

# St Ignatius College Siggiewi Primary

## SCHOOL LANGUAGE POLICY

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### **1. School Language Aims**

- 1.1 To adopt a whole-school approach to literacy across the curriculum in keeping with the principles and practices established in the National Curriculum Framework.
- 1.2 To empower children to have full access to the curriculum which will thus lead to the mastery of the key competences of lifelong learning.
- 1.3 To enable all pupils to reach their potential in the key literacy skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- 1.4 To help children express their ideas through speaking and listening.
- 1.5 To encourage children to develop the necessary skills to become fluent independent readers and to develop appropriate writing skills.

### **2. Introduction**

- 2.1 The school language policy is in line with the general aims as stated in the National Curriculum Framework.
- 2.2 The school language policy includes strategies for the teaching of both Maltese and English.
- 2.3 The school language policy has developed from an action research process. The school stakeholders did extended background research, examined routine practices, analyzed existing context and implemented innovative practices before finalising the school language policy.
- 2.4 The language policy is the responsibility of all teachers: only through the everyday commitment of the teacher in the class can the desired effects become a reality.

2.5 In order to keep this policy alive it will be reviewed every two years, and innovative practices will be considered for inclusion.

2.6 Language learning does not only take place in specific subjects explicitly defined and reserved for it such as mother tongue education or a second language education. It also takes place in each and every activity across the curriculum whether we are conscious of it or not.

2.7 Placing Literacy as the first cross-curricular theme highlights the fact that all learning happens primarily through language in its various forms, and that therefore all educators need to see themselves as guarantors of the language mastery required of their learners in their particular area of knowledge. (NCF, pg. 9)

### **3. Policy Statement**

In the primary years language is linked to all aspects of the curriculum. St Ignatius College Siġġiewi Primary commits itself to linking the four basic skills related to language development, namely the listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The strategies mentioned below are not restrictive. Each teacher is expected to enhance language teaching through a variety of strategies depending on the children's ability, class dynamics and other situations that may arise from time to time.

As language is part of ones' identity the recognition of the mother tongue and the culture associated with it will increase a child's self-esteem and general sense of well-being. Skillful use of Maltese language will help children appreciate their own national identity and strengthens their capacity as responsible citizens.

Malta is increasingly becoming a multi-cultural society and, as stated in the National Curriculum Framework for All, St Ignatius College Siġġiewi Primary, strives to 'provide all children and their parents with language support in Maltese and

English so that they achieve a basic working knowledge of these languages at the earliest possible in order to allow them to integrate quickly' (NCF, pg. 4)

#### **4. Bilingualism**

Normally students with good mother tongue skills develop good general language skills and thus importance should be given to the first and second language at both levels. As highlighted in the NCF, pg. 34, linguistic fluency and competence is expected in both the mother tongue (L1) and the second language (L2), which in the Maltese context generally refer to Maltese and English respectively. As highlighted in the Language Policy for the Early Years, learners should be fluent in Maltese and English and educators should provide learners with opportunities to engage with both languages. 'They are also to convey positive attitudes towards the use of both languages, and to reinforce the children's self-esteem as bilingual learners' (A Language Policy for the Early Years pg. 13).

Teachers are strongly encouraged to use English when teaching English and Mathematics and Science in class, and encourage learners to speak in English. In situations when teaching these subjects in English causes a problem, mediation strategies may be adopted. 'When adopting language mediation, the teacher can also switch from one language to the other' (A Language Policy for the Early Years pg.13).

#### **5. Developing Listening and Speaking Skills**

In these guidelines the various competences of listening and speaking are outlined below.

1. Provide good models of spoken language to help learners widen their vocabulary and learn.
2. Make eye contact with speakers.
3. Ask the kind of questions attentive listeners would ask.

4. Give feedback.
5. Teach learners to wait before they speak.
6. Listen attentively to others.
7. Think about what has been said.
8. Gather their thoughts and frame their replies.
9. Provide opportunities for learners to extend their spoken communication.
10. Enable learners to listen appreciatively and to respond in a variety of ways to stories, poetry and rhymes.
11. Provide good models of spoken English to help students increase their fluency and learn how to structure sentences, speak confidently and clearly, and sustain dialogue.
12. Encourage learners to participate in performances using appropriate language e.g. Role-play, drama and presentations.
13. Encourage and prepare children to participate in assemblies and other school activities.

## **6. Developing Reading and Writing Skills**

In these guidelines the various competences of reading and writing are outlined below.

