



Ashbourne Community School Literacy Policy

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Introduction:

In Ashbourne Community School, we recognise that the development of literacy skills is essential to a student's personal, educational and holistic development. In this policy, we seek to outline our whole school approach to literacy.

“Traditionally we have thought about literacy as the skills of reading and writing; but today our understanding of literacy encompasses much more than that. Literacy includes the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media.” (DES: Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life, 2011-2020, pp.8).

As is evident from the above definition, literacy underpins every aspect of the school curriculum as well as a student's ability to think independently and contribute to wider society. Through the promotion of an integrated whole school approach, we aim to create an environment where literacy is developed and recognised as a lifelong asset.

Rationale:

In July 2011, Minister for Education and Skills, launched the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2011-2020, Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life, to improve literacy and numeracy among children and young people in Ireland. As it has been noted:-

1. Ireland's literacy levels had dropped to worrying levels. Source: PISA Report 2010.
2. Literacy is a whole school issue. Every teacher and subject must work on it together.
3. Literacy is linked to subject planning, cross curricular links as well as self and peer evaluation.
4. Improvements in literacy benefit every subject and the whole school community.

Literacy underpins the school curriculum by developing students' abilities to speak, listen and communicate, to think, explore and organise. This includes helping students to express themselves orally and in writing. All departments and all teachers have a crucial role to play in supporting students' literacy development.

Competent literacy skills also enable students to read, understand and access examination materials, so that students can achieve their educational potential across the curriculum.

Ashbourne Community School is committed to ensuring that all students are provided with a holistic education which encourages independent thinking and allows all students to reach their full potential. Literacy is seen as an essential part of the teaching and learning process. It also opens personal pathways to success and is central to personal expression and active participation in the society, economy and culture.

Relationship to Mission Statement:

This policy is informed by the school's Mission Statement which commits us to prepare all students for the challenges of adolescent and adult life and to respect the dignity, worth and individuality of every member of the school community. Our vision of literacy is to have high expectations for all our students to ensure they can realise their potential and become life-long learners. The literacy policy is an integral framework which we are committed to, creating a learning environment which emphasises the holistic development of each student.

The school's role in the development of young people is enriched by the active participation of teachers and parents/guardians in many aspects of students' lives. We are committed to continual and consistent efforts to improve literacy standards, which may include providing extra available resources to those pupils with additional needs, will further enhance the opportunity for our pupils to participate fully in education and in all aspects of society and culture including local, national and global communities.

Aims of Policy:

The aims of this policy are:

1. To promote a whole school approach to literacy across all curricula.
2. To help support students learning across all subjects through literacy and communication skills.
3. To support students' confidence to express themselves through talking, listening, and writing.
4. For students to be able to recognise, read, comprehend, and use key words in their approach to specific subjects.
5. To encourage staff to take responsibility for the development of literacy in their subject areas.
6. To support the development of literacy through the deployment of a range of resources in school e.g., computer rooms, laptops etc.
7. To foster an appreciation of literacy through various modes of media including printed text, broadcast media, and digital media.
8. For parents/guardians to recognise their role in supporting their son's/daughter's progress and to support the school in our endeavours.

Context of this policy/Links with other Policies:

The emphasis of this literacy policy is on the role of the whole school community in implementing it. This is a whole school policy and other school policies will be informed by it e.g.

- Code of Behaviour Policy
- SPHE Policy
- Wellbeing Policy
- Internet Safety Policy
- Dignity in the Workplace Policy
- Child Protection Guidelines
- Critical Incident Policy
- Acceptable usage policy
- Extra-Curricular Activities Policy
- Intercultural Policy
- Safety Statement
- Special Educational Needs Policy
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Roles & Responsibilities

The role of Subject Teacher may involve:

1. Using agreed common approach and strategies in identified areas for literacy development.
2. Contributing to the development and implementation of a whole school literacy policy/plan.
3. Contributing to the monitoring and evaluation of language development throughout the school.
4. Participating in whole school literacy initiatives e.g., DEAR
5. Participating in relevant continuous professional development where the opportunity arises.

