

Intercultural Policy: Scoil Nano Nagle

INTRODUCTION:

Schools play a very important role in forming positive attitudes in children to people of different cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds or skin colour. Education holds the key to developing an inclusive society where social diversity and cultural differences can be respected, promoted and practised. Schools that reflect and affirm diversity of cultures, ethnicity and religious backgrounds will help children from ethnic minorities to feel valued, accepted and supported.

POLICY STATEMENT:

Scoil Nano Nagle is a Catholic Co-Educational Junior School. In accordance with our enrolment policy, all children have an equal right to education. Although the school promotes the teachings of the Catholic Church, tolerance and respect for other religious beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life are fostered. In order to fulfil this right, differences will be respected and valued in our school. Our school will be pro-active in challenging racism. All children in the school will benefit from an intercultural education and be better prepared for the intercultural environment in which they live.

Enrolment Procedure:

1. Our school's enrolment form is inclusive and the same for all children.
2. It refers to ethnicity, 1st language, religion, health and country of origin.
3. Children are placed in age appropriate classes.
4. Children who speak the same language as new pupils will be given the opportunity to meet.
5. All parents will be given adequate knowledge of all school procedures
6. Parents are given assistance to understand all school correspondence
7. Children's special needs (medical, psychological and educational) shall be accommodated.

INCLUSIVE STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS:

- Parents are actively encouraged to participate in school life and contribute to class activities.
- Teachers are aware of the different expectations parents have and open to discussion with parents.
- Parents from ethnic minorities are encouraged to become involved in Parent Association, Board of Management and other school organisations.
- Ethnic minorities have equal employment rights in our school.
- Parents are aware of our anti-racist policy.

WHOLE SCHOOL GUIDELINES:

In creating an environment which values and affirms different cultures, and an environment where racism is not tolerated a school is creating a safe space in both physical and psychological terms.

In our school:

- The 1st language of all pupils is valued
- Children feel at ease to speak to each other in their home language
- Different cultures are affirmed through out display areas
- Festivals, both religious and non-secular are acknowledged and affirmed
- There are multi-lingual notices and signs
- We have a school charter against racism which is on display.

CLASSROOM GUIDELINES:

An inclusive classroom environment supports children to develop a positive self concept.

In our school:

- Children have a sense of belonging
- Children's 1st language is valued
- Children of all ethnic backgrounds are involved in all activities
- Children of ethnic minorities are encouraged to contribute to the learning experience of their fellow pupils by sharing their own culture and life experience *if* they so wish (e.g. multi-cultural week)
- Children are given sufficient opportunities for meaningful interaction where they can mutually support and learn with others.
- Teachers are alert for signs of rejection/exclusion and take steps to address it.

THE IMPORTANCE OF 1ST LANGUAGE AT HOME AND AT SCHOOL:

It is vitally important for children's intellectual development that they continue to develop their 1st language while acquiring a 2nd.

Schools can help by encouraging parents to:

- Use their 1st language at home
- Read, tell stories, sing songs in 1st language
- Discuss in 1st language books read in English
- Develop mathematical concepts e.g. "how many?" / "more than" in 1st language

Schools can value the 1st language by:

- Creating an environment in which children feel free to communicate with each other in languages other than English and Irish.
- Including greetings, colours, words etc. from other languages on charts
- Developing in all children an interest in languages and their different sounds
- Encouraging recently arrived older children to write in their 1st language while the class is engaged in writing activities.
- Encouraging the class to learn greetings / words in different languages

E.A.L. (English as an Additional Language) LEARNERS IN THE CLASSROOM:

While supporting the 1st language, teachers will create the optimum environment for acquiring English.

- Newly arrived learners will have time to hear, absorb and gain understanding of English before they are obliged to speak.
- Children are given the opportunity to demonstrate understanding before they are able to speak (drawing/ gestures)
- Language Support is provided for the E.A.L. learner
- The classroom provides visual supports for meaning e.g. pictures, photos, charts, visual signs and timetables.
- The children are engaged in intellectually stimulating work for their appropriate intellectual ability.
- Children are given the opportunity to communicate with others in their 1st language
- Children are affirmed in using their 1st language to sing and write etc.
- Children are given the opportunity to explore the other languages of the classroom and to learn a little e.g. greetings, counting etc.

