



Communication, Language & Literacy Policy

Contents

1. The rationale of the policy	3
2. Statement of intent of the policy.....	3
3. Aims	3
4. Language.....	3
5. Special Educational Needs	3
6. Skills and Attitudes we wish to develop.....	4
7. The Staff needs.....	4
8. We intend in school to.....	4
9. Main Skill Areas.....	4
9.1. Speaking and Listening.....	4
9.2. Writing	5
9.3. Reading	5
9.4. Spelling.....	5
10. Observation, Assessment and Record Keeping	6
11. Technology	6
12. Equal opportunities	7
13. Staff training	7
14. Curriculum map	7
15. Additional notes for using Makaton symbols.....	7
16. Next steps.....	7

1. The rationale of the policy

This policy is intended to provide a clear and practical outline of our approach to the teaching of communication, language and literacy. We hope it will:

- Prove useful to the work of teachers and all professionals involved with our pupils towards developing a consistently high standard of practice.
- Be of interest to parents in supporting the work from home.
- Be informative for others involved or interested in our programme such as governors and the staff teams of neighbouring schools with whom we may integrate.

Developing fun, multisensory activities that are based on the pupils' interests is key to encouraging inclusivity and making literacy and language acquisition enjoyable and memorable.

2. Statement of intent of the policy

Our teaching of Literacy is influenced by the National Curriculum Programmes of attainment and Study for literacy. Also the continuing change in the intake of children from moderate to more severe learning difficulties has meant the use of a wider variety of strategies and resources, for example 'Equals', Verbal Behaviour etc.. Our essential task continues to be to achieve, as best we can, a genuine access for all pupils to the requirements of the National Curriculum Programmes and therefore, as far as we can, we adhere to the format of that with a strong emphasis on the basic skills. We aim to ensure that each child has the opportunity to read, write and communicate in English at a level necessary to function effectively and progress at work and in society in general.

3. Aims

- Through a range of social and learning contexts, to develop skills in the use and understanding of English.
- To encourage understanding of the various ways and systems through which meaning is conveyed.
- To provide equal opportunities for all pupils to be able to access a balanced and relevant curriculum that reflects the pupils' cultural diversity.
- To respond to pupils' individual learning styles through the use of a variety of teaching methods.
- To provide an environment of Total Communication by all staff supporting language acquisition through the use of basic signing - Makaton.

4. Language

English is different from other school subjects in that it is both a subject and a medium of instruction for other areas of the curriculum. The National Curriculum Programme of Assessment and Study for Learning understands that the pupils' spoken language, reading, writing and vocabulary are integral aspects of the teaching of every subject. English is both a subject in its own right and the medium for teaching; for pupils, understanding the language provides access to the whole curriculum. Fluency in the English language is an essential foundation for success in all subjects: Vocabulary development / Reading & Writing / Spoken language. It encompasses all language use and study, drama, and the teaching of skills for reading, writing and spelling and communication on every level. The children are supported through OT programmes for pre-writing (gross and fine motor skills) and higher writing skills.

Language is a social tool, the means whereby we interpret and communicate experience and generally make sense of our world. Our teaching reflects an awareness of the importance of home languages, and the multicultural nature of society, contributing to a sense of social awareness and social responsibility in our pupils. We are aware of the new National Curriculum Programme for English, in which there will be a stronger emphasis on vocabulary, handwriting, spoken English and spelling, punctuation and grammar.

5. Special Educational Needs

At Castlebar School each pupil is valued as an individual. Pupils are encouraged to achieve their own potential and to develop an intrinsic desire to learn and participate fully in school life. Our pupils present a range of physical, sensory, perceptual and emotional needs. The constant challenge is therefore in how we offer access to the curriculum, as well as providing a curriculum which is relevant and appropriately challenging at different points. In achieving this we will:

- Liaise with occupational, speech and physiotherapy departments and Learning support services.
- Make use of resources and professional expertise within the school to support our teaching.
- We will recognise possibilities for drama, dance and movement in our work for all pupils particularly those who would benefit from communication not necessarily verbal.
- We will differentiate our presentation of material to ensure that as well as taking account of breadth and progression, it is appropriate in terms of both pupil interests and level of maturity.

