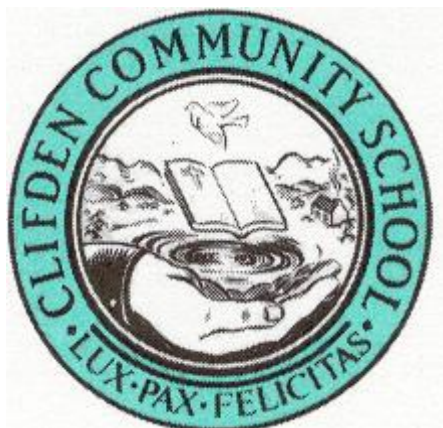


Clifden Community School



DRAFT SCHOOL LITERACY POLICY

Mission Statement

“Our mission in Clifden Community School is to continue to provide a challenging educational environment in which all members of the school community, irrespective of ability level or background, can realise individual and collective potential in a caring environment which values and strives for quality and creativity in all that it offers.”

We are committed to preparing our students for adult life by learning *Responsibility, Respect and Personal Regard* for self and others under our banner of *Lux, Pax, Felicitas – Light, Peace, Happiness* in an atmosphere that encourages positive self esteem

INTRODUCTION AND LINK TO THE MISSION STATEMENT

Clifden Community School is an inclusive school and in keeping with our Mission Statement each student is enabled to realise his/her individual potential. The spirit and content of this policy has a direct input into fulfilling this mission.

LITERACY STRATEGY

In July, 2011, the Minister for Education and Skills, R  air   Quinn, launched the National Strategy to improve literacy [...] among children and young people, *Literacy for Learning and Life 2011-2020*.

Minister Quinn asserted, "This is an issue of equality. Without the skills of literacy [...], a young person or adult is often denied full participation in society. They may be condemned to poorly paid jobs or unemployment and a lifetime of poverty and exclusion. This is why I am convinced that ensuring all our young people acquire good literacy [...] skills is one of the greatest contributions that we can make towards achieving equality and social justice in our country."

STANDARDS OF ATTAINMENT IN LITERACY IN IRELAND

One in ten children in Irish schools has serious difficulty with reading or writing. The literacy skills of students in Irish primary schools, measured by the National Assessments of English Reading, have not improved in over thirty years despite considerable investment. Employers and third-level institutions are calling for higher literacy standards among students leaving post-primary education. Meanwhile, there has been a decline in the performance of post-primary students in Ireland in international literacy tests.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

In Clifden Community School whole school literacy is seen as an essential part of the teaching and learning process. We recognise the importance of literacy in the school environment, to life within the wider society and the personal growth of the individuals. All staff in Clifden Community School share the responsibility for the teaching of literacy across the curriculum. The school's role in the development of young people supports and is enriched by the active participation of teachers and parents/guardians in many aspects of the students' lives. We believe that literate students will ultimately emerge as confident and articulate communicators, fully prepared to enter the adult world.

Within a broad and balanced curriculum, our school's ethos helps us to encourage curiosity and creativity for life-long learning and discovery, and enkindles in our school members an intentional service to contribute to the common good and the transformation of society. Clifden Community School acknowledges that a key element of equal education opportunities provision is the fostering of good literacy skills which are essential to the life prospects of each person and vital for the quality and equity of Irish society.

Clifden Community School is committed to raising the standards of literacy of its pupils in order that each pupil will master these crucial skills to the best of her ability. The focus of this policy is to sustain and build on the high levels of teaching and learning taking place in Clifden Community School. 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 with the aim of making a “real, measurable and positive difference”¹ to their lives and will assist them in achieving their full potential.