DEALING WITH RACIST INCIDENTS:

Racist incidents are less likely to occur in a school that has an ethos that affirms and values all children and their parents. When racist incidents do occur it is the responsibility of the school to deal with the incident in the same way that any form of unacceptable behaviour is dealt with, by counselling the children who have behaved unacceptably and by giving support to the children at the receiving end of such behaviour. Racist incidents, and the procedure to deal with them, are included in our anti-bullying policy. All children of ethnic minorities, including Travellers, will be listened to and supported, incidents will be recorded and racist behaviour will be seen as unacceptable.

ENSURING SUCCESS:

Inclusive Curriculum:

Schools with an inclusive curriculum that reflects and affirms diversity of cultures, ethnicity and religious background in society will help ensure that children from ethnic minorities feel valued and accepted.

- Cultural diversity is reflected in our textbooks.
- Classroom activities affirm diversity.
- Contributions and experiences of other cultures are recognised and valued (e.g. Cultural Day)
- There are images of different cultures in our school
- Subjects such as P.E. and music reflect the diversity of other cultures.

Achieving Success:

An ethos that affirms all students will naturally lead to more successful outcomes for children of ethnic minorities.

- Children of ethnic minorities are enabled to achieve at the same level as their peers in (a) academic (b) sporting (c) extra curricular activities.
- We have full integration of children of ethnic minorities in the mainstream classes.
- Language and Learning Support help to achieve full integration
- Children can access all area of the curriculum
- The ethos of our school is inclusive and affirms all students.

UNICEF RIGHTS OF A CHILD

1. To have a name and nationality
2. To have food, clothes and a place to live
3. To be protected from illness
4. To go to school
5. To be able to play
6. Children have a right to know their rights
7. Children's rights must be respected
8. To have freedom of thought and expression
9. To have a clean environment, and to be safe from drugs
10. Children have a right to be heard and their views considered
11. To have a family and be loved
12. To be protected from violence and exploitation

IN-CLASS SUPPORT AND WITHDRAWAL

At the time of drawing up this policy the current language support provision is based on two Language Support teachers.

Junior Infants: In-Class Support

In order to minimize the daily disruption to class teachers, and to maximize the exposure of all Junior Infants to early intervention, the Language Support team, will aim to provide in-class support in literacy to Junior Infant classes for a 4-5 week block.

Each Junior Infant class (depending on the particular class circumstances) will have in-class support to focus informally with small groups. In this way the Language Support teacher gets to know and observe all the children in the class, as well as the particular target group of children.

In practice within the class, groups and activities will be rotated between teachers. Each group will consist of children with a mixture of ability levels and language backgrounds/ abilities, to encourage the children to learn from and interact with each other during activity time, guided by the support teacher for the group.

Activities will be structured, mainly based on early English and Maths language and concepts, and involve language development, skills and concepts, as well as socialization factors which are often lacking in children who have not attended any form of pre-schooling, especially in the case of children from different cultural backgrounds. For example, the children learn about working individually and collaboratively, taking turns and respecting others, approving their own work and that of other children, and listening and responding to each other and to the teacher, as well as learning and practicing the language, concepts and skills involved in each activity.

Activities include a wide range of sorting, classifying, ordering, matching and pattern-based objectives, along with early reading and writing language and skills. Oral language, with vocabulary extension and practice, is a key component of these guided activities, and can therefore be regarded as an effective and useful means of providing Language Support and access to the curriculum in Junior Infant classes.

WITHDRAWAL

Withdrawal of Junior Infant Language Support groups usually takes place during the first period. A group of 4 – 5 children is withdrawn for approximately 30 minutes daily, during which the Language Support teachers work on basic language development with these children through the themes and topics recommended by the NCCA publication “Up and Away” (consolidating work done by IILT before it was disbanded), along with consolidation and practice of the language being taught in the mainstream class.

To this effect the Language Support teachers link closely with the particular content, skills and learning objectives being covered in the Junior Infant classes, so that the children are enabled to practice the language they need to access the curriculum which is one of the main aims of Language Support in general.

