

# Teaching and Learning Policy



*Striving Together for Achievement*

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## Mission Statement

At Gaelscoil na Móna, we believe that children should be enabled to learn for life. We believe the process of learning to be a partnership between children, their teachers and their families. We strive to help the children entrusted to us to achieve the very best that they can. Working in partnership with families and the local community, it is our mission that the pupils of Gaelscoil na Móna will learn the skills needed to succeed in education, in their future careers and in their personal lives.

## Aims

At Gaelscoil na Móna we aim to:

- Develop children who are highly literate in Irish and English
- Continuously raise achievement for all children
- Develop independent learners
- Develop critical thinkers
- Create a happy, caring and nurturing environment for optimal learning
- Continuously develop innovative and effective teaching strategies
- Plan for, provide and source continuing professional development for our staff
- Teach according to the Revised Curriculum for Northern Ireland, ensuring skills development as well as a broad and challenging content
- Help children develop with skills which are transferable across the curriculum and in their day to day lives
- Ensure consistency of teaching across the school, through collaborative planning, monitoring and evaluation
- Identify and support children with Special Educational Needs



## Values

In Gaelscoil na Móna, we believe that a range of teaching approaches are used. Whilst we are aware of the importance of different learning styles, we are committed to a sociocultural approach to teaching and learning:

- children learn best when they learn together,
- they can discuss both *what* they learned and *how* they learned
- they can transfer skills beyond the learning activity in hand, to enable them to use their skills in a range of contexts
- they develop from learning in groups to learning and working independently
- the curriculum is relevant and interesting

Gaelscoil na Móna has high expectations of its pupils and of its teachers who are committed to the ethos that effective teaching means effective learning. We value learning as a reward in itself and also celebrate achievement by:

- using specific praise with each child
- using a reward system in every class
- awarding certificates
- holding weekly assemblies
- inviting parents to school plays and shows
- organising family days and encouraging parents to become involved in their children's school life

Meeting all a child's needs, including their emotional, and social needs, is essential to effective learning and we are committed to creating the conditions and atmosphere necessary for children to feel safe and cared for, happy and confident. We believe classrooms should be calm and nurturing. We encourage children to take an active role in solving problems with peers and provide a Personal Development curriculum, including an Emotional Literacy Policy, which contributes to meeting their emotional and social needs.



## Effective Teaching

Children will learn effectively if they are taught effectively and the school has agreed on a consistent, innovative and challenging approach to ensure this. We know children have learnt effectively if:

- They know what they need to do to succeed and when they have succeeded
- They can explain what they have learnt
- They can develop from learning as a group to learning independently
- They can apply learning to other situations
- They can teach what they've learnt to others
- They want to learn more



### Learning styles

It is recognised that children may have differing styles of learning and that these may change, through time, and in different areas of learning. Teachers plan their lessons to meet the needs of all learning styles.

### Planning

Consistency and continuity throughout the school and across age groups ensures that all children receive the same high quality education in Gaelscoil na Móna. A common planning format is in place throughout the school which is based on agreed schemes of work from Rang 1 through to Rang 7. Teachers devise yearly, half termly and weekly plans which are monitored by the Principal. Every child in the school also plans with their teacher their own Personal Learning Plan to help them achieve their goals.

## Teaching Strategies

A variety of strategies helps ensure lessons are challenging, interesting, relevant and skills-building. These include

- Group work
- Pair work
- Independent work
- Investigations, explorations and experiments
- Circle time
- Active learning
- Class discussions
- Debates
- Competitions
- Use of technology
- Presentations
- Creative activities
- Discursive
- Role plays
- Class/school visitors
- Educational trips



## Lesson Structure

Gaelscoil na Móna has adopted a common lesson sequence:

1. Introduction – agreeing success criteria against the learning intentions and introducing the topic. This means children and staff agree on the best way to advance learning,



gives ownership to the children and helps the teacher make the lesson relevant and interesting

2. Learning – a variety of tasks to meet the needs of all learners, which includes where possible the use of technology. The learning is well balanced between instruction, guided and independent learning.
3. Plenary – summing up of the lesson, checking learning, assessing achievement, addressing problems and planning the next steps.

### Organisation and Developing Independent Learners

The ultimate goal of each lesson is to equip each child with the knowledge and skills which will enable him or her to succeed in other situations, both in school and beyond. This is aided by organisation of learning:

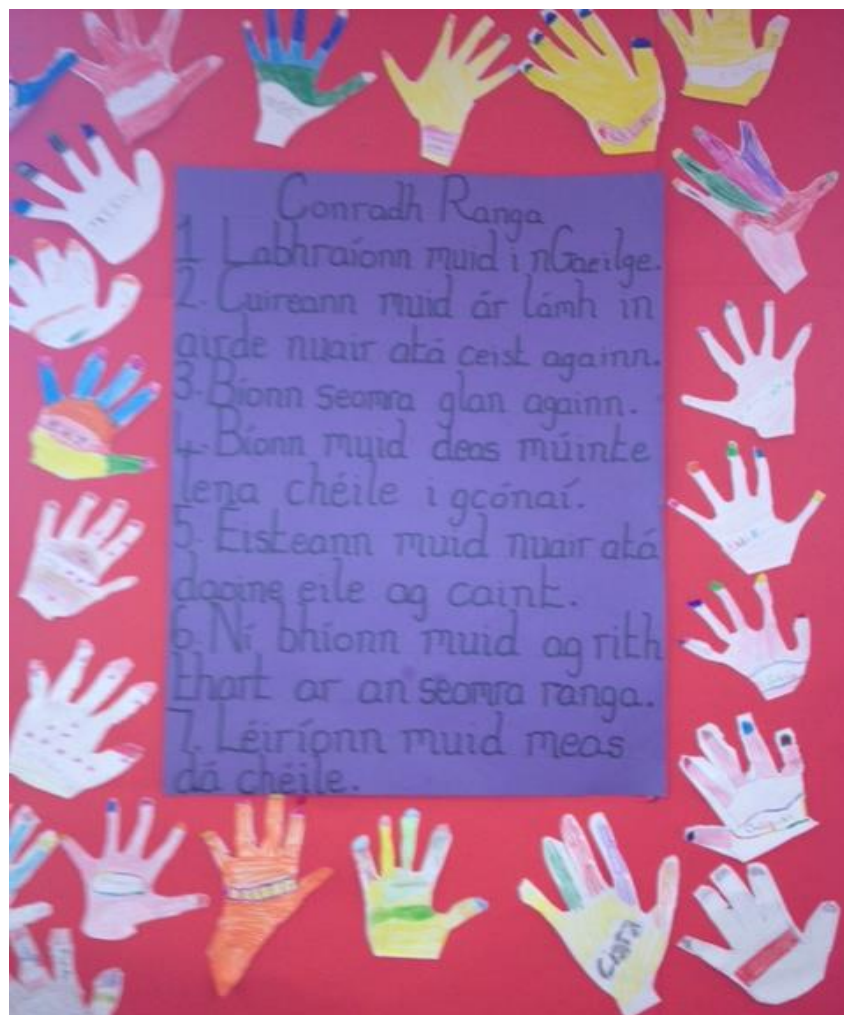
- Scaffolding – giving the child the appropriate support s/he needs to achieve tasks and gradually removing those supports as s/he becomes able to achieve independently and to move onto the next level of learning
- Grouping – children are taught in whole class groups, ability groups, interest groups, mixed ability groups, in pairs and alongside peer mentors
- Withdrawal – at times it may be best to withdraw a child for short periods of time to one of our dedicated support areas such as the *Aisceantár* (Resource Area) or *Seomra Tacaíochta* (Support Room). This is done only at times when a gap in a child's learning is preventing them from accessing the curriculum, or when a little extra support may help a child to overcome underachievement. The object is to fill that gap to get the child back into his/her classroom as soon as possible.
- In-class support – a trained classroom assistant works with small groups in class, either to support learning difficulties or, to drive high achievers ahead in their learning.



### Rules and Routines

Each teacher agrees a set of rules, or expectations, with their class and displays these in class. The class reward system is linked to achieving these expectations. These rules are:

- Agreed and understood by the children
- Positive and achievable
- Fair and consistent
- Based on good learning and caring for ourselves and others
- Clear, specific and enforced.





## Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Gaelscoil na Móna has developed a Special Educational Needs and Inclusion Policy which sets out arrangements for identifying and supporting children with SEN. The policy is based on collaboration with the children, with parents and with educational services such as outreach providers. Support depends on the strengths and needs of the child and may take the form of:

- Differentiation in class
- In-class support, including differentiated work and groupings
- School-provided withdrawal to work with qualified and trained staff, individually or in small groups
- Withdrawal to work with specialist services such as the Peripatetic Support Service
- Access to BELB or school provided adult assistance, in class and/or withdrawal.

The aims of our SEN provision are the same as our aims for all children; to develop happy, effective and independent learners.

## Language

Gaelscoil na Móna is an Irish Medium education organisation. Irish is the main medium of instruction and communication but it is more than that. Gaelscoil na Móna strives to help the children develop a love for the language and to develop a rich understanding and use of Irish. Some of the ways we do this are by working towards the silver and gold *fáinne*; by praising and awarding prizes and weekly certificates, not only for the use of Irish in the classroom and social settings but also, for *saibhreas*, or richness of language use. We are committed to the staff being the best models of Irish use and each year further develop the staff's Irish proficiency through professional development.

We are committed to helping our children to develop fully all the skills they will need for life. We place high importance on the development of strong literacy skills in English. Children begin to formally learn English literacy in Rang 3 and as they get older, they are provided with further opportunities to use English across the curriculum. From Rang 5, mathematical language and terminologies in Irish are also taught in English.



## Spirituality and the Teaching of Religion

Gaelscoil na Móna has devised a Spirituality Policy which aims to:

- Meet all children's spiritual needs
- Provide an understanding of world religions
- Develop children's empathy and mutual understanding
- Prepare those children who will receive the Catholic sacraments

Children who prepare for the sacraments will do so outside normal class teaching time. Parents who wish their children to receive the sacraments are encouraged to be active in their role in passing on their religion by taking their children to Mass, discussing their beliefs with their children and teaching them bible stories and prayers at home.



