

Oral Language Policy

Introduction:

Two important principles of the English Language curriculum are 'The central place of oral language throughout the curriculum' (Teacher guidelines pg. 2) and 'The dual function of *learning language* and *learning through language*' (Curriculum pg. 3). It is revealing that 'oral language is the primary means through which each individual child will be enabled to structure, to evaluate, to describe and to control his/her experience and most significantly, oral language is the primary mediator of culture, the way in which children locate themselves in the world, and define themselves with it and within it' (Cregan, 1998, as cited in Archer, Cregan, McGough, Shiel, 2012) (PDST-Five components of Effective Oral language Instruction)

Keeping the above principles in mind this whole school plan for Oral English was devised and prepared by the staff of Knock N.S. during the academic school year 2013-2014. It will be implemented in September 2015.

Rationale:

In Knock we are committed to the holistic development of all our pupils. We see the development of their fluency in the English language as central to this process. We believe that the ability of our pupils to communicate fluently, confidently and effectively will contribute greatly to their sense of self- esteem and to their personal growth. We also believe that their academic progress depends to a large extent on their ability to communicate both orally and through the written word. In our school therefore with due regard for the differing needs of our school population, social, cultural and economic and realising that children enter our school with a varied oral language experience, we attach a high priority to ensuring all pupils have a working command of the English language.

This plan reflects the best current practice and pedagogy.

Broad Aims and objectives:

- To enable the children to speak independently and effectively.
- To foster an enjoyment and appreciation of the English language.
- To develop the capacity to express intuitions, feelings, impressions, ideas and reactions in response to real and imaginary situations through talk, discussion, debate and the development of ideas.
- To develop fluency, explicitness and confidence in communication.
- To develop listening skills, language conventions, vocabulary, aesthetic response and language manipulation.
- To raise awareness among parents/guardians re. the importance of developing good oral language skills (*by drawing up and distributing a leaflet -A Guide for parents of Infant Pupils – Your child and Oral Language*)

These broad aims and objectives for the teaching and learning of oral language as well as the following methodologies are presented under the four strand headings of the Revised English Curriculum:

- Developing Receptiveness to Oral language
(*English Curriculum: Infants C16-1st/2nd C 24-3rd/4th C 36-5th/6th C 48*)
- Developing Competence and Confidence in using Oral language
(*English Curriculum: Infants C18-1st/2nd C 27- 3rd/4th C 38- 5th/6th-C 50*)
- Developing Cognitive Abilities Through oral language
(*English Curriculum: Infants C 20- 1st/2nd C 29- 3rd/4th C 41- 5th/6th C 53*)
- Developing Emotional and Imaginative Life through Oral language
(*English Curriculum: Infants C 21-1st/2nd C 31- 3rd/4th C 44- 5th/6th C 56*)

They also take on board the 'Five Components of Effective Oral Language Instruction' (PDST);

- Listening and speaking
- Spoken texts
- Language and Learning Environment
- Vocabulary and Auditory memory.

The five principle contexts for Oral language development will be used:

- Talk and Discussion
- Play and games
- Story
- Improvisational drama
- Poetry and Rhyme

This plan is prepared under the three principle sources of content for the Oral language Activities as mentioned in the English Curriculum Teacher Guideline Section Three ('School Planning for English' pg. 13)

1. Oral Language across the curriculum
2. Oral Language in Literacy/The English Curriculum
3. Discrete Oral Language.

1. Oral Language across the curriculum: The development of oral language takes place across all subjects and throughout the whole day in a print rich environment. In an effort to develop higher order thinking skills teachers will use questions to:

- Gain maximum information
- Seek and give explanations
- Discuss different possible solutions to problems
- Argue a point of view
- Persuade others
- Develop specific vocabulary related to all subjects in a spiral way up through the school
- Examine fact and fiction, bias and objectivity
- Develop critical thinking skills.

All subjects (except Gaeilge) are mediated through the English language. In their engagement with these subjects, children use their language skills to help them to understand, explore, question, discuss, debate, and generally learn more about the specific themes and topics at hand by:

- Describing and responding in Art
- Listening and Responding in Music and learning terminology, words of songs, instruments of the orchestra etc.
- Developing expressive skills through talk and discussion and retelling stories in SPHE and Religion
- The use of guided discussion in maths, problem solving, reporting on processes, pair work, group work, mental maths activities, counting and the consistent use of mathematical language throughout the school (and as outlined in our school policy on mathematics)
- Role play in Drama
- Predicting, analysing and reporting in Science.
- Circle Time
- Comparing, contrasting, discussing, reporting and presenting in Geography.
- Naming equipment, refereeing, describing and giving instructions in P.E
- Reporting to all classes on sporting/music/dancing achievements.
- Conducting tours of the school during open days/Green Schools/Active Flag days
- Reporting back from meetings involved with various committees in the school.
- Responding to Local, National and International News by reporting.