In the Purple and Orange departments we will ensure that the older members of the school receive the opportunities to access appropriate work which will enable them to acquire knowledge and basic skills in preparation for transition to High School or integration into mainstream.

6. Skills and Attitudes we wish to develop

We would wish our pupils to have:

- An expectation of success.
- Confidence: to take risks, make connections, ask for help.
- A willingness to share and engage.

7. The Staff needs...

- Respect for and interest in the pupils' language, culture and interests.
- The ability to recognise growth points, strengths and potential.
- An understanding of mistakes as being necessary to learning.
- The ability to make use of a variety of learning styles to meet the needs of the variety of children in the class.

8. We intend in school to...

- Build on the present language understanding which our pupils have developed at home and in the community.
- To teach transferrable skills to increase the students' ability to communicate at their level.
- Use Makaton signs & symbols as a total communication aid, as well as alternative communication when necessary i.e. PECS system.
- Maximise interaction between pupils and staff, who are involved as talkers, readers, writers and listeners.
- Use adapted texts that pupils can read and understand e.g. use visual and written materials in different formats, including large print, symbol text.
- Use ICT and other technologies, to support augmentative & alternative communication.
- Use materials and resources that pupils can access through sight, touch, sound, taste or smell.
- Provide support from adults or peers when needed.
- Adapt tasks or environments as required.
- To experience live performance e.g. Smarts Pantomimes, Bag Books.

9. Main Skill Areas

As a school, we are concerned with ensuring the children acquire the basic skills in Literacy. We plan on a termly and weekly basis, using our own curriculum, the format being based on the Early Years Foundation Stage model of 7 areas of learning. We follow guidelines within the National Curriculum Programme for Assessment and Study, the E.Y.F.S., Letters and Sounds (Primary National Strategy) and information from individual pupil' I.E.Ps.

The following principles will underpin our practice.

9.1. Speaking and Listening

- We acknowledge the central importance of speaking and listening skills to the development of our pupils both cognitively [their ability to understand new ideas] socially accepting the essential link between language learning and social interaction.
- We intend to provide for an atmosphere in our classrooms in which pupils will feel secure in expressing and exploring their thoughts and ideas.
- We will model good listening and speaking throughout each day, through supportive staff and a range of resources.
- We will use symbols and signs in all sessions to enhance learning and to encourage children to communicate with others and understand what is required, for example: PECS, Makaton signs and symbols.
- We will liaise with speech therapists and other agencies when necessary to support the children's progress and learning and use a variety of interventions e.g. Verbal Behaviour, Intensive Interaction, Look and Listen.
- We will make use of audio equipment, visual aids, iPads and computer programmes.
- As many of our pupils need particular support in oral work & cognitive processing, we will allow for this in our planning by using small progressive steps.
- We will use the programme of Talking Partners to enhance the speaking & listening opportunities of the more able students, three pupils per class per term, when appropriate, led by a teaching assistant.

- We will develop language skills through the use of Communication in Print and Colourful Semantics.
- To celebrate Literacy through events throughout the year, World Book Day, World Poetry Day, and to celebrate the wide range of the School's cultural heritage to have a Multicultural story telling event every 2-3 years.

9.2. Writing

- We will develop pre-writing skills across a range of multisensory activities.
- We will introduce the children to the concept of written work by helping them to recognise meaning in words and text by giving them the basic skills and knowledge needed.
- We will provide opportunities for pupils to develop their skills as writers for a range of purposes and for different audiences across the curriculum.
- We will support handwriting development using specific schemes as suggested by OTs e.g. Handwriting Without Tears, Teodoroescu-Perceptual Motor Programme.
- We will use structured programmes to underpin skills in all areas of writing e.g. spellings, grammar, composition, such as Colourful Semantics and 5 Minute Phonics.
- We will encourage pupils to write individually, supported by a range of symbols, and in collaboration with other students or staff. Children who are ready will be encouraged to use word books, word lists and dictionaries to aid independent work.