## Target Setting

Throughout the school year, we assess children's learning so that we can plan more effectively for their learning and our teaching. Gaelscoil na Móna is committed to continuously improving our children's educational outcomes so as to provide them with the very best opportunities in life. We set targets as part of our actions plans and plan our teaching, and any necessary intervention, to meet those targets. Some examples of Gaelscoil na Móna's target setting are:

- Whole school targets in literacy, numeracy and ICT
- Whole class targets
- Targeting groups at risk of underachievement
- Personal Learning Plans
- Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
- Beginning Teacher induction targets
- Teachers' Performance Review and Staff Development Targets

Targets are based on a number of assessments, which are detailed in our Assessment Policy and include:

- End of Key Stage results
- IQ assessments
- Progress in English assessments
- Nfer Maths
- A number of school based Irish assessments



## Homework

Homework is designed to reinforce learning in school and is differentiated according to the child's current level of ability. Dependent on the children's year group, homework set is based on:

- Maths
- Personal Development
- Irish
- English
- Reading in Irish
- Reading in English
- Spelling
- Phonics/Fónaí na Gaeilge

Although we provide an effective Homework Club, we encourage parents to:

- Check their children's homework
- Encourage their children to produce a high standard of homework
- Read with them, or encourage their children to read to them
- Help their children to learn spellings

Further details about homework can be found in our Homework Policy.

## Resources

To support effective learning, Gaelscoil na Móna utilises a number of resources including:

- Teachers
- Classroom assistants (SEN and Foundation Stage)
- BELB Peripatetic Support Service
- St Gerard's Educational Outreach Service
- Harberton Behaviour Outreach Service
- Extended Schools provision
- BELB Behaviour Support Team
- Children's Interdisciplinary Schools Team
- BELB Curriculum Advisory and Support Service
- Gaelic Athletic Association
- Oakwood ASD Advisory Service
- ICT – interactive whiteboards, classroom computers & technologies
- Textbooks, reading schemes in Irish and English
- Teacher produced worksheets
- BELB Spelling & Phonics Schemes
- Gaelscoil na Móna's Irish Spelling Scheme
- Class libraries
- Holy Trinity Youth Club Sports Hall
- *Áisceantár* (Resource Area)
- *Seomra Tacaíochta* (Support Room)



## **Roles & Responsibilities**

### **Board of Governors**

Gaelscoil na Móna's Board of Governors has ultimate responsibility for the teaching and learning in school. They delegate this responsibility to the Principal, Caireann Uí Mhuireagáin. Gaelscoil na Móna's Board of Governors is made up of a number of educationalists, including retired and serving principals, Gaelscoil na Móna's Principal, a Teacher Representative, a Parent Representative, members of the community and BELB Representatives.

### **Principal**

Caireann Uí Mhuireagáin has responsibility for the overall implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this policy.

### **Vice Principal**

Gerard Larkin has delegated responsibility for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this policy. He has responsibility for ensuring that schemes of work support all learners. He has responsibility for organising external and internal support for children with SEN and for monitoring and evaluating their progress.

### **Coordinators**

Numeracy, Literacy and ICT coordinators have responsibility for devising challenging and relevant schemes of work which challenge and support all learners and which embed the aims and values of this policy. They have responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of their areas.

### **Teachers**

Have responsibility for planning, preparation and delivery of lessons, according to this policy and the school's schemes of work. They have a responsibility to ensure that their classrooms are organised, calm, nurturing, supportive and challenging learning environments.

### **Children**

Have a responsibility to work hard, to work towards their personal targets and to ensure that their behaviour and work supports their peers' right to learn.

### **Classroom Assistants**

Have responsibility for supporting the work of the teacher. They have responsibility for guiding the children they work with towards achieving their learning goals.

### **Parents**



Have a responsibility to ensure that their children are in school every day, on time and in an optimum mental, emotional and physical state to learn. They have a responsibility to ensure good homework and that their children's learning is supported at home. Parents have the responsibility to attend meetings in school to collaborate in their children's education.



## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Teachers monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching in helping all children to reach their potential. They continuously assess, both formally and informally, the children's learning and development.

Gaelscoil na Móna utilises a number of annual assessments. The data obtained is used to evaluate children's learning and to set targets in teaching and learning.

To monitor and evaluate teaching and learning, the Principal regularly observes lessons in every classroom. Coordinators observe lessons in every classroom to monitor and evaluate the implementation of their schemes of work.

The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) monitors and evaluates the success of IEP's in helping children to meet their educational goals. The SENCo observes lessons in every classroom to monitor and evaluate SEN support.

Teachers plan together and observe other teachers in order to reflect on their own practices and to develop innovative and effective teaching methods.

Children are involved in planning learning activities and in discussing their learning, barriers to learning and overcoming these barriers

Parents are invited to regular meetings to discuss their children's learning progress.

*This policy will be re-evaluated every two years, or according to changing circumstances.*