AIMS OF THIS POLICY

The aims of this policy document are to:

- to adopt a whole-school approach to Literacy;
- to promote the development of a literacy committee and the establishment of a literacy co-ordinator;
- to devote time to staff in-service training in the area of literacy;
- to ensure to identify specific roles and responsibilities within the school with regard to the development of literacy work;
- to promote continued parental involvement and support of their child’s literacy development;
- to ensure that parents/guardians are as fully informed as possible about literacy issues;
- to support pupils’ learning in all subjects by helping teachers to be clear about the ways in which their work with pupils contributes to the development of pupils’ communication skills;
- to develop a shared understanding between all staff of the role of language in pupils’ learning and how work in different subjects can contribute to and benefit from the
- to enhance the development of pupils’ ability to communicate effectively;
- to be conscious of the fact that good skills in language are central to pupils’ sense of identity, belonging and growth;
- to elevate pupils’ own expectations of achievement, thus raising standards;
- to improve pupils’ level of confidence and self-expression;
- to promote knowledge and understanding of the pupils’ standards of achievement and assessment in speaking and listening, writing and reading;
- to identify areas of strength and weakness and use this information to inform planning.

WHOLE SCHOOL POLICY FOR LITERACY

DEFINITION OF LITERACY

“Literacy includes the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media and digital media.”
(Literacy and Numeracy For Learning and Life 2011)

“We must develop the literacy and skills of *all* young people”

Every young person needs to be literate. We use the basic skills of literacy in almost every part of our lives when we communicate with each other – in traditional written forms or through the internet and digital media, when we follow signs and instructions, when we are at

¹ Literacy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy

our work or enjoying leisure time, when we try to make sense of the mass of information and data available through the media, and when we are managing our lives.

In Ireland, we enjoy the benefit of having access to two languages: being able to use both Irish and English orally and in other forms gives us an added advantage in understanding ourselves and in contributing to the enrichment of our culture. Without the skills of literacy a young person is cut off from full participation in many aspects of life: they cannot perform basic tasks such as reading or sending an e-mail; advertisements and notices are meaningless to them; they cannot jot down a shopping list or understand a utility bill; and they are cut off from participating in and contributing to many aspects of the society and culture in which they live. Young people and adults who do not have adequate literacy skills cannot participate fully in schooling or in further and higher education, and they have fewer opportunities to take up satisfying jobs and careers.

(Literacy and Numeracy For Learning and Life 2011)

“Better literacy for individuals contributes to a more just and equitable society”

Missing out on the skills of literacy or failing to develop these skills to the best of each person’s capability is not just a loss for the individual; it is also an enormous loss for all of us in Irish society. Mastering the skills of literacy brings with it many social, economic and health benefits for the individual and society as a whole. Having young people who can understand the growing range of economic, technical, scientific, social and other contexts is essential if we are to ensure employment and economic prosperity in the future. We know too that children who do not learn to read, write and communicate effectively are more likely to leave school early and in later life to encounter a range of other difficulties.

This strategy is premised on the strong belief that developing good literacy skills among all young people is fundamental to the life chances of each individual and essential to the quality and equity of Irish society

(Literacy and Numeracy For Learning and Life 2011)

“Literacy is one of the Key skills and will underpin the new Junior Certificate. The National Literacy Strategy makes literacy the business of all teachers so strategies in areas such as writing, reading, listening and speaking are multidisciplinary and can be used across all subjects.”

(PDST Facilitator 2013)

RATIONALE FOR LITERACY

Clifden Community School is committed to promoting a better understanding of the critical importance of the core skill of literacy in all of its forms and improving our students’ literacy skills so that they can become effective communicators.

For each individual communication, which includes the interdependent skills of talking, listening, reading and writing, is the gateway to social inclusion and being active global

citizens. The development of literacy skills is vital to support our pupils' learning and raise standards across the curriculum because:

- Pupils need vocabulary, expression and organisational control to cope with the cognitive demands of subjects;
- responding to higher order questions encourages the development of thinking skills and enquiry;
- language helps us to reflect, revise and evaluate the things we do, and on the things others have said, written or done;
- improving literacy and learning can have an impact on pupils' self-esteem, motivation and behaviour;
- high standards of literacy allow pupils to learn independently and the ability to communicate is empowering.

ORACY AND LISTENING

Talk is our main means of communication in everyday life and talking and listening are fundamental to the development of understanding. The teacher explains questions, describes, organises and evaluates in the classroom and this may often be done orally.