9.3. Reading

- The initial stages of reading are taught using the Letters and Sounds Phase 1 activities, ranging from Aspect 1: General Sound Discrimination -identifying environmental sounds to Aspect 7: Oral Blending and Segmenting. The pupils will move onto intensive phonics input with the 5 Minute Phonics intervention.
- Castlebar uses the Oxford Reading Tree as its main scheme. We use 'Note Book' for creating & adapting texts with Makaton symbols. Oxford Reading Tree texts are used lower down the school as part of the Literacy sessions but with a wider range of schemes available as the pupil progresses. When it is considered beneficial to the pupil books will be sent home on a daily basis. Other reading schemes are used to supplement and run alongside the ORT scheme offering a broad base at any level.
- A variety of fiction, non-fiction and poetry texts from will be available for use in the Literacy sessions, which will have support sheets and concrete materials with them to aid the teaching points being made—i.e. toys, fruit, magnetic characters, puppets etc.
- DVDs, CD-ROMs, games and computer stories from the Oxford Reading Tree range and other reading schemes and sources will also be used on a regular basis to support reading in class.
- Castlebar is using a variety of sites and programmes to develop synthetic phonics, e.g. my USO, Core 5 Lexia, Big Cat Phonics, Collins Connect and sensory book bags, to assist in blending and segmenting phonemes, and recognising graphemes. We will start at the level of the pupil:
 - Through close observation and assessments we will aim for a precise grasp of what pupils know and can do, using PIVATs, I-Can statements and the Letters and Sounds Phase 1-3 overview.
 - We value close links with parents both as providers of information and also as the main supporters of our work..
 - We will select books appropriate to the ability of our children- books which have strong story lines, interesting illustrations, positive cultural images and memorable natural language.
 - We will read aloud to children throughout the school therefore building constantly on the repertoire of known texts, encouraging a natural inclination to respond, join in and predict.
 - In particular, with more able children, we will encourage the use and appreciation of non-fiction and various information texts and sources i.e. dictionaries, word books, computer data, which will be age appropriate.
 - Pupils have access to the school library with age/reading age appropriate books.
 - We will use the on line adaptive programme Core 5 Lexia to extend more able students throughout the school.

9.4. Spelling

We follow guidelines from the National Curriculum Programme of Attainment & Study for Literacy on teaching of phonics and support the work with a wide range of resources in order to interest the pupil and reinforce work covered. With the emphasis on the teaching of synthetic phonics we follow the guide lines as set out in [Letters and Sounds \(2007\)](#). Phonics-

Letters and Sounds teaching will happen daily. So that the needs of all pupils are provided for e.g. some access learning of whole words (5 minute phonics intervention). The pupils move on to learning of high frequency words given in the National Curriculum Programme. Additional resources used are the Big Cat Phonics programme, Collins Connect online learning, myUSO, Smart Kids Phonics and Core 5 Lexia (an online programme to support higher ability students).

- We will teach the SATPIN method and follow phases 1-3 in 'Letters and Sounds.'
- We will teach the phonemes, order then names of the letters of the alphabet, supported by games and exercises to develop concentration and memory skills.
- We will teach the children to become familiar with sounds of letters.
- We will introduce children to common spelling patterns.
- We will encourage children to use their knowledge of sounds and spelling patterns to spell words independently as they move through the school.
- We will use the 5 Minute Phonics Box 1 and 2, to teach and extend understanding of the alphabet and phonemes throughout the school for pupils who are assessed as being ready.
- The literacy team created a Phonics assessment pack, following the Letter and Sounds guidelines for phases 1-3. This will be assessed termly. This will help track pupils phonic progress over a number of years.