The Junior Infant English scheme is parallel as far as possible in these small groups, including practice of nursery rhymes, songs and basic language being used daily in class eg. such as colours, days of the week, etc. Regular consultation with mainstream teachers ensures the Language Support teachers are up-to-date with material being taught in class, and for this reason the short-term plans from the Language Support scheme will be given to the Junior Infant class teachers, as well as the thematic scheme suggested in the “Up and Away” programme.

The selection of children for withdrawal is generally based on the results of the Primary Assessment Kit as well as consultation and agreement between the individual Language Support teacher and the mainstream teacher regarding the children most in need of extra help, mainly those whose English is poor or even non-existent. These are children who have the greatest difficulty in coping with the mainstream curriculum, and *many of these children have little or no exposure to English outside school hours.*

Some EAL children go through a non-verbal or Silent Phase on starting school but may use gestures, mime, or speak in their first language, in an effort to communicate. It is difficult to assess young non-verbal children as it is unclear whether they are unable to respond in English or merely unwilling due to a lack of confidence.

Working in small groups of similar ability in a designated Language Support room enables children with inadequate language skills to gain in confidence, learn at an appropriate pace and experience success in English for a short period every day. Without the large number of children, the consequent background noise, and the faster pace of the mainstream class, which sometimes serve to frustrate, intimidate and overwhelm EAL children, non-verbal children often emerge from their Silent Phase more quickly, and as a side benefit, withdrawal in small groups

may have a positive impact on any behavioural problems caused by communication difficulties.

Children of multicultural background who receive in-class support but are not chosen for withdrawal, are deemed to have sufficient English for the purposes of keeping up with the Junior Infant curriculum, and are generally coping well in the mainstream class. They may have some pronunciation difficulties or accented speech, but in the main they are able to understand, respond appropriately and engage in conversation and activities through English. These children therefore have no real difficulties with confidence or competence in using English and are able to access the Junior Infant curriculum as fully as any average child.

Flexibility will, of course, be a key component of the Junior Infant In-Class/Withdrawal programme. Ongoing observation and informal assessment of EAL children during the in-class support period, along with the regular formal and informal consultation between the mainstream and Language Support teachers, can help to determine a child's changing and developing needs. For example, a child currently undergoing the Silent Phase of additional language acquisition may well exhibit fluency in spoken production relatively quickly when they gain in confidence and competence through working within a small withdrawal group. On the other hand, a child who initially appears to have adequate English in order to cope reasonably well with class activities, may find as the Junior Infant programme unfolds during the year, that the gap between their social and academic language widens sufficiently to warrant a period of withdrawal also.

Through this varied and flexible approach, we aim to enable every child to gain the maximum benefit from Language Support provision, with minimum disruption to the child, the class and the class teacher.

Senior Infants to Second Class: Withdrawal

In all classes from Senior Infants to Second, children in need of continued Language Support are taken on a withdrawal basis only. Children from these older classes with inadequate English skills benefit more from working in small groups in a designated Language Support room, particularly for the purposes of facilitating confidence-building, competence in using English from oral, reading and writing perspectives, focused listening skills, and improved pronunciation and phonological awareness, which are crucial to the development of more formal oral, reading and writing skills across the curriculum. Lack of normal classroom distraction and background noise assists greatly in focusing more intently on the language and on its spoken production. In addition, the children enjoy their daily visits to the Language Support room and this in itself helps to foster a positive attitude towards learning English and using it more confidently in other settings.

ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

As in the case of Junior Infants, older children from Senior Infants to Second Class are selected for withdrawal based on the results of the Primary Assessment Kit way of consultation with the class teacher. Various factors are considered in the selection process, including the amount of disruption it may involve vs. the benefit to the child, if they appear to be coping well in class. Children's Language Support needs in older classes are determined mainly through formal and informal assessment and observation by the Language Support and class teachers, which may include the child's performance in any formal or diagnostic testing, if they have sufficient language ability to attempt the test. The concerns of the class teacher regarding the EAL child's general competence in engaging with the broader curriculum through English is of major significance in the selection of children for Language Support provision.