The role of students may involve:

- Making every reasonable effort to improve their literacy skills.
- Participating fully, and to the best of their ability, in activities provided by staff to improve their literacy skills.
- Engaging with different modes of media to improve their literacy skills.
- Following the school's homework policy.

The role of parents/guardians may involve:

Ireland's Constitution states that parents are the child's primary educators. Support from home is vital for a child's success in school. To support student's literacy, parents/guardians can:

- Engage in conversations around literature. Ask students what they are reading and discuss the prescribed texts they are studying in English and Irish; this helps with developing communication skills.
- Offer a literacy-rich environment. Model good literacy behaviour by reading regularly. Talk about school, magazines, or current events. Have a lot of age-appropriate reading material around the home.
- Technology can help families meet the literacy needs of their children. Parents/Guardians can talk with students about using technology in creative ways for example reading blogs or listening to podcasts. These talks can boost language development, build background knowledge, and help students develop useful skills.

The role of the SET – Special Educational Team may involve:**1. The school has in place appropriate means and processes to assess students' literacy skills:**

- SET, in conjunction with Guidance Department, collaborate to collate the student passport provided by the transferring national school and from this assess incoming First years' literacy abilities.
- First Year students' literacy skills are assessed using a variety of testing such as CAT4 and The New Group Reading Test, within the first term providing meaningful data for 1st Year teachers and the SET.
- A range of formal and informal assessment is carried out to assess literacy skills by SET on students from all year groups if deemed appropriate and beneficial to the student.

2. The school has clear procedures for the early identification of pupils with difficulties:

- There is regular communication with class teachers to identify students who present with literacy difficulties in the classroom.
- There is regular communication with parents/guardians to identify students who present with literacy difficulties.
- House exams are reviewed to identify students who are experiencing literacy difficulties.

3. The SET develop targeted and positive learning support to help students develop literacy skills as per the Continuum of Support:

The support provided includes in-class support, team teaching, small group support or one to one.

Literacy support focuses on reading fluency, reading comprehension, writing skills including spelling and oracy.

The role of the learning-support teacher & resource teacher may involve:

The role of the learning-support teacher is to provide additional teaching support to students with low achievement in the areas of literacy.

- The learning-support teacher prioritises students who are performing at or below the 10th percentile on standardised tests of literacy.
- The resource teacher may also provide additional classes in literacy to students with special educational needs.
- The learning-support teacher / resource teacher may deliver this additional teaching support in several ways, including co-operative teaching with colleagues, small group or one to one support.
- The SET Co-ordinator and/or the learning-support teacher will share this information in a collaborative manner with subject teachers so that each teacher will be in an informed position to encourage and help students in all their subjects to develop their literacy skills.

The role of the Senior Management Team may involve:

1. Creating and supporting a culture of continuous improvement and shared goals.
2. Supporting the development, implementation and integration across the curriculum of a whole school literacy policy.
3. Engaging the whole staff in conducting a review of the literacy provision currently available in the school and the range of interventions already being employed for the improvement of literacy standards in the school.
4. Providing finance for material resources and ensuring efficient use of available resources.
5. Providing opportunities for effective communication between SEN Department, the Senior Management Team and subject departments so that literacy and special educational needs is integrated.
6. Supporting the training needs of staff in the form of relevant and focused continuing professional development.

Actions & Interventions for the promotion of Literacy (Whole School Activities):

'literacy is everyone's responsibility' (See Rationale above)

➤ **-Use of Key Words**

Students' attention is drawn to key words as identified in the curriculum for each subject area. These are terms that students are expected to learn, understand and be able to spell and use in the right context. Students are encouraged to take note of these words in the assigned section in their journal and/or subject copy. These words may also be displayed in the classroom.

➤ **-Editing Strategies**

In line with the Junior Cycle Key Skills, students are encouraged to draft, edit, and redraft all work. This is to promote ownership of work. Several strategies for the implementation of this include:

CUPS: a step-by-step approach is included in the student journal

Self-assessment based on a given success criteria.