Presentations: Children are encouraged to present their work to a range of audiences such as classmates, staff, parents, school visitors, grandparents etc.through:

- Performances of plays/dramas at Christmas time,
- Delivery of presentations at assemblies, masses, ceremonies etc.
- Presenting history projects using ICT/3D displays
- Comenius activities
- Green school/Active Flag presentations, speeches, debates.

All of these activities provide children in our school with opportunities to develop good, working oral language skills.

Strategies:

- Posters dealing with all curricular areas are stored in a central location (beside the LST classroom) and can be accessed by all class teachers/Learning Support/Resource/Special Educational Needs teachers.
- Teachers have access to ready-made educational packs from different publishers
- All classes display appropriate vocabulary banks
- All classrooms have a supply of appropriate board games which can be used for the development of Oral Language. Some are also stored in our central location.
- All classes have sets of language posters from Folens Reading Zone/SESE schemes and also Oral Language cards such as Fallons Chatterbox set.
- Junior classes have a good supply of 'Big Books' and some are also on display in the library.

- All classes have access to internet and audio visual equipment which can be used across the curriculum.
- Songs, story tapes, worksheets, photographs, artefacts etc. are used by all class teachers to develop Oral Language across the curriculum.

Organisational Settings:

Teachers use a range of organisational settings for the development of oral language such as pair work, whole class discussion, circle time, conversation stations, games, oral presentations, reporting, presenting, story times, informal debates, election campaigns for school committees, drama etc.

2. Oral language in Literacy:

Children naturally learn through language as they engage in reading and writing.

When involved in reading activities teachers in our school use the following strategies to develop oral language:

- Read aloud
- Think aloud
- D.E.A.R.
- Oral book reports
- Discussion
- Comprehension and oral language
- Lower and higher order questioning
- Paired reading, buddy reading, shared reading
- Modelled reading
- Oral reporting on reading given for homework
- The use of Fallons 'Read at Home' series
- Think, Pair, Share
- Picture stimulus
- Thought tracking
- K.W.L.

When engaged in writing activities teachers use the following strategies to develop oral language:

- Brainstorming
- Conferencing
- Mini lessons
- Oral redrafting
- Visualisation activities
- Concept mapping
- Read aloud (sharing personal writing/news)
- Active listening
- Word wall/word webs/word strands.

3. Discrete Oral Language Time:

(At least 30 minutes per week will be set aside for discrete oral language- to be reviewed after year 1)

Form, structure, use of language and grammar are addressed during discrete oral language time and will encompass all oral language strands. This is the opportunity for children to learn correct grammar and pronunciation when speaking and for the teacher to address difficulties experienced by the children during the course of reading, writing and oral work. These difficulties may include e.g. positional words, the past tense, plurals, vocabulary, analogies, sequencing, emotions etc.

Teaching strategies such as talk and discussion, story, drama, poetry and rhymes and play and games will be selected as appropriate to develop children's confidence in speaking in small/large group settings.

It is imperative that children are explicitly taught both how to listen and how to speak.

Discrete oral language lessons will be based solely on language with the teacher introducing a stimulus, brainstorming the relevant vocabulary, developing the topic orally, engaging in group work when necessary and concluding the lesson orally.

There will be no writing involved in a discrete oral language lesson.

Assessment: The following types of assessment will be used in our school for the assessment of Oral Language and will assist in planning for the effective development of oral language:

- Self-assessment
- Work portfolios
- Conferencing
- Concept mapping
- Effective questioning
- Teacher observation
- Teacher designed tasks
- Parent Feedback
- Show and Tell
- Assemblies
- News Time
- Oral presentations across the curriculum

Notes:

- Appendix 1 attached contains Oral language activities appropriate for each class level in our school.
- Appendix 2 is a sample leaflet for parents of Infant classes outlining the importance of oral language.

- Where class splits occur that are contrary to the norm e.g. as in the school year 2014-2015 (Senior Infants and First class/ Second and Third) teachers will be mindful to cover oral language activities that are appropriate to each class level.
- Strategies to be employed for children with special needs, learning difficulties, speech and language difficulties are outlined in our school policy for learning support/resource
- Supports for children with exceptional ability are contained in the policy for same.
- Teachers will be mindful of equality of participation and access for all children.