



# **Ratoath College**

## **Literacy Policy**

### **2021 – 2024**

#### **Introduction**

In July 2011, the Minister for Education and Skills, Rúairí Quinn, launched the National Strategy to improve literacy and numeracy among children and young people, Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020. The strategy seeks to “address significant concerns about how well young people are developing the literacy and numeracy skills that they will need to participate fully in the education system, to live satisfying and rewarding lives and to participate as active and informed citizens in our society” (Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life, 2011, pp. 7).

Literacy is often thought to refer only to the skills of reading and writing. However, 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, pp.8).

#### **Rationale**

In 2009 the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) ranked Irish Students 17th out of 34 OECD countries in literacy performance. They also found that 17% of all Irish fifteen year olds and almost one in four teenage boys lack the literacy skills necessary to function effectively in society.

In 2012, PISA showed that the literacy levels of Irish teenagers had improved significantly, placing Ireland 4th out of 34 OECD countries in print reading performance. While this score is significantly higher than in 2009, it does not differ to the scores in 2000, 2003 or 2006. In fact, Ireland does not yet rank amongst the top performers internationally with regard to literacy. For example, 10% of Irish students are top performers in reading compared to 25% in Shanghai-China.

The 2012 results for Ireland also show that the gender gap between boys and girls continues with girls considerably out performing boys in the area of literacy. Ratoath College 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. Through the promotion of an integrated whole school approach, our school aims to create an environment where literacy is developed and embraced as a lifelong asset which supports students as they strive for excellence.

#### **Aims & Objectives**

The aims of this policy are to:

- support student learning across all subjects through the development of student’s literacy and communication skills
- support all teachers to become teachers of literacy
- promote a shared view of literacy and literacy development across the curriculum and provide appropriate staff development
- teach students to read fluently and with understanding, using reading methods that are appropriate to the material



- develop student's writing skills for a range of purposes and audiences, using spelling, punctuation and syntax appropriately and with confidence
- enable students to communicate clearly and with assurance. They should be able to talk and listen in a variety of groupings and in both formal and informal contexts
- to promote reading for pleasure
- to promote the wide use of ICT as a medium for the further development of language across the curriculum
- to use effective models of planning, target-setting, development and action planning to ensure common approaches and consistency across the school

### **Roles & Responsibilities Board of Management**

The board of management is responsible for:

- ensuring the literacy policy is developed and reviewed as appropriate
- considering reports from the principal on the implementation of the policy

### **Senior Management**

The senior management team led by the principal is responsible for:

- engaging the whole staff in developing strategies for the improvement of literacy in the school with the aim of establishing a comprehensive and co-ordinated literacy programme
- participating in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the whole school literacy strategy
- putting in place structures to review, monitor and evaluate the literacy development plan on an annual basis
- assessing the performance of students and using data from these assessments to establish the existing levels of achievement
- creating a culture of continuous improvement and shared goals
- evaluating teaching practices with regard to literacy and identifying areas for improvement
- evaluating the efficacy of assessment and evaluation measures in the school and making adjustments as necessary
- determining the role of the literacy co-ordinator
- providing finance for material resources and ensuring efficient use of available resources
- providing opportunities for effective communication between the Literacy and Numeracy Coordinator, SEN co-ordinator, the Senior Management Team and subject departments so that literacy, numeracy and special educational needs is integrated
- identifying and making provision for the training needs of staff in the form of relevant and focussed continuing professional development
- liaising with parents and external agencies in the provision of literacy supports for students

### **Literacy Co-ordinator**

The literacy co-ordinator is responsible for:

- leading the planning, implementation and evaluation of the whole school literacy strategy
- chairing regular meetings of the literacy committee



- assessing the performance of students and using data from these assessments to establish the existing levels of achievement and set targets
- setting challenging but realistic goals for improvement in literacy targets focussed on the progress of every student
- supporting and maintaining the implementation of strategies through subject departments
- planning, running and reviewing whole school literacy interventions such as word millionaire and paired reading
- liaising with senior management, numeracy co-ordinator, SEN coordinator and subject departments
- identifying, sourcing and alerting staff of appropriate resources
- identifying CPD needs and alerting staff to CPD opportunities SEN Co-ordinator

### **SEN Co-ordinator**

The SEN Co-ordinator is responsible for:

- organising the additional teaching supports to students with low achievement in the area of literacy
- administering the New Group Reading Test to all first year students in September
- gathering data relevant to literacy – NGRT, CAT5, education passport, psychological reports, teacher observation and identifying students in need of high levels of literacy support
- liaising with the literacy co-ordinator with regard to the individual needs of SEN students on an ongoing basis
- creating, monitoring and reviewing IEP's which include clear literacy targets in consultation with relevant stakeholders
- monitoring and reviewing literacy supports for SEN students

