



**ST. PATRICK'S NATIONAL SCHOOL**

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# Arts Education

# Drama



## school policy

**2020**

# CONTENTS

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1 Introductory statement	3
1.2 Rationale	3
<b>2. Vision and aims</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 School characteristic spirit / ethos	3
2.2 Aims and objectives	3
<b>3. Curriculum planning</b>	<b>4</b>
3.1 Strands and strand units	4
3.2 Approaches and methodologies	4
3.3 Children with special needs	7
3.4 Assessment and record keeping	7
3.5 Linkage and integration	7
3.6 Equality of participation and access	8
<b>4. Organisational planning</b>	<b>8</b>
4.1 Timetable	8
4.2 Resources and equipment	8
4.3 Health and safety	8
4.4 Individual teachers' planning and reporting	9
4.5 Staff development	9
4.6 Parental involvement	9
4.7 Community links	10
<b>5. Success criteria</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>6. Ratification and communication</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>7. Implementation</b>	<b>10</b>
7.1 Roles and responsibilities	10
7.2 Timeframe	10
<b>8. Review</b>	<b>10</b>
8.1 Roles and responsibilities	10
8.2 Timeframe	11

# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1 Introductory statement**

This policy was formulated through staff collaboration co-ordinated by the principal, in consultation with the Board of Management and parent representatives, following in-service training as part of the implementation process of the revised Primary Curriculum (1999).

## **1.2 Rationale**

Drama provides children with ways to explore our cultural heritage and new dimensions of a changing world. The essential elements of make-belief in drama help the children to test their hypotheses about all sorts of aspects of their family, their community and the wider world – exploring what it is like and what it could be like.

The school has a tradition of including Drama throughout its curricular implementation programme, especially in Language areas. A number of dramatic productions may be prepared annually in various classes throughout the school, usually at Christmas and at the end of the school year. School assemblies are regularly led by individual classes, and these are usually drama- based.

The purpose of this policy is

- to benefit planning, teaching and learning through Drama in our school;
- to provide a coherent approach to the teaching of drama across the whole school, in order to ensure that pupils may develop skills as envisaged in the Primary School Curriculum.

# **2. Vision and aims**

## **2.1 School characteristic spirit / ethos**

The Drama programme in our school is intended help children to develop their creativity, expressiveness and understanding through a range of activities that explore feelings, knowledge and ideas.

As noted in the school's Mission Statement:

*“pupils are encouraged to reach their full educational potential, by developing intellectual skills combined with a spirit of inquiry and the capacity to analyse issues critically and constructively, while developing expressive, creative and artistic abilities”.*

## **2.2 Aims and objectives**

We endorse the aims of the Primary Curriculum (ref *Drama Curriculum*, pp. 8-10)

- to enable the child to become drama literate;
- to enable the child to create a permanent bridge between make-believe play and the art form of theatre;
- to develop the child's ability to enter physically, emotionally and intellectually into the drama world in order to promote questioning, empowering and empathetic skills;

- to enable the child to develop the social skills necessary to engage openly, honestly and playfully with others;
- to enable the child to co-operate and communicate with others in solving problems in the drama and through the drama;
- to enable the child to understand the structures and modes of drama and how they create links between play, thought and life;
- to enable the child to acquire this knowledge of drama through the active exploration of themes drawn from life (past and present), whether they have their source in other curricular areas or in general areas relevant to the child's life;
- to enable the child to begin the process of translating a knowledge of drama into the active exploration of life themes from drama literature, leading to the appreciation of world drama culture;
- to form the criteria with which to evaluate the drama texts, written or performed, to which he/she is continually exposed;
- to be able to derive the maximum benefit from the extensive facilities and resources provided through the school.