1. Auditory discrimination (e.g. identifying and matching sounds).
2. Visual discrimination (e.g. matching pictures, shapes etc.)
3. Left to right orientation.
4. Sorting activities.
5. Classifying (e.g. odd one out).
6. Sequencing activities.
7. Recalling (e.g. what is missing).
8. Help children reflect on the form and content of the book.
9. Encourage children to predict the story from the illustrations.

10. Use their skills in speaking and listening to explore, articulate and extend their understanding of texts.
11. Ask inferential questions since these help develop in depth reading skills such as learning to read between the lines.
12. Discuss the set up and ask them to summarise what happens.
13. Understand the sound and spelling system and use this to read and spell accurately. Read and write with a confidence, fluency and understanding.
14. Use a variety of strategies when they come across new words.
15. Understand the conventions of different non-fiction text types and be able to use these conventions confidently as readers and writers.
16. Plan and organize by means of; spider, squashed web, lists, senses, etc.
17. Adapt their writing to suit audience and purpose.
18. Be confident users of subject specific vocabulary and correct spellings.

The learners are taught that proper writing involves identifying the purpose and audience, deciding what needs to be written, planning their thoughts, drafting, proofreading and presenting work neatly. Thus teachers will:

1. teach learners how to understand and be able to write in a range of genre, and be familiar with ways in which these genre are constructed,
2. set writing tasks that have clear purposes, are objective driven and which are appropriate for the age and ability of the pupils concerned,
3. teach pupils how to structure their writing using a variety of sentence structures, paragraphs and a wide range of punctuation,
4. ensure that pupils are familiar with the appropriate style and conventions to write in a particular genre and
5. provide good models of particular kinds of writing

## **7. Developing Handwriting Skills**

In kindergarten classes learners will be encouraged to do a great deal of scribbling and inventive writing and to discover letter shapes and movement. At this stage learners will:

1. be allowed plenty of practices of pre-writing skills involving scribbling and pattern work which will help develop perception and hand-eye coordination (this can also link in with art and craft work),
2. practice in pencil control and fine motor movements before being introduced to letter formation

Specific attention will be given to:

1. physical development,
2. postural control,
3. shoulder stability,
4. development of web space (the circle that forms with the tip of the index finger and the thumb touching),
5. pencil control,
6. pencil grip,
7. different needs of left-handed learners

## **8. Handwriting and Spelling**

It has been shown that good handwriting and spelling go together. The work of Cripps and Cox (1989) indicates that when the two skills are taught together, learners do become more confident in looking at and writing words, and more able to identify misspellings. Therefore at Siġġiewi primary the teaching of spelling and handwriting will be linked together.

Specific attention will be given to:

1. letter formation,
2. letter size,
3. order of letters,
4. capital letter sequence,
5. joint handwriting,
6. different needs of left-handed learners

If handwriting is a means of communication, legibility should be a priority.

Learners will be introduced to joint handwriting from the early years. Joint handwriting reduces the chance of reversing letters by removing the need to lift the pen between letters in a continuous flow from left to right. It also assists with retaining spelling patterns due to its multi-sensory effect.

In due process learners will require different levels of writing for different purposes namely a very fast hand for personal notes, a clear but quick hand for general use and finally a formal hand for special occasions.

## **9. Assessment**

Assessment is closely interlinked to learning.

It takes the form of assessment of learning when it is done with the intention of recording and documenting learners' progress. This is mainly achieved through the use of diagnostic tests, checklists and formal exams. But the correction of homework and classwork can serve this summative function as well. This form of assessment should not be an end in itself, but rather a means to an end. It provides a more holistic analysis of the capabilities of each learner. Thus the teacher can use the insights gathered to understand the

learners' needs and plan more effectively. In other words it should lead to assessment *for* learning. This can be achieved through the employment of structured feedback in which strengths and tangible ways of improvement and development are clearly outlined. One practical way how this can be achieved is through the use of *two stars and a wish*. This feedback can be given both orally and in written form, and to both learner and parents/guardians, at the professional discretion of the teacher.

Finally assessment can, and should, also assume the role of assessment as learning as well. It assumes this role when assessment is used as a means of furthering learning. This can be done through the use of self and peer assessment. But also by giving learners tasks and activities which are not repetitive and merely more of the same, but aimed at stretching their development further. They therefore involve applying, analysing, evaluating and creating new knowledge.

DATE OF POLICY – October 2017

DATE OF REVIEW- October 2019