The teaching staff in Clifden Community School aims to foster in its pupils the skills of:

- Listening with understanding and respond sensitively and appropriately;
- using speech appropriately and adjusting ways of speaking clearly and effectively, according to the audience;
- clarifying and expressing their ideas and explaining their thinking, using varied and specialised vocabulary according to context and purpose;
- active listening in order to help improve the students' skills of concentration and sensitivity to the speaker's viewpoint;
- increasing confidence and competence in speaking and listening so that they are able to adapt their speech to a widening range of circumstances including paired and group discussions and speaking to a larger audience and speak for a range of purposes e.g. to narrate, to analyse, to explain, to reflect and evaluate.

SUGGESTED STRATEGIES

Teaching in Clifden Community School aims to provide planned opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to engage in purpose talk, both formally and informally. In planning for talk the pace and timing should be considered, so that purposeful talk is maintained. The aim is to take account of demands on concentration to ensure that pupils are required to listen for realistic lengths of time.

The teaching staff in Clifden Community School aim to provide pupils with regular opportunities to speak and listen in the following contexts:

- In pairs with a working partner; (eg, Think, pair, share)
- in small groups with opportunities to take on the roles of chair or scribe; (eg, placemat)
- with the teacher or another adult;
- in whole class discussions;

- in presentations to a wider audience.

In these contexts some of the following activities may take place:

- Exploring and describing events, activities and problems, exploring and developing ideas with others;
- reporting back to a wider audience in order to consolidate ideas and understanding;
- asking questions as well as answering them;
- speculating, hypothesizing and imagining;
- planning, organising and reviewing activities;
- investigating and solving problems collaboratively;
- evaluating experiences and reflecting on learning;
- talking at length and adopting the 'expert' role.

READING

Reading from a wide variety of texts affords pupils the opportunity of learning from sources beyond their immediate knowledge. Fluent reading allows pupils to develop their potential as learners by understanding others' ideas from the past and present and to explore those of the future by creating meaning and sense through the integration of information encountered in the texts and connecting it with existent knowledge, skills and understanding. The whole school and the individual classrooms shall reflect that reading is a worthwhile activity. The reading environment shall reflect a school philosophy to promote reading. All teachers are asked to SMOG test their textbooks.

The teaching staff in Clifden Community School aim to foster in its pupils:

- The ability to make judgments about and respond critically to what is significant in a text;
- an enjoyment of reading and motivation in reluctant readers;
- the motivation to spell correctly;
- increasing confidence and competence in reading so that they are able to read fluently, accurately and with understanding;
- the skills necessary to become independent and critical readers and make informed and appropriate choices.

SUGGESTED STRATEGIES

All teachers should be aware of pupils' reading levels in order to make informed choices about appropriate texts and to plan appropriate support for pupils in order that they may successfully access texts. Opportunities may be taken to demonstrate pleasure in reading. Opportunities may be created in lessons for students and teachers to share their reading experiences.

The teaching staff in Clifden Community School may plan opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to:

- Read and follow written instructions;
- read and engage with narratives of events or activities;
- follow up their interests and read texts of varying lengths;
- question and challenge printed information and views;

- read with understanding descriptions of processes, structures and mechanisms;
- read and explore ideas and theories;
- learn how to sift and select, and take notes from text and read to locate and relocate information;
- learn how to scan for overall meaning and scan for key points, words and phrases;
- use reading to research and investigate from printed words and moving images ICT texts.

In selecting texts and generating texts (e.g. worksheets etc.), the following may be considered:

Scanning for overall impressions:

Print;

- is the print clear?
- are the lines of print short enough to be easily read?
- is the size and style of font appropriate?

Illustrations;

- are the illustrations appropriate? informative? attractive? accurate?
- are the illustrations representative? e.g. of the whole community?
- are the graphics clear? helpful?
- how well does the text relate to illustrations and graphics?

signposts;

- are headings and sub-headings clear? helpful?
- are the contents pages, index and glossary appropriate? clear?

quality;

- is the text balanced in its presentation of gender?
- is the text balanced in its presentation of different peoples and cultures?
- is the information accurate? up-to-date? reliable?
- is the content relevant and accessible to pupils?

Looking closely at a sample page:

Sentences;

- how long are the sentences?
- how complex are the sentences?
- are sentences mainly 'active' or 'passive'?

vocabulary;

- is the choice of vocabulary and terminology appropriate?
- are the difficult words made clear? e.g. re-phrased in the text?

cohesion;

- is the text clearly organised? logical? easy to follow?