### **Subject Teachers**

All subject teachers are responsible for:

- using agreed common approach and strategies in identified areas for literacy development (see Appendix 1)
- contributing to the development and implementation of a whole school literacy programme (see Appendix 2)
- contributing to the monitoring and evaluation of language development throughout the school
- participating in whole school literacy initiatives e.g. DEAR (See Appendix 3 & 4)

### **Students**

Students are asked to:

- participate fully and to the best of their ability in whole school literacy initiatives
- follow the school's policy with regard to homework (See Appendix 5)
- make every reasonable effort to improve their literacy levels

### **Parents**

Parents are asked to:



- promote reading at home and to be seen as readers (discuss the book they are reading, ask child about their book, visit bookshops, library)
- encourage child to read newspapers and listen to the news
- engage in discussion with their child on current affairs
- encourage the use of dictionary
- encourage child to take time with written homework in particular the drafting and redrafting of written work
- participate in school activities to promote literacy when invited to do so
- contact the school if they have any concerns about their child's literacy levels Success Criteria
- show positive attitudes towards reading displayed by students and staff Monitoring Procedures

This policy was compiled in October 2021 and will be reviewed again in 2024

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on: \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Chairperson of Board of Management**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Principal**

**Date of next review: May 2024**



## **Appendix 1: Whole School Literacy Strategies**

### **(a) Print Rich environment**

Create a print rich classroom by:

- having lots of visual cues/reminders on display
- having posters/definitions/keywords on display
- referring regularly to the visuals on display
- displaying student work inside and outside your classroom
- ensuring that any work that is on display uses the correct spelling and grammar
- share the date, learning intentions, homework and keywords on the board when appropriate

### **Key words**

Acknowledge the importance of keywords by:

- pre teaching key words for each topic
- displaying keywords on wall and referring to them regularly
- ensuring a copy of the key words for all relevant topics is in subject department folder
- teaching students to recognise and wherever possible, to spell key words correctly

### **(b) Notes/Handouts**

Ensure that all students can utilise classroom notes and handouts by:

- using typed notes (Recommended Font: Arial. Recommended Font Size: 14)
- using one 1½ line spacing
- using bullet points / headings
- keeping the amount of text used as short as possible
- making notes available electronically to students through their 365 accounts

### **(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
- promoting the use of dictionary and thesaurus

### **(d) Reading**

Ensure that students hear excellent models of reading by:

- not asking students to read aloud in class unless the piece of text has been pre taught and they have had time to practice the piece
- providing students with a good model of reading when you read aloud to them
- inviting students to read but never coercing a student into reading aloud

### **(e) Promoting Reading**

Promote reading for pleasure by:

- displaying you "I am Reading Poster"



- discussing the book you are reading with students
- asking students about what they are reading
- creating a classroom library consisting of specialist magazines, reference texts and relevant articles
- compiling a reading list which is relevant to your subject area and displaying it in your classroom (For example: Science – Bill Bryson’s A Short History of Nearly Everything. Business – Steve Job’s biography)
- participating in whole school reading initiatives such as DEAR, Book in a bag, World Book Day

### **(f) Graphic Organisers**

Support students with literacy difficulties by:

- avoiding large volumes of text
- using bullet points and headings
- using graphic organisers such as fishbone/placemat/mind maps/venn diagrams to present information

### **(g) Reading for understanding**

Support students to read for understanding by:

- teaching students how to scan for keywords
- teaching students how to highlight keywords
- teaching students how to summarise a piece of text using bullet points and headings
- showing students how to use index/contents page
- doing a readability test on text book
- knowing the reading age of your students and differentiating your instructional practice and homework appropriately (For example, do not expect students who have a lower reading age than the book to: -find the answers in the book without support - read and find information from the book without support - do the set questions in the book without support)

### **(h) Written Work**

Promote an excellent standard of written work by:

- ensuring students use the guidelines for written homework
- expecting homework be presented neatly in the correct copy with a margin, appropriate heading and date
- checking punctuation and spelling
- ensuring paragraphs are used and ideas are correctly sequenced
- encouraging students to use draft, re draft and editing techniques

### **(i) Oral Literacy**

Promote student’s competency and confidence with regard to oral literacy by:

Providing pupils with regular opportunities to speak and listen in the following contexts:

- In pairs with a working partner
- In small groups with opportunities to take on various roles
- With the teacher or another adult
- In whole class discussions
- In presentations to a wider audience