In the case of newcomers to older classes in the school (from Senior Infants to Second Class) an initial interview assessment is carried out by Language Support teachers and interpreted with reference to the guidelines recommended by the "Up and Away" programme; in the case of children who have received prior Language Support in our school, consideration is given to the progress and achievement of these children during the Language Support period as well as to feedback from the current and previous class teachers.

ASSESSMENT

Children are officially eligible for Language Support if they are assessed as having a language level of A1 or A2 in the *English Language Proficiency Benchmarks*, working towards achieving proficiency at B1 level. ***Many newcomer children in Junior Infant and older classes, however, initially have little or no English to assess.***

The English Language Proficiency Benchmarks are outlined in significant detail in the "Up and Away" programme. These Benchmarks are used in relation to Listening, Reading, Spoken Interaction, Spoken Production and Writing objectives (where appropriate to the pupil's age), regarding both the general levels of language proficiency and those in relation to each theme covered in the Language Support programme published by the NCCA ("Up and Away" book). The ELP Benchmarks are derived from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe) which is a 6-point scale describing language proficiency, A1 – C2. Only the first 3 levels of the Framework, i.e. proficiency levels A1, A2 and B1, are used for Language Support. These generally correspond to Levels 1, 2 and 3 as previously referred to in DES correspondence. More formal assessment materials have been made available to schools in the form of "The Primary School Assessment Kit" (PSAK)

On occasion after a period of 2 years' Language Support, a child may still be unable to cope sufficiently with the increasing academic demands of the curriculum, and such children may be referred to the Learning Support team if they appear to have learning difficulties beyond the scope of the Language Support programme. However, if inadequate language development is still the child's main problem, for example in the case of a child who is exposed to little or no English outside school, they may be referred back to the Language Support team for further intervention in a small group consistent with their language ability level. These children may be operating at or near B1 level in some aspects of the language but not others, and therefore still have gaps in their language skills leading to their inability to cope with the increasing demands of the curriculum. Since the DES has taken the welcome step of removing the 2-year limit on Language Support provision where necessary, these children who are still eligible for support by way of failing to achieve the B1 proficiency level in the ELP Benchmarks, can now benefit from further Language Support and increase their ability to better access the mainstream curriculum.

DISCONTINUATION OF LANGUAGE SUPPORT

Language Support is discontinued after a child has achieved a level of B1 in all language skills, subject to availability of human resources.

An EAL child is considered to have gained the necessary language skills and knowledge to engage with activities in English and to use existing language knowledge to develop further skills and proficiency when they have achieved this B1 level.

Whether older EAL children have received 1 or 2 years of Language Support, or even none at all to date, because of their apparent ability to cope sufficiently in Junior classes, the progress of EAL children in older classes is monitored in consultation with the class teachers regarding their ability to cope in class, and re-evaluated on a yearly basis or as the necessity arises during the year, depending on the concerns of the class teacher. Generally, children initially in need of Language Support in Junior Infants and again in Senior Infants, have acquired adequate language skills to enable them to access and benefit fully from the mainstream curriculum after 1 or 2 years, as the gap between the social and academic language required has not widened sufficiently to necessitate any further Language Support intervention. Records are currently being kept on multicultural children and the amount of support they have received during their time in our school. Pupil profiles and progress notes, including simple theme-based assessment checklists and teacher observations, are kept for pupils availing of Language Support on a withdrawal basis, which, along with the use of more formal EAL assessment materials in the P.S.A.K., will help to determine children's further Language/Learning Support needs.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

We measure the success of this policy by:

- Test results based on the PSAK
- Mainstream Class Assessments
- Teacher Observation of EAL child's learning and social integration
- Incidences of Racial Discrimination
- Positive attitudes & outcomes in the school community that reflect assimilation of other cultures
- Evidence of the involvement of EAL parents in all school activities
- Observation of social interaction of EAL pupils with their peers on the yard and in the classroom environment

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be disseminated to the Parents Association and staff. It will be posted on the school website and a hard copy made available on request.

REVIEW AND RATIFICATION

This policy was ratified by the board of management on 18th September 2012

The policy will be reviewed in the event of any changing circumstances/guidelines to the provision of resources for EAL pupils as stipulated by the Dept of Education & Skills.