Asking students to comment:

(Choose students to represent the full range of ability with which the text might be used.)

- What are their general impressions?
- can they use the index to find information?
- can they relate the illustrations to the text?

- can they read and understand the text?
- (Use a simple cloze test: copy a passage from the text and obscure every seventh word; if students cannot reconstruct the text to make reasonable sense, it is probably too difficult for independent use.)
- are there any words they don't know and can't deduce from the context?

Assessing overall suitability:

Use;

- how often will the text be use?
- which students would you use this text with?
- how would you use it with the students;
 - for background reading?
 - giving essential information?
 - stimulating interest and further enquire?
 - enjoyment?
- how will different students need to be supported in using this text?

WRITING

Many lessons include and depend on written communication. Writing development is recursive. Pupils do not learn particular features of written language once and for all at a specific stage. They shall therefore be encouraged to behave as independent writers throughout their school career, gradually developing the range, extent and subject content of their writing. They shall be exposed to fiction and non-fiction text types, including those whose language features involve recounting, reporting, explanation, instruction, persuasion and discussion.

In the role of observer, facilitator, model, reader and supporter of literacy skills, the teaching staff in Clifden Community School aims to foster in its pupils the skills to:

- Write in order to help sustain and order thought and to record;
- write logs and journals in order to clarify thoughts and develop new understanding;
- know when and how to plan, draft, discuss, redraft, reflect and proof-read their writing analyse and explore;
- learn the conventions of different forms of writing in different subject areas, e.g. by scaffolding pupils' writing and providing models of good writing;
- by providing frameworks for writing consisting of starters, connectives and sentence modifiers and provide clear models for communication;
- write coherently about a wide range of topics, issues, ideas and incidents, organising text in ways which help the reader;
- craft their writing, showing an improved control of grammatical structure and of a differentiated vocabulary;
- write at appropriate length, sometimes briefly;
- write collaboratively with other students;

- develop ideas and communicate meaning to a reader using wide-ranging and technical vocabulary and an effective style, organising and structuring sentences grammatically and whole texts coherently;
- have a high standard of presentation for their finished work clearly using accurate punctuation, correct spelling and legible handwriting;
- appreciate the differences between standard English and non-standard forms of the language;
- recognize appropriate form for their written responses so that they know when to respond in note form and when more formal constructions are required;
- apply word processing conventions and understand the principles of authoring multi-media text;
- understand the criteria for marking writing;
- present some writing for display or publication, showing varying degrees of ability.
- write in a widening variety of forms for different purposes e.g. to interpret, evaluate, explain.

Please refer to appendix attached for specific strategies in all the above strands of literacy.

THE LITERATE STUDENT

Please note that this list is neither definitive nor prescriptive.

On completion of their Clifden Community School education a literate pupil shall:

- Use written language to express and reflect on experiences;
- write a formal and informal letter;
- write a report – a factual account of an event or situation;
- respond to and make sense of a range of reading materials, literary texts, data and media sources including internet and digital media;
- comment on the purpose, content and features of various advertisements and print media;
- describe, reflect and respond to a novel, short story, poetry, play or a film studied;
- review a novel, poem, play, film, song, or any other creative work studied;
- produce an original piece of creative writing, drawing on either an external stimulus, or on imagination;
- find and understand general and specific information from a variety of texts, e.g. signs, notices and instructions;
- be aware of the significance of pictorial and printed symbols;
- make appropriate use of written language when dealing with the normal demands of school and everyday life, e.g. use correct punctuation, address envelopes and cards correctly;
- apply a range of higher-order skills and strategies for reading comprehension, e.g. retrieving, questioning, inferring, synthesising, critical evaluation;
- use written or oral language to demonstrate the ability to listen and to retain information accurately, e.g. follow a sequence of instructions given by someone or summarise a story told by one or more people;
- use the spoken word to accurately express opinions and experiences in a social context, e.g. leave a message on a telephone answering machine.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

THE ROLE OF THE ENGLISH TEACHER

The role of the English teacher may involve:

- The explicit teaching of the structure and function of written and oral language;
- providing dictionaries, glossaries and lists of appropriate subject vocabulary and encouraging students to use them;
- applying techniques such as skimming, scanning, and text-marking effectively in order to research and appraise texts;
- selecting information from a wide range of texts and sources including print, media and ICT and evaluating those sources;
- the explicit development of higher-order skills and strategies for reading comprehension (e.g. retrieving, questioning, inferring, synthesising, critically evaluating) in a wide range of contexts;
- the development of lower-order skills (handwriting, spelling, punctuation) and higher order skills and strategies (choosing topics, generating and crafting ideas, revising, editing) to support writing development;
- ensuring that there is systematic and explicit attention given to the teaching of a range of literacy skills in English including oral and aural skills, fluency, reading comprehension strategies, including the ability to respond critically, analyse, evaluate, describe, discuss, explore, reflect on, question and infer meaning.
- ensuring that systematic and explicit attention given to language awareness skills including functional and structural aspects of language, and competence in spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, paragraph organisation, awareness of the concept of style and knowledge of fundamental literary concepts.
- help students to use a range of strategies to learn spellings, including:
 - look say cover write check
 - making connections between words with the same visual pattern
 - exploring families of words;
- ensuring that there is systematic and explicit attention given to vocabulary development, writing skills and appropriate development of lower-order and higher-order skills, including the ability to express, explain, defend opinions, and to use language appropriate to context and audience in a range of literary forms;
- ensures that there is systematic and explicit attention given to the teaching of a range of literacy skills in English including oral and aural skills, fluency, reading comprehension strategies, language awareness skills including functional and structural aspects of language, vocabulary development, writing skills and appropriate development of lower-order and higher-order skills;
- encouraging students to read for enjoyment, and to write and communicate in a range of authentic contexts for different purposes with a variety of audiences;
- being familiar with the various strategies, approaches, methodologies and interventions that can be used to teach literacy as discrete areas and across the curriculum.

ROLE OF TEACHERS OTHER THAN ENGLISH

All departments and all teachers have a crucial role to play in supporting students' literacy development. Teachers across the curriculum contribute to pupils' development of language, since speaking, listening, writing and reading are, to varying degrees, integral in all lessons. Helping students to express themselves clearly orally and in writing enhances and enriches teaching and learning in all subjects.

Teachers other than English may:

- Incorporate a strong emphasis on literacy in lesson plans and the inclusion of explicit literacy strategies into subject department plan;
- raise awareness of the importance of oral and written language in all its forms in lessons and foster a positive attitude in students to literacy;
- incorporate specific reference to literacy development in lesson and subject planning;
- work towards the development of lower-order skills (handwriting, spelling, punctuation) and higher order skills and strategies (choosing topics, generating and crafting ideas, revising, editing) to support writing development;
- increase the awareness of the importance of digital literacy;
- promote confident use of oral communication skills;
- encourage students to read for learning and leisure;
- be familiar with the various strategies, approaches, methodologies and interventions that can be used to teach literacy across the curriculum.

THE ROLE OF THE LEARNING-SUPPORT TEACHER AND THE RESOURCE TEACHER

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 in the lower percentiles in 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 a number of ways, including co-operative teaching with colleagues, small group or one to one support.
- The learning-support teacher, HSCL, Year Head and/or Guidance Counsellor may be responsible for the screening of in-take information and transfer data from primary schools (and previous secondary schools, where applicable). The data that will come from the primary school will comprise of results of standardized testing in second, fourth and sixth classes and a copy of the final report card from sixth class.²
- 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.

² Circular 0056/2011 (Department of Education and Skills, 2011)

Literacy

In September each year the learning-support leader administers a group reading test to all first year students. This along with the results of the CAT test, transfer data and psychological reports etc. is used to select students for learning-support.

The learning-support teacher / resource teacher will target the literacy support, in as far as is possible, to suit the needs of the particular student or group of students. The learning-support teacher will place significant importance on the development of Literacy skills when drafting the students' Individual Educational Plans (IEPs).

Literacy support may include the following:

- Structured reading programmes;
- targeted spelling programmes;
- revision of phonics;
- revision of spelling rules;
- oral language skills;
- comprehension skills;
- punctuation skills;
- reading for meaning;
- prediction skills;
- dictionary skills;
- mind mapping;
- mnemonics;
- skimming, scanning;
- memory games;
- puzzles, word-searches and scrabble.

