The Development of a Literacy and Numeracy Policy
A Guidance Document for Primary Schools

Northern Ireland Education & Library Boards
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Introduction
‘Schools should have a literacy and numeracy policy, linked to the School Development Plan and annual targets’ (para 5.7) ‘Count, Read, Succeed – A Strategy to Improve Outcomes in Literacy and Numeracy’

It is intended that this document will support literacy and numeracy co-ordinators in engaging with their colleagues to agree the principles, practices and provision in their school, resulting in the development of an agreed policy document for literacy and numeracy. The key is the process in which staff undertake to reaching this shared understanding. A whole-school literacy and numeracy policy should be explicit; it should contain agreed statements about the nature, teaching and monitoring of these areas of study throughout the school.

Context
The stated vision of the Department of Education for N Ireland (DENI) is ‘To ensure that every learner fulfils his or her potential at each stage of his or her development.’ (DE 2010)

This has been enunciated in the overall aim of the N Ireland Curriculum (DE 2008), which states, ‘The N Ireland Curriculum aims to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives.’

The School Improvement policy document, ‘Every School a Good School,’ (DE 2009) has outlined characteristics of what will be recognised as effective performance under four headings:
- child centred provision;
- high quality teaching and learning;
- effective leadership;
- a school connected to its local community.

In March 2011 DE published ‘Count, Read, Succeed – A Strategy to Improve Outcomes in Literacy and Numeracy’. It states:

‘Literacy and Numeracy are at the very heart of the revised curriculum’ (para 2.3) ‘Developing literacy and numeracy therefore must be central elements of a school’s delivery of the revised curriculum, and of the support and professional development for teachers in implementing the curriculum’ (para 2.5)

In putting together this guidance we have set out the indicators from Every School A Good School and given relevant references to Count, Read: Succeed. When drawing up your policy, you need to set out only the key principles and practices that guide the development of Literacy &
numeracy throughout your school. The guidance regarding the school’s policy on its approaches to Language and Literacy on the planning, teaching and assessment of Talking & Listening, Reading and Writing should form the introduction to these schemes of work. The guidance regarding the school’s policy on its approaches to Mathematics and Numeracy should form the detail in the scheme of work for Number, Shape & Space, Measures and Handling Data with Processes in mathematics woven throughout.

What does a Literacy and Numeracy Policy do?

- A policy sets out the school’s principles and practices for the promotion and development of literacy & numeracy, both across the curriculum and within the Areas of Learning, English with Media Education & Mathematics.
- It clarifies the responsibilities for all stakeholders