understanding of school rules and procedures so that he/she does not unwittingly infringe them.
- Helping pupils to understand different norms of behaviour that may exist in the new school/culture/society.
- Helping to build the confidence and self-esteem of pupils who may feel different, excluded and less able than those around them.

Success Criteria:

The effectiveness of the school's language policy will be measured using the following criteria:

- Children grow more confident in using their L1 to further their understanding of concepts learned through their L2.
- Newcomer parents understand practices and procedures in the school.
- Planning/Cuntais Mhíosula reflect teachers' attempts at adapting activities/learning to make them more relevant to the children's linguistic and cultural identities.

Ratification and Review:

This policy was ratified by the single manager in May 2014. It will be reviewed annually and when needed but no later than June 2015.

Implementation:

This policy will be implemented from May 2014.

Signature of chairperson/single manager:

Date:

Review date:

June 2016

Appendix 1 - Practical Strategies:

Every effort is made to bring a child to the point where they can function successfully within the mainstream system. In Scoil Niamh:

- Parents of EAL pupils are encouraged to maintain and develop the L1 of the child.
- Children receive language support from Junior Infants.
- Children who speak the same language are given opportunities to work on projects together utilising their L1. This is to ensure that they have a deep understanding of the content of the project. Feedback on the project to their teacher and peers is provided in their L2. This is seen as particularly relevant in maths.
- The aims of this policy in ensuring that all languages spoken in the school are affirmed, respected and included will be accomplished through:
 - The formal curriculum
 - The 'hidden curriculum' i.e. wall displays, images etc.
 - Nurturing a culture of language awareness among all pupils
 - Highlighting that different languages are spoken in school.
 - Encouraging parents to maintain and develop their child's L1
 - Viewing EAL children as multi-linguists rather than in deficit terms.
- EAL children are withdrawn in small groups of 5-6 children rather than in pairs.
- Teachers should include an 'academic language' section in their planning to target subject specific language to be explicitly taught to all children.
- In elbow-partner work – EAL children are often paired with native English speakers. However, it is important that native English speakers are given opportunities to discuss topics with other native English speakers.
- EAL children of the same linguistic backgrounds are given opportunities to discuss concepts in their L1 and feed back to the class using English.
- Teachers do not attempt to correct grammar when having a conversation with a child. Grammar is taught during discrete grammar lessons and during Literacy.
- Teachers are aware of the 'silent phase' and that it is normal for this to last up to a year. Receptive language is increasing even if it is not heard being used. Expressive language will follow with encouragement and increased confidence.
- Clear distinctions are made with Learning Support and Language Support. These groups are not taught together, unless their needs are similar. A child attending Learning Support may join a language group from time to time to give the Learning Support child a sense of achievement and success.
- Use of a child's L1 (if not English) is discouraged in the following instances:
 - If any child feels excluded from a group conversation as it is taking place in another language. Repeated use of a child's or group of

children's L1 to exclude another child will be dealt with under the school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies.

- In infant classes, children are encouraged to use English at all times during the play aspect of Aistear, as English language acquisition is one of the main objectives of each station.
- When the children are eating and socialising in their groups in the classroom.
- During whole-class discussions.