## **Appendix 2: Subject Department Guidelines**

- ✓ Whole School Literacy Plan
- ✓ Subject Department Checklist
- ✓ There is a literacy section in the subject folder
- ✓ All teachers know the reading age of the students in their class
- ✓ All text books used in the department have been reviewed for their readability
- ✓ There is a keyword list for each topic
- ✓ Keyword lists are on display in classrooms where appropriate
- ✓ Students are taught to spell subject specific words
- ✓ Students are taught to skim text for answers
- ✓ Students are taught to summarise chapters
- ✓ All members of department have read and are familiar with the school's literacy policy
- ✓ There is a copy of the school's literacy guidelines in the subject folder



### **Appendix 3: Some Whole School Literacy Interventions**

- ✓ Literacy Notices – word / fact / riddle / quote of the week
- ✓ Teachers are encouraged to discuss the display with their students.

#### **DEAR (Drop Everything and Read)**

This is a great way of promoting reading across the whole school or year group. The idea is that at a set time, throughout the year, everyone stops what they are doing and reads for fifteen minutes. It is a shared experience, gets people talking about books and reading while conveying a strong message that the school believes in reading.

Students read, principals read, teachers in the staff room read, phones are taken off the hook and secretaries read, the caretaker reads and all visitors to the school are offered books to read or magazines to look through.

#### **Creative Writing Competition**

This is a school competition during Arts Week and is aimed at encouraging students to write creatively using drafting and re drafting. Students are given a visual along with a sentence or a theme to inspire them to write a piece within specific parameters. There are prizes given for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place.

#### **World Book Day**

World Book Day takes place in March each year. Various activities are organised throughout the day to celebrate reading for pleasure.

#### **School Library**

This is a public area of the school open at lunchtimes where reading for pleasure is encouraged for students, staff and visitors. It is a welcoming space that offers enticing reading material such as novels, magazines and newspapers.

#### **I am Reading Posters**

This is a poster displayed by every teacher sharing a book they are reading or have enjoyed. They can include a review or a mark out of ten written on it. This serves as a review for those who might wish to read the book.

#### **Staff Library**

This is an area in the staff room where teachers donate and swap books they have read and enjoyed.

#### **Reading Challenge**

The aim of the Ratoath College Reading Challenge is to promote both literacy and reading for pleasure amongst all first-year students with a view to extending it to other year groups. It further aims to reward and recognise those students who are passionate about reading. It looks to engage those students who may be unlikely to participate in extra-curricular activities. Students who complete the various stages of the Reading Challenge will be rewarded for their achievement by a bronze, silver or gold lapel badge as they proceed through levels.

Students can also have their success recognised formally, through inclusion of their achievement on their Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement.

#### **Board Signs**

This year 23/24, all teachers were provided with signs for their board: Date, Keywords, Homework and Learning Intentions. The intention is that literacy, numeracy and differentiation strategies will be promoted in the classroom for the benefit and clarity of all students and lessons.





## **Appendix 4:**

### **Literacy Calendar 2021-2024**

#### **Term 1**

- Noticeboard with focus on literacy promoted – Use of Screens around the school
- Book club recruitment
- Keywords emphasised for all classes
- Library opened
- I am Reading Posters distributed

#### **Term 2**

- Noticeboard with focus on literacy promoted – Use of Screens around the school
- Reading Challenge
- Revision of Exam Terminology in classes

#### **Term 3**

- Noticeboard with focus on literacy promoted – Use of Screens around the school
- Arts Week
- Spelling Competition
- World Book Day
- Reading Challenge Continues
- Update I am Reading Posters

#### **Term 4**

- Noticeboard with focus on literacy promoted – Use of Screens around the school
- Spelling Competition
- DEAR
- Revision of Exam Terminology in classes



## **Appendix 5:**

### **Checklist on Standard of Homework**

All students must have a pencil, red biro, ruler, calculator, blue or black pen, colouring pencils, drawing equipment, mathematical set, eraser, topper and pencil case.

- ✓ Homework must be completed in the correct homework copy for the subject.
- ✓ Date the top of page for homework.
- ✓ Page number in book/Year of exam paper at the top of the homework.
- ✓ Use only blue or black pens for the main text.
- ✓ All questions are numbered.
- ✓ All questions should be answered in full sentences where required.
- ✓ Every sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop or question mark.
- ✓ Handwriting is clear and easy to understand.
- ✓ The meaning of each sentence is clear.
- ✓ Diagrams where required are drawn in pencil, presented neatly and properly labelled.
- ✓ The use of rulers, coloured bios and other requirements set down by the teacher are followed.