10. Observation, Assessment and Record Keeping

- A Baseline assessment of each child is made when they enter a new class. This assessment is reviewed twice in the year in the form of I.E.P.s written by the teacher. At an annual review, which involves the class teacher, parents (and other agencies, if necessary), the I.E.P.s and the child's progress are discussed. Plans for the following year are then recorded.
- A mid-term review with a follow up meeting with an Assistant Head tracks progress, and ensures no progress or limited progress is analysed, and the exceeding progress is monitored.
- Assessment procedures should provide pupils with an opportunity to reflect on their own work. Therefore each child has a Work Evidence Folder that contains samples of work done throughout their school career linked to their Progress Tracker file. Children will be given the opportunity to reflect on their work after each teaching session and therefore be encouraged to appreciate their level of understanding and achievement.
- Standardised Reading Comprehension tests taken in November and May are used to monitor progress in reading for selected pupils working above P8.
- Teachers use PIVATs and I-Can statements to produce I.E.P's three times in the year. These I.E.P's are taken into consideration when termly and weekly plans are produced. IEP achievement monitored once a term, followed by discussion with teachers regarding targeted pupils.
- Parents have the opportunity to meet with teachers twice in the year in Structured Conversations, aside from the Annual Review, as well as impromptu meetings as and when necessary.
- Assessment opportunities are planned for and recorded on half termly planning sheets.
- Makaton assessment taken once a year for selected pupils between May & June, carried out by the Makaton Team.
- Letters and Sounds Phase 1-3 overview each term.
- Statutory Year 2 phonics screening test in May.
- Fortnightly meetings with Deputy Head and Numeracy Coordinator and a cycle of Cluster leaders to monitor staff planning, book scrutiny, to review Learning Walks, Progress Meetings. These all combine to highlight areas for discussion and further improvement.
- Moderation of different areas of CLL work is carried out once a term by staff, focusing on different areas.
- Termly meetings for the CLL Team, to oversee progress and discuss strategies and initiatives.
- Teachers will meet with Department managers on a termly basis to monitor IEP progress.

11. Technology

The promotion of computer/ICT skills is delivered through the following:

- Access to interactive learning through use of whiteboards, computers etc.
- Access to two sensory rooms.
- Use of augmentative equipment such as touch screen and digital cameras, and camcorders.
- The availability and use of learn pads, iPads in each department (this is being reviewed at present).

12. Equal opportunities

- Access for all, regardless of ability.
- Promotion of material that reflects the diverse ethnicity of our pupils.
- Material that promotes positive images of boys and girls.
- Awareness of materials to engage boys as readers and FRED intervention.

13. Staff training

All staff members are encouraged to take advantage of the courses offered by the Ealing Primary Teaching School Alliance and IOE courses, especially those relating to the teaching of the basic skills. We review our teaching of basic skills and address this in our school based inset at least once a term. A wide range of in-house training to promote all areas of communication, language and literacy is provided each term on an official and unofficial basis, with the support of the Multi-disciplinary Team.

14. Curriculum map

Our curriculum map gives a balanced overview of our teaching throughout the school. It incorporates non-fiction, fiction and poetry as well as basic skill requirements and is linked to our Records of Progress. A variety of texts are used for teaching, these will be allocated as a teaching resource to particular departments. This will ensure, where possible, the use of age appropriate texts. There may still be times when it is necessary to use younger texts with older pupils. This is altered every 2-3 years to reflect the changes in levels of pupils' achievements and is now grouped in to Lower Ability, Middle Ability, High Ability and Higher High Ability.

15. Additional notes for using Makaton symbols

- The Makaton Collection 2013 signs and symbols can be found within the Communicate in Print software.
- We will use a Makaton symbol as a first choice
- We will use an alternative widget black and white symbol if the Makaton symbol is not available
- We will use an alternative coloured widget symbols if this believed to be the most suitable symbol based on the object in question
- Coloured widgets may be used in some circumstances where a pupil would benefit from a more pictorial symbol

16. Next steps

In 2017-18 Castlebar School will

- Continue to use PIVATs based on the P-Scales.
- Use the Interim Pre-Key Stage standards
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/interim-pre-key-stage-1-standards>
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/interim-pre-key-stage-2-standards>
- Will update assessments systems according to Rochford Review recommendations and changes to statutory requirements.

Castlebar School

January 2018

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