In addition the SEN department may oversee a buddy reading scheme involving senior and selected junior students.

All learning support and resource students are encouraged to select from the large supply of books available in the resource and learning-support rooms, the reading corner and the school library.

MANAGEMENT OF THE WHOLE-SCHOOL LITERACY PLAN

The role of the Senior Management Team may involve:

- 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 with the aim to establishing a comprehensive and coordinated literacy programme (e.g. school policies on retention, attendance, spelling, homework, presentation of work);
- providing opportunities for effective communication between the Literacy Coordinator, the Senior Management Team, the English and ICT Departments and other departments so that literacy, special educational needs and ICT provision is integrated;
- identifying and make provision for the training needs of staff in the form of relevant and focussed continuing professional development, encouraging principals, deputy principals and

teaching staff to continually reflect, improve and up-skill throughout their professional careers;

- supporting and encouraging staff involved in the project to maintain sustained effort and focus;
- identifying improvement in literacy standards as a priority for the school and establish and maintain a policy on improving literacy standards;
- setting up and support the appropriate structures such as a literacy committee, possibly comprising of a Literacy Co-ordinator, two English teachers, a management representative, Learning Support/Resource teacher and a representative from each department and other interested parties, others responsible for developing and implementing a plan for a whole school approach to literacy development;
- evaluating current teaching practices with regard to literacy and identify areas for improvement;
- putting in place structures to review, monitor and evaluate the literacy development plan on an annual basis;
- evaluating the efficacy of assessment and evaluation measures in the school and make adjustments as necessary;
- assessing the performance of incoming 1st years students regularly and using data from these assessments to establish the existing levels of achievement;
- using assessment data to inform national educational policy for literacy;
- using assessment information as a source of evidence for the school community to monitor progress and interpret attainment levels with a view to informing planning and adjusting actions as necessary;
- setting challenging but realistic goals for improvement in literacy targets, focussed on the progress of every student;
- participating in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the whole school literacy strategy;
- specifying expectation of the active role to be played by all teachers in the consolidating the critical core skills of literacy;
- ensuring the provision of co-ordinated support for literacy across the curriculum;
 - regularly reviewing the literacy policy and support and maintain the implementation of strategies and provision of resources to improve the standards in literacy;
- supporting newly qualified teachers in addressing literacy;
- creating a culture of continuous improvement and shared goals;
- supporting the development, implementation and integration across the curriculum of a whole school literacy policy;
- providing resources for English teachers and other teachers in the school;
- providing finance for material resources and ensure efficient use of available resources;
- continuing with attendance monitoring and tracking and informing parents of absences, ensuring that the EWB (Education Welfare Board) is informed of absences as necessary and acknowledging and rewarding excellent attendance.

ROLE OF THE LITERACY CO-ORDINATOR

The Literacy Co-ordinator is a Special Duties Teacher and the role involves supporting departments in the implementation of strategies and encourages departments to learn from each other's practice by sharing ideas.

The role of the Literacy Co-ordinator *may* include:

- initiating, implementing and driving the school-wide enrichment action;
- liaising with subject departments and teachers, learning support, management;
- establishing a programme and calendar for literacy development and events in the school;
- identifying the strategies already in place for assessment and evaluation;
- working with the senior management team to determine strategies for dealing with literacy across the curriculum for all teachers to ensure the effective development and implementation of a whole school literacy policy;
- helping parents to take an active interest in family literacy and support their children's literacy development;
- evaluating the effectiveness of the strategy and make modifications where necessary;
- facilitating amendments to the literacy strategy in the light of evaluation and curriculum changes.
- to raise awareness among staff, in conjunction with management, of key literacy strategies;

TEACHING AND LEARNING

This policy promotes teaching that:

- is informed by clear, challenging and progressive objectives and a shared set of goals;
- aims to create print rich, literate environments in the classrooms;
- encompasses purposeful, direct and explicit learning experiences;
- is managed in such a way as to allow pupils frequent opportunities to make oral contributions, answer open-ended questions and ask relevant questions;
- is highly interactive and encompasses learning experiences in classroom environments that are conducive to questioning and answering;
- is inspiring and motivating, inclusive and ambitious;
- is varied in style and distinguished by a fast pace and strong focus;
- is well-pitched to pupils' needs;
- enables students to acquire new skills and integrates and consolidate the skills in written and oral language that they have already learned;
- encourages and supports clarity around standards expected and achieved;
- ensures understanding of terminology, e.g. RA (reading age) etc.;
- uses an effective blend of teaching approaches including direct skill-based differentiated instruction, individualised learning and the use of structured cooperative group work;
- reflects the reading interests of all students and offers them a balance of text types;
- promotes collaborative interaction between teachers and students;
- supports the learning of students with additional support needs, including students whose first language is not English or Irish and students who are experiencing difficulties;
- create a reading ethos in the school;
- monitors and evaluates pupils' oracy skills.

The Strategy promotes learning that:

- is active and highly-motivated;
- is purposeful;
- is creative and imaginative;
- is reflective;
- is secured in use and meaningful in context;
- is increasingly independent and self-motivated;
- motivates pupils to take increasing responsibility for recognising their own literacy needs and making improvements;
- harnessed to personal or group targets;
- involves collaboration with teachers and with other students;
- permeates all work, enabling pupils to realise the purpose of literacy and to become more confident in the transference of skills to other subject areas, e.g. gives additional opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of vocabulary through ORACY, listening, recording and writing.

PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT

Planning in Clifden Community School is specific, rigorous, thorough, measurable, achievable, challenging, realistic and adheres to a timeframe. The successful implementation of this literacy policy is dependent upon the extent to which the staff in Clifden Community School takes account of the needs of all students, with regard to ethnicity, ability and social and cultural factors.

Planning for literacy aims to:

- adopt current objectives outlined by the DES with a view to inclusion in planning for and assessing literacy skills;
- increase the time devoted to the teaching of literacy;
- raise the awareness of all staff (both teaching and non-teaching) about their responsibilities for the development of literacy at all levels;
- promote the improvement of literacy standards and identify good practice for literacy;
- ensure inclusion and differentiation;
- ensure the transference of relevant information between the relevant education providers to facilitate the continuity and progression for the child;
- provide guidance for all teachers on how they can support students' literacy development across the curriculum;
- identify and make provision for the professional development needs of staff with regard to literacy;
- foster effective and sustained links between the Literacy Co-ordinator and the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator so that literacy and special educational needs provision is integrated;

- share best practice, forge links and build supportive networks of communications with other schools;
- recognise how resources will be organised to support the literacy strategy;
- make appropriate use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT);
- structure lessons appropriately in ways that support and stimulate language development and engages with those learning approaches, including cooperative learning, differentiated learning, active learning and problem-solving activity;
- incorporate a systematic “learning outcomes” approach into all subject plans, outlining the skills and competences expected of learners at the end of each stage of their learning;
- encourage and consolidate teaching approaches which are broad and balanced and which interweave the strands of literacy where opportunities arise;
- incorporate into each subject plan a strategy specific to the subject for identifying progression in the main forms of reading, writing, speaking, listening skills undertaken in each department to ensure coverage and progression across the key stages and strengthen teaching and learning accordingly;
- adapt the identified literacy cross-curricular priorities for each year to ensure the transference of literacy skills across the curriculum;
- strengthen the links between the school and the home by building effective working relationships with parents with a view to integrating parental engagement and encouraging parental participation as a core part of the literacy plans of the school;
- support initiatives that may provide parents with literacy difficulties with information and disseminate information about on-line resources about activities that they can use to support their child’s literacy development;
- take active steps to inform parents of the standards being achieved and the goals the school aims to achieve in order to heighten parents’ interest in becoming involved in helping to raise their child’s literacy standards;
- encourage parents to ensure that their child attends school every day;
- increase the RA (Reading Ability) of incoming first year students to enable them to better decipher the traditionally used texts in first year;
- continue to support the acquisition of a wide range of books and other materials and educational resources for the school’s in-house library facility;
- interpret and use the attainment levels of all pupils through teacher observation and interpretation of standardised tests to inform future literacy planning leading to robust, evidence-based school self-evaluation;
- support the learning needs of students who come from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, students whose first language is not English and students who are exceptionally able to the level of their capacity in an inclusive way;
- identify those pupils underachieving in literacy across the curriculum and address their specific weaknesses with appropriate teaching strategies;
- audit existing literacy provision and review current support for students with individual needs;
- promote the use of available guidelines and online resources for schools on best practice in supporting the needs of students with special educational needs;
- encourage detailed, accurate record-keeping.