Peer assessment

Teacher feedback

➤ **-Transition Year 'Book in the Bag'**

All transition year students are required to always have a book for personal reading in their bag. Should students have the opportunity during school time, they are encouraged to read.

➤ **-ACS 'Book on the Shelf'**

Books are available to students for personal reading at several points throughout the school, for example, the white area bookshelf. The same facility exists for staff in the staffroom.

Other actions for the promotion of literacy:

- A spelling program based on 'Spell Write Right' is made available to all first-year English teachers.
- Events to mark World Book Day
- Visitors to the school: storytellers, writing workshops, theatrical performances etc.
- Word of the month
- Literacy quizzes and competitions
- A student and/or staff book club

Literacy interventions in ACS:

- Literacy support is given to those in need based on CAT scores assessed in first year.
- Work is differentiated by teachers to support specific literacy needs.
- Subject teachers liaise with the relevant SEN anchor if a literacy concern arises.

Teaching & Learning: Whole School Literacy Strategies

Teaching and Learning is a vital part of education. Both teachers and students will look at various strategies to encourage, promote and improve literacy throughout the entire school body.

Some of these Teaching and Learning strategies include:

(a) Print Rich environment

Create a print rich classroom by:

- having lots of visual cues/reminders on display.
- referring regularly to the visuals on display.
- displaying student work in literacy corridor or in the corridor outside.
- classroom based projects & assignments.

(b) Key words

Acknowledge the importance of keywords by:

- pre teaching key words for each topic.
- displaying keywords on wall/whiteboard and referring to them regularly.
- getting students to take note of the key words in the subject area.

(c) Spelling/grammar

Promote correct spelling and grammar by:

- realising that all teachers are literacy teachers.
- actively teaching the spelling of words specific to your subject.
- correcting spelling and grammar in written work.

(d) Reading Aloud & Promoting Reading

Ensure students hear excellent models of reading by:

- asking students to read aloud in class, if comfortable to do so. Also, it is good practice to provide students with a good model of reading by a teacher reading aloud to them
- asking students about what they are reading
- contributing to the Read Wall in the school
- participating in whole school reading initiatives such as DEAR, Book in a bag.

(e) Graphic Organisers

Support students with literacy difficulties by:

- avoiding large volumes of text.
- using bullet points and headings.
- using graphic organisers.

(f) Written Work

Promote an excellent standard of written work by:

- ensuring students use the guidelines for written homework (homework policy).
- expecting homework be presented neatly in the correct copy with a margin, appropriate heading and date.
- checking work regularly and giving feedback to the student (teacher; peer or self-assessment/feedback)

(g) Oral Literacy

Promote student's competency and confidence regarding oral literacy by:

- In pairs with a working partner.
- In small groups with opportunities to take on various roles.
- In whole class discussions.
- Presentations to the class (Junior Cycle CBA's)
- Providing the opportunity for students to practice prior to Orals with peers; teachers or external facilitator.

Evaluation & Review:

The Literacy Policy will be reviewed as required. The evaluation will take place on a regular basis and will include teachers, students, parents/guardians and senior management.

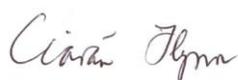
When responding to pupils' work the staff in Ashbourne Community School may:

- make comments which are positive and supportive.
- target specific areas for improvement (a selective and focused identification of errors).
- provide guidance on how to achieve the short-term targets set. For example, whilst "improve your spelling" is unhelpful and vague, the identification of a particular spelling error, e.g., doubling of letters before adding – 'ing' is specific and presents the student with a target which can be addressed.
- create opportunities for students to reflect on the quality of their own work and for peer assessment.

The Literacy Strategy will be monitored and reviewed through:

- the school and departmental development plans.
- lesson observation.
- sampling pupils' work.
- discussion with staff, parents/guardians and students.
- reviewing planning; analysing assessment data.
- discussion of student's information provided from the monitoring and review process which will inform decision making about improvements and further developments in the area of Literacy.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management of Ashbourne Community School at its meeting 23rd March, 2021 (Meeting Nr 260)



Date: 23rd March, 2021.

Chairperson

Board of Management

Ashbourne Community School