### 3. Content of Drama plan – curriculum

#### 3.1 Strands and strand units

<b>Strand</b>	<b>Strand units</b>
<b>Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• exploring and making drama</li> <li>• reflecting on drama</li> <li>• co-operating and communicating in making drama</li> </ul>

#### **Infant Classes**

(ref Curriculum, pp 13-17)

#### **First and Second Class**

(ref Curriculum, pp 19-23)

#### **Third and Fourth Class**

(ref Curriculum, pp 24-31)

#### **Fifth and Sixth Class**

(ref Curriculum, pp 32-39)

Teachers can choose from the range of content objectives in all strand units appropriate to class levels.

A thematic approach may be used, eg stimuli may include stories, poetry, pictures/photographs, objects, issues from SPHE curriculum, aspects of life in the past/present/future, or the needs/concerns of pupils.

#### 3.2 Approaches and methodologies

(ref *Teacher Guidelines* pp 37 – 99).

Belief is central to all drama and should be characterised by

- a willingness to believe in the drama itself,
- sincerity in playing roles and characters,
- a willingness to accept the fictional consequences of drama and
- a willingness to explore.

The prerequisites for making drama are

- content
- the fictional lens
- a safe environment

### Content

(ref *Teacher Guidelines*, pp 39 – 40)

The content of drama lessons is chosen from a combination of aspects of life, whether experienced, imagined, or read about. This may be from the past, present or future, and may involve the needs, concerns or preoccupations of the children (eg relationships). The content may also derive from other curricular areas.

### The fictional lens

What's the story?... What's the real situation? What's the fiction?

(ref *Teacher Guidelines*, pp 41 - 42)

An appropriate and effective fictional lens is chosen to reflect the content, suitable to the age and ability of each group.

In the Infant classes and First Class, this will involve stories closely related to the children's own experience (eg family, pets, toys, friends, local environment). Through drama the children can try out real-life situations, in a safe and secure environment. From Second Class onwards, factual stories from history or current affairs may be included more regularly, as the children understand that the framing of the drama distinguishes the dramatic representation from the factual situation. By the end of Sixth Class, it is intended that the children will have a sense of how different genres (eg tragic, comic, absurd) can act as distinctive lenses on reality. The process of drama also involves creative story making, as well as adapting existing material to meet the needs of a particular group as well as the teacher's objectives.

### A safe environment

(ref *Teacher Guidelines*, p 43 - 46)

Age-appropriate rules and guidelines are devised on a class-by-class basis to ensure that a safe environment is created for Drama activities. Teachers are advised to make Drama contracts with their classes.

**The elements of drama**, as defined in the Curriculum are belief,

- role and character,
- action,
- place,
- time,
- tension,
- significance and
- genre.

In improvised drama, various combinations of elements are used to enrich the drama.

## **Drama strategies and conventions**

(ref *Teacher Guidelines*, pp 97-98)

There are many strategies and conventions that are used in drama, allowing creativity within a controlled situation. Teachers include the following drama strategies in their implementation of the curriculum. They are used selectively and thereby avoid classes being a series of drama strategies rather than encouraging the flow of productive dramatic action.

### Drama games

They are helpful in establishing confidence and a sense of drama, (eg blind man's buff).

### Still image and montage

Groups compose a still picture to illustrate an idea or capture a moment. This can be developed further with senior classes, eg where a composition is set against a contrasting image/soundscape so as to question the content of the still picture (eg a still picture of emigrants with a sound-track of sounds from home).

### Hot-seating

A character sits in the centre while the others ask questions about his/her life and he/she answers as the character. As a variation/development, the others can also sometimes ask the questions as their own characters.

### Thought-tracking

Some of the class do actions silently or make still images while the others speak their thoughts aloud about them, either simultaneously or individually.

### Sound-tracking

Some of the class do actions silently or make stills while the others make the soundtrack to go along with them (ref *Teacher Guidelines*, p 83, activity 4).

### Voices in the head

At a moment of choice for a particular character others in the group articulate the conflicting voices the character can hear in his/her head.

## **Review and reflection**

Children are encouraged to reflect on drama both within the drama and after the drama experience, eg through writing, visual arts, speaking, listening, doing, questioning, etc.