ASSESSMENT

DES Circular 0056/2011 states that primary schools are directed from 1st June 2012 to send a copy of the end of year report card for each student to the secondary school in which the student has enrolled. The report cards should include also information from standardised tests and is invaluable in assisting self-evaluation of teaching and learning, specifically of literacy skills, in Clifden Community School, and in the formation of school improvement plans. Resources for students with special educational needs will be applied for as soon as is feasible. Clifden Community School is equipped with a software package which provides assistance in recording and analysing assessment data. This data is used to monitor the progress of each student's attainments in:

- standardised literacy tests (from both primary and secondary school);
- Christmas tests, Mock exams, summer tests and state examinations.

This data will inform and support target setting for the improvement of attainment in literacy.

Assessment shall:

- Make explicit to the pupils the key features of language which will be considered;
- be consistent and data from standardised tests and other sources may be analysed to track trends over time;
- carefully monitor learners' progress in literacy at each stage of development;
- identify students' learning needs as early as possible, allowing issues to be addressed and ensuring that they do not become a barrier to learning as the student progresses;
- inform planning and have an impact on teaching and learning interventions;
- provide useful data for the school's self-evaluation process, reflective practices, school improvement plans and inform target-setting;
- use a continuum of well-considered assessment approaches to determine the next steps in learning and planning approaches to teaching to suit the needs of learners;
- provide students and parents with feedback on progress and clear suggestions for the next steps that they should take to improve their learning;
- inform national education policy for literacy;
- include judgements about the progress pupils are making based on different sources of evidence, including conversations with the learner, an analysis of the learner's own self assessment, the teacher's observations of the learner's engagement with tasks, test scores, examples of students' work and written, oral and practical examinations;
- combine good assessment for learning (AfL) practice with appropriate assessment of learning (AoL) approaches. These are the approaches that provide an indication of the progress that the student has made in achieving the learning outcomes that are set out in the curriculum. Assessment of learning should provide a summary of what the student has achieved at fixed points, such as the end of an academic year. The information on students' progress may come from teachers' informed judgements, the students' performance on tests or tasks constructed by the teacher or school, the students' performance on standardised assessments and performance in state examinations.

EVALUATION

When responding to pupils' work the staff in Clifden 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 Strategy will be monitored and reviewed through:

The school and departmental development plans;

- sampling pupils’ work;
- discussion with staff, parents and school management;
- reviewing planning;
- analysing assessment data;
- discussion of students

Information provided from the monitoring and review process will inform decision making about improvements and further developments.

SHORT TERM ACTION PLAN 2012/13/14/15

Introduce a Literacy Coordinator and establishment of a Literacy Committee.

Create a whole school approach to literacy, raise awareness among staff by:

- displaying key word posters into English and maths subject classrooms and displayed in key areas of the school;
- establishing key word lists for each subject area;
- encourage staff to apply for JCSP initiatives to raise awareness of literacy in the school;
- adopting DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) for a specific week in the school calendar;
- first year public speaking;
- Library reading class for juniors

LONG TERM ACTION PLAN 2015/18:

- initiation of further whole school strategies and methodologies in classrooms and across the curriculum;
- disseminate literacy resources to all staff, pertaining to our literary initiatives;
- Display key word posters into all classrooms;
- review and expand achievement awards;
- promote and reward homework and study achievements;
- make provision for more regular literacy committee and subject department meetings to facilitate planning;
- increase the number of students sitting the higher level English paper at both Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate examinations;
- introduce a study skills module for specific year groups at the beginning of the school year;
- arrange special events to acknowledge literacy in subject specific weeks
- adopt a whole school marking approach
- introduce initiatives such as *Reading Millionaire, Red Reading Wall, DROP week, Spelling Bees, WOWords, etc*