

Programme of Study for Irish (in Irish Speaking Schools) at Key Stage 1

1

KEY STAGE

Programme of Study
IRISH (in Irish Speaking Schools)

General Introduction

Language by its very nature is multifocused. All curricular areas are infused with language activities. Language is the dominant medium through which experiences and activities are presented to the pupils; pupils explore and investigate these experiences and activities; pupils record and communicate their thoughts, understanding, opinions and emotions about these experiences and activities.

Listening, understanding, talking, reading and writing should not be regarded as discrete areas which are developed separately from one another or without reference to each other. Language, oral and written, formal and informal, and as an individual and collective activity, is an essential and inevitable ingredient of all activities within the classroom situation. This natural link between the three attainment targets should be taken account of and built upon at all times.

LISTENING, UNDERSTANDING AND TALKING

Introduction

Oral language skills are the foundation for the development of the more formal aspects of reading and writing skills. However, the conditions which affect the development of the first language, usually English, and the second language are not always the same and the school which is teaching through Irish must take account of those conditions. In the early years of Key Stage 1, Irish requires the provision of an extended period of time directed almost exclusively at oral language development. It involves activities where the main emphasis is on basic language acquisition rather than on the enrichment and extension of a language which is already developed to a considerable degree. Under these circumstances, the teacher is obliged to focus consciously on the requirements for the development of basic language competence throughout all aspects of the curriculum. This is a major challenge because it requires systematic and conscious planning. Language activities must have a specific and planned focus at all times, even in the situation where the teacher is involved in the development of other non-language specific areas.

To be successful, the language environment of the classroom must provide a wide range of relevant activities, stimulate the pupil's interest and motivation, take account of the stages within the second language acquisition process, consolidate and extend the pupil's increasing competence and promote an informed supportive role for parents.

The earliest second language experiences of the pupil are directed largely at the development of their receptive skills - their ability to comprehend. The ability to listen is a crucial factor in this process. While a pupil's ability to listen for the purposes of comprehension is influenced by maturity, levels of interest and social skills, it is also enhanced by the use of appropriate levels of language by the teacher and a wide range of visual and contextual clues. Practical experience in all language-associated activities is crucial. As the pupil moves from a purely receptive role into a more productive role in the language acquisition process, practical interaction of the pupil in language activities must be sustained.

In the early years of Key Stage 1, until the pupils' ability to express themselves in the second language is adequate, it is the pupils' use of the first language that gives information with regard to those aspects of language development which relate to personality, confidence, social skills and social interaction with others, along with their ability to reflect, think and articulate about experiences and activities in which they are involved.

Presentation of the Programme of Study

While these detailed requirements have been set out under specific headings, it must be remembered that the processes and activities incorporated within the headings are not discrete but inter-relate and interact.

Progression

During the early stages of Key Stage 1, there are two languages in use in the Irish-medium school. The teacher will use Irish with the pupils. By and large at the beginning the pupils will use English with the teacher and they will use English with their peers, who themselves are also using English. At this point pupils, therefore, function as listeners in relation to the target language (i.e. Irish) and as listeners and speakers in relation to their first language. During this period, until their spoken Irish has reached an adequate standard, the pupils' comprehension of Irish, as they participate in stories, games, mathematical and scientific activities and other experiences within the curriculum, will tend to be indicated by responses they give in English. This is an inevitable part of the language-learning process for English-speaking pupils in an Irish-medium school. As competence in Irish grows, the pupils' dependence on English decreases.

The pupils' innate skills as listeners, along with their experiences and practice as listeners, will all have had a significant influence on the level of Irish that the pupils have acquired at any given point. These skills will continue to influence their development.

In the Irish-medium school, where English is the pupil's first language, there is a definite progression to be seen in the type and complexity of language to which pupils respond. In the early years of Key Stage 1, language directed at the pupils will involve restricted register, much repetition and extensive dependence on visual and contextual aids. Language production skills emerge gradually - from the first simple word or phrase incorporated into a primarily English context to the fairly even mixture of Irish and English, to the pupils' capacity to use all Irish, or nearly all Irish, in any given situation by the end of this Key Stage.

Within the context of this programme of study, pupils should have opportunities to progress:

- **from** listening and understanding **towards** listening, understanding, and speaking within the classroom situation;
- **from** using English interspersed with basic words, phrases and sentences in Irish **towards** using Irish with teachers and peers in the classroom and then in spontaneous activities;
- **from** using simple Irish in structured situations **towards** using a variety of sentence patterns and tenses;
- **from** using recognisable basic Irish pronunciation **towards** developing a grasp of the most common pronunciations characteristic of Irish;
- **from** talking about simple matters and feelings **towards** asking pertinent questions and describing classroom events.

Pupils with Special Needs

It is important to recognise the particular problems of pupils with learning difficulties. They need extra encouragement, help and support at all times, and language activities should be based firmly on the first-hand experiences of the pupils.

Contribution to the Educational (Cross-curricular) Themes

The Irish Curriculum should, where appropriate, provide opportunities for pupils to use Listening, Understanding and Talking to explore and reflect on the content and issues associated with cross-curricular themes.

Through group work, role-plays, simulations etc, pupils should have opportunities, to talk about:

- themselves and others - their growth, their senses, their similarities and differences, their health and diet, personal hygiene, safety and avoidance of danger (CH, EMU, HE);
- adult figures significant to them within their immediate community (EMU, HE, CH);
- events important to them – nativity play, school concert and school outings (EMU, HE);

and

- to develop and apply their knowledge, understanding and skills of information technology and, in particular, to record and listen to their own speech and that of others, *for example, on an audio tape or video tape (IT)*.

Context

Arising from the development of a classroom environment in which pupils' ideas are encouraged and stimulated, pupils should have opportunities, based on practical experiences, to develop their talking, listening and understanding:

- as individuals;
- in pairs;
- as members of a group;
- as members of a class.

Audience

In most instances, the issue of audience will arise from the context for the task. Pupils should have opportunities to listen, understand and talk:

- to the school community as a whole;
- to Irish speaking visitors to the school;
- when visiting outside the school situation.

Purpose

Talking, listening and understanding are developed through the social use of language and the tasks to which language is directed. Pupils should have opportunities to develop and extend the target language through participation in:

- discussions and conversations;
- asking and answering questions;
- giving directions and explanations;
- describing and informing others about their own work and experiences;
- expressing thoughts, emotions and opinions.

Listening, Understanding and Talking Activities

The confidence and competence which pupils exhibit in their use of language are influenced by the activity in which they are engaged and the purpose for which they are using language. Pupils should have opportunities to participate in a variety of listening, understanding and talking activities. These activities should include:

- a becoming involved in oral language activities throughout the curriculum;
- b listening to and responding to directions given by the teacher;
- c listening to and responding to a wide variety of stories based on personal experiences, imagination and literature;
- d listening to and responding to appropriate stories, rhymes and songs, and using these as a basis for art, drama and other expressive activities;
- e listening to and reciting poems, rhymes and songs;
- f participating in role-play and other drama activities;
- g expressing thoughts, opinions and feelings about personal experiences, stories, poems and curricular activities;
- h describing and discussing events, people, places and things, imaginary and real.

Within the context of these activities, pupils should develop the ability to:

- a understand and respond to basic oral communication;
- b communicate with a responsible adult in times of need;
- c take turns at talking and listening;
- d co-operate and share within pairs, groups and the whole class;
- e consider what and how they say things;
- f speak audibly and clearly and with reasonable pronunciation;
- g discuss patterns encountered in language, *for example, rhyming words, initial consonants*;
- h consolidate, extend and enrich language ability.

READING

Introduction

The development of reading skills is crucial in facilitating pupils' understanding and study of all areas of the curriculum. Pre-reading language experiences are an important and essential foundation for this programme of study. In the early stages of Irish-medium education in particular, considerable time is required to develop basic receptive and production skills in the target language. Extended periods should be spent on a range of pre-reading activities which not only focus on the specific requirements of the pre-reading situation but also stimulate and initiate a range of oral language activities.

The value and importance of reading should be demonstrated through the creation of a positive and stimulating atmosphere in the classroom and the provision of an environment which arouses the pupil's curiosity and interest. Pupils should feel at ease during their reading activities and, as their competence increases, the pleasure associated with reading should become a significant factor in their motivation. The good example, keen interest and energy of the teacher as a reader should be major sources of encouragement for the pupils as readers.

A wide range of various types of print and reading materials should be available to the pupils in the classroom. The teacher should provide a variety of reading activities and experiences for the pupils from which they will begin to develop their own likes and preferences in their choice of reading material.

Reading is perceived as a unit composed of three interdependent elements:

- decoding skills;
- understanding;
- enjoyment.

The pupils should have frequent opportunities to:

- increase their word store;
- use pictorial, contextual and phonic cues;
- become familiar with the sounds of letters/blends/syllables;
- become familiar with the names of the letters of the alphabet;
- become familiar with the most common phonetic patterns of the Irish language through
 - games, verses, songs, stories and art work;
- read at home and listen to other readers at home.

Presentation of the Programme of Study

While these detailed requirements have been set out under specific headings, it must be remembered that the processes and activities incorporated within the headings are not discrete but inter-relate and interact.

Progression

Within the context of this programme of study pupils should have opportunities to progress:

- **from** listening to stories and understanding that pictures and print convey meaning **towards** reading simple texts with a degree of understanding and fluency;
- **from** recognising letters, words and common phrases **towards** using a range of strategies to identify unfamiliar words;
- **from** expressing with help a literal understanding of texts **towards** expressing personal opinions and inferential understanding;
- **from** focusing on single words when reading **towards** reading fluently and with ease;
- **from** recognising the letters of the alphabet **towards** using simple dictionaries.

Pupils with Special Needs

It is important to recognise the particular problems of pupils with learning difficulties. They need extra encouragement, help and support at all times and language activities should be based firmly on the first-hand experiences of the pupils.

Contribution to the Educational (Cross-curricular) Themes

The Irish Curriculum should, where appropriate, provide opportunities for pupils to use Reading to explore and reflect on the content and issues associated with cross-curricular themes.

Through reading pupils should have opportunities to:

- read stories and poems about life situations appropriate to pupils in Key Stage 1 to facilitate discussions of feelings and emotions (CH, EMU, HE);
- develop, where appropriate, and apply their knowledge, skills and understanding of technology, *for example, search for and find information using a computer (IT)*.

Context

Arising from classroom experience, pupils should have opportunities to develop their reading in a variety of contexts, including working:

- as individuals, reading silently or aloud;
- in pairs;
- as members of a group;
- as members of a class;
- with the teacher;
- with parents and other adults.

Range

Pupils should have opportunities to read a variety of texts including:

- picture books and posters;
- songs, nursery rhymes, verses and poems;
- labels and signs in both the classroom and school environment;
- their own compositions;
- graded reading books;
- flash cards and games;
- picture dictionaries and personal dictionaries;
- suitable computer software;
- information books;
- fairy stories, mythology, folklore and contemporary literature;
- non-fiction materials, timetables, graphs and atlases;
- badges and greeting cards;
- comics.

Purpose

Pupils should have opportunities to read for a variety of purposes, including:

- amusement and enjoyment;
- learning in all areas of the curriculum and in the educational (cross-curricular) themes;
- locating information and following instructions;
- enriching their language.

Audience

Pupils should read for a variety of audiences, including:

- themselves and other pupils;
- the teacher;
- parents and other adults;
- visitors to the school;
- audiences outside the school.

Reading Activities

Pupils should have opportunities to engage in a wide range of reading activities, including:

- a listening to and responding to stories, nursery rhymes, verses and songs;
- b discussing pictures, posters and picture books;
- c sorting and matching activities, sequencing activities, shape differentiation activities and jig-saws;
- d reading labels and signs in both the classroom and school environment or as a part of structured play in the house, in the shop or as an art activity;
- e reading their own stories and other pupils' stories;
- f reading and discussing graded texts;
- g discussing aspects of stories they have read or already know, considering characters, places, events and expressing an understanding through the media of art, music and drama;
- h following a text while listening to a tape-recording of the text;
- i sequencing the main events of the story with help from the teacher;
- j discussing the main points in a text and summarising with help from the teacher;
- k reading aloud and beginning to express feeling in their reading;
- l using phonic cues to read unfamiliar words;
- m using their personal dictionaries and other suitable dictionaries;
- n using factual material and resources;
- o beginning to use an index;
- p using the library regularly.

Within the context of these reading activities, pupils should develop the ability to:

- a recognise that print carries meaning;
- b recognise that texts are read from left to right and from the top of the page to the bottom;
- c acquire a sight vocabulary;
- d read unfamiliar words;
- e discuss a range of reading materials and show an awareness of inferential understanding and prediction;
- f enrich and improve their command of Irish;
- g use picture dictionaries, personal dictionaries and information books;
- h locate information with help and record the information simply.

WRITING

Introduction

From the beginning, writing should be an enjoyable experience. To foster this aspect of writing, the classroom atmosphere should be one in which pupils feel relaxed, accepted and affirmed and in which they succeed as writers.

Writing should develop gradually over a period of time. At the beginning any written work should reflect the work undertaken orally. Pupils who have had little exposure to the target language should be given the time and support needed to develop their oral language in preparation for writing. Sensitivity should be shown in developing pupils' confidence to write in the target language. Initially, pupils should be supported and encouraged in their ability to compose by allowing them to communicate orally to their teacher what they want to write. At this point, pupils whose first language is English, will be expressing their thoughts to teachers in English. However, in helping the pupils to express their thoughts in simple sentences, the teacher will speak in Irish. As their linguistic faculty and confidence increases, pupils should have opportunities to vary their use of the written language in an increasing number of different tasks and situations.

Pupils should understand the importance of writing as a means of communication. The early emphasis should be on conveying thoughts intelligibly and not so much on correct spelling and grammar. Gradually, more attention should be given to improving their use of language through the teacher working constructively on weaknesses displayed. It is important that teachers show sensitivity in correcting pupils' work.

The process of writing involves two aspects: the compositional and the secretarial. The compositional aspect includes the selection, ordering and organisation of ideas and the expression of feelings and opinions, while the secretarial aspect involves spelling, syntax, punctuation and handwriting. Whilst the meaning may be obscured if the secretarial aspect is neglected, it is the content and the form in which the content is expressed that is at the heart of the writing process.

Pupils should be able to see their teacher writing, sharing the process and the final outcome. Pupils should experience positive responses to their writing. Before, during and after their writing they should be supported by their teacher with advice and encouragement.

The classroom should actively facilitate writing. Pupils should have access to:

- a variety of writing tools and materials;
- a word processor;
- a word bank or store;
- a personal word book;
- simple reference resources;
- dictionaries.

Every opportunity should be taken to provide an audience for the pupils' work:

- on display boards in the classroom and in corridors;
- in booklets;

- in class and school magazines or newspapers;
- in anthologies;
- through competitions.

Presentation of the Programme of Study

While these detailed requirements have been set out under specific headings, it must be remembered that the processes and activities incorporated within the headings are not discrete but inter-relate and interact.

Progression

Within the context of this programme of study pupils should have opportunities to progress:

- **from** using a pencil with basic competence and showing some control over size and shape of letters **towards** producing handwriting that is accurately formed and consistent in size;
- **from** expressing ideas orally and writing simple phrases under the guidance of the teacher **towards** writing with some independence, showing a sense of structure and organisation in their writing, appropriate to the chosen form;
- **from** spelling recognisably most frequently used words and words that are important to them **towards** spelling them correctly.

Pupils with Special Needs

It is important to recognise the particular problems of pupils with learning difficulties. They need extra encouragement, help and support at all times and language activities should be based firmly on the first-hand experiences of the pupils.

Contribution to the Educational (Cross-curricular) Themes

The Irish Curriculum should, where appropriate, provide opportunities for pupils to use Writing to explore and reflect on the content and issues associated with cross-curricular themes.

Through writing, pupils should have opportunities to:

- make drawings and posters of themselves and others. Write captions about personal qualities, positive behaviour, hygiene, health and safety (CH, EMU, HE);
- develop and apply their knowledge, skills and understanding of information technology, *for example, use pictures, phrases and words to communicate and create their own short sequences of pictures, words and sounds (IT).*

Planning

Pupils should be encouraged, when it is appropriate to the task, to plan their written work. The teacher has an important role in discussing their work with the pupils, helping them to organize their ideas and thoughts and to prepare an outline. Pupils should also have opportunities to discuss their work in pairs or groups.

Purpose

Pupils should have opportunities to write for a variety of purposes, including:

- their own enjoyment and amusement;

and

- to express their thoughts and feelings;
- to develop their imagination;
- to narrate;
- to describe;
- to inform and explain;
- to report;
- to record findings.

Context

Writing will arise from a variety of experiences including:

- first-hand experiences;
- structured play;
- role-play;
- language games, rhymes, riddles, word games, poems;
- the various areas of study and cross-curricular themes ;
- stories, nursery rhymes and poetry that they are reading and hearing;
- play or drama;
- audio-visual and visual aids, television and radio
 - visits and trips;
 - competitions;
 - software packages.

Audience

Pupils should be aware of their audience when writing. They should write for a variety of audiences including:

- themselves;
- the teacher;
- the parent;
- other pupils;
- audiences outside the school.

Range

Pupils should have opportunities to write in a variety of forms, including:

- labels;
- captions;
- stories;
- simple records of observations;
- descriptions of people or places;
- diaries;
- letters;
- poems;
- greeting cards and invitations, posters, notices and diagrams;
- recipes and lists.

Within a meaningful context or arising out of their own work, pupils should develop the ability to:

- a use the conventional ways of forming letter shapes in upper and lower case;
- b make use of the names and order of the letters of the alphabet;
- c spell recognisably a range of familiar and important words;
- d use some of the most common spelling patterns in Irish to enable them to spell new words;
- e use basic punctuation conventions including capital letters, full stops and question marks;
- f write correctly structured sentences and develop an understanding of more complex language use.