## **Differentiation**

Teachers use various methods to ensure that all children are provided with opportunities to access the drama curriculum, and by offering opportunities for involvement at various levels, eg through story-line or character development, production, and direction opportunities, etc.

### **3.3 Children with special needs**

Teachers operate a system of differentiation in planning and implementing Drama lessons. Where applicable, they work closely with SNAs to support and ensure participation of those children who have particular special needs.

'Social stories' and 'socially speaking' games are used to help children to learn how to deal with real life situations, both day-to-day and specifically challenging scenarios.

### **3.4 Assessment and record keeping**

(ref school's policy on Assessment and record keeping, *Curriculum*, pp 42 - 46, *Teacher Guidelines*, pp 99 - 101)

Through consideration of the inherent objectives, assessment in Drama involves monitoring the development of the children's drama skills and concepts, and the success with which they learn through engagement the three strand units, ie

- exploring and making drama (the extent to which the child enters into a role or a character and develops it in the context of the action);
- reflecting on drama (the extent to which they use reflection to create alternative courses for the action or the quality of the insights they gain from the drama experience)
- co-operating and communicating in making drama (the ability to contribute to the shaping of the drama, both in discussion about it and as the action takes place).

The assessment tools used include

- teacher observation
- teacher-designed tasks
- peer assessment e.g. two stars and a wish
- reflection on the drama through the creation of a storyboard

The information gained from teachers' observation and assessment will inform all planning, eg to enable the teacher to develop a differentiated programme for the class.

Teachers may keep written records and some photographic records of classroom- based activities and productions, in accordance with our school policy on record keeping.

### **3.5 Linkage and integration**

Linkage of the three strand units (exploring and making drama; reflecting on drama and co-operating and communicating in making drama) is addressed by teachers in their planning. Drama is integrated with the other subjects of the curriculum

- within lessons, eg reflection on a poem, dramatisation of history story, bringing art images to life;
- through possible extensions and development of aspects of various lessons, eg developing sound track and movement for a story, reading body language and movement, dealing with emotions explored in SPHE.
- through annual celebrations and national holidays such as World Book Day.

### 3.6 Equality of participation and access

(ref school's *Equality Policy*)

Drama is considered to be an excellent vehicle for use in providing opportunities to integrate the varying culture and backgrounds of all pupils. Authentic materials from other cultures are used for drama activities, when possible, and can include costumes, props, and musical instruments. All children have equal rights to access services, facilities, and amenities in the school environment.

## 4. Organisational planning

### 4.1 Timetable

The official allocated time for Arts Education (Visual Arts, Music and Drama) is

- Infant classes: 2.5 hours per week
- other classes: 3 hours per week

(ref *Curriculum Introduction*, pp 67 - 70)

As Drama is often integrated with other subjects throughout the curriculum, this allocation may be exceeded. Blocked time is regularly used, eg for project work, preparation for productions, etc. Plays are performed at Christmas and the end of the school year, at the discretion of the class teacher.

### 4.2 Resources and equipment

The school's facilities and resources include a hall, collapsible stage, lighting, sound equipment, and seating as well as props, costumes, and drama books. Ongoing efforts are made to develop the stock of props and costumes suitable for use with classes throughout the school, and to keep them in good condition for future use. Props and costumes have a designated storage area in the Computer Room. A range of stimuli for drama includes music, poetry, stories, visual images.

Curriculum support websites:

DES	<a href="http://www.education.ie">www.education.ie</a>
PDST	<a href="http://www.pdst.ie">www.pdst.ie</a>
NCCA	<a href="http://www.ncca.ie">www.ncca.ie</a>
NCTE	<a href="http://www.ncte.ie/internetsafety">www.ncte.ie/internetsafety</a>
INTO	<a href="http://www.into.ie">www.into.ie</a>
IPPEN	<a href="http://www.ippn.ie">www.ippn.ie</a>
NPC Primary	<a href="http://www.npc.ie">www.npc.ie</a>

### 4.3 Health and safety

(ref *Health and Safety Statement*)

All Drama activities are organised in accordance with the school's *Health and Safety Statement*.



#### **4.4 Individual teachers' planning and reporting**

This policy is available to all teachers, who are encouraged to refer to it when planning, as it aims to provide information and guidance to individual teachers for their long and short-term planning.

Monthly reports serve a valuable role in the review and development of whole school/individual preparation for following years. In order to ensure continuity and to avoid repetition etc, teachers' monthly reports are available for reference when doing long-term planning.

#### **4.5 Staff development**

Teachers are encouraged to engage in in-career development, and to share the expertise acquired at professional development courses with colleagues at School Development Planning (SDP) sessions, staff meetings, etc.

Opportunities for team-teaching are welcomed as they arise from time to time, eg in preparation for joint class assemblies.

Staff members who have particular expertise and experience are encouraged to share their expertise with colleagues. If an individual teacher needs to be supported in developing the required knowledge and skills to facilitate pupil learning in some aspects of the Drama curriculum, it is hoped that such support would be available within the school. Outside support can also be availed of by individual teachers or by the staff as a whole. The Drama co-ordinator may arrange a Drama support workshop in consultation with the Principal and the ISM team as part of the school's ongoing CPD programme.

#### **4.6 Parental involvement**

(ref *Drama Curriculum and Guidelines for Parents - your child's learning*)  
Parents are aware of the nature and purpose of the Drama curriculum through this policy, the school website [www.stpns.ie](http://www.stpns.ie), and websites such as [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie), [www.schooldays.ie](http://www schooldays.ie), etc. All curricular areas may be discussed with parents individually during the on-going home/school consultation process that applies throughout the year.

Parents support the implementation of the Drama curriculum through hands-on help in a variety of ways including productions, costumes, and technical support. They have also raised the funds to provide the lighting, sound and stage equipment. The school recognises the value of specialised support in particular curricular areas and is fortunate to have some parents who are particularly talented in various elements of Drama whose help is welcomed whenever possible.

Parents are invited to view their children's work by attending class productions and performances. Parents may join Drama excursions where they are part of the supervisory support team for the Class Teacher.

## **4.7 Community links**

Visiting/travelling actors and theatre companies enrich and support the Drama programme and are invited to perform at the school from time to time. The children are also regularly invited to listen to local and travelling story tellers in our local library.

## **5. Success criteria**

This policy represents the plan that supports the teaching and learning of Drama in this school, as outlined in the aims of the Primary Curriculum (ref *Drama Curriculum*, pp. 8-10). Its implementation is monitored through

- teachers' preparation and record keeping
- ensuring that procedures are consistently followed
- the end product, as seen directly in the children's work.

Outcomes are assessed through

- teacher observations
- peer assessment
- DES inspectors' suggestions/reports
- feedback from parents and the community.

## **6. Ratification and communication**

Following a review in 2020, this policy was ratified by the Board of Management. It was immediately given to all teaching staff and made available to parents through the school office and the school website [www.stpns.ie](http://www.stpns.ie).

## **7. Implementation**

### **7.1 Roles and responsibilities**

This plan was developed by the Principal, in consultation with other teaching and support staff, Board of Management and parent representatives. The policy is implemented by all staff throughout the school, and is reflected in all teachers' long and short-term planning.

### **7.2 Timeframe**

The revised policy was implemented immediately following its ratification by the Board of Management.

## **8. Review**

### **8.1 Roles and responsibilities**

Policy development includes consultation with representatives of all education partners, teachers, Board of Management, parents, and pupils (where appropriate).

## 8.2 Timeframe

It will be necessary to review this plan on a regular basis to ensure optimum implementation of the Drama curriculum in the school. However, this policy is scheduled for a full review in 2025.

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Canon David Mungavin  
Chairperson  
Board of Management

\_\_\_\_\_  
Rachel Harper  
Principal

Date: \_\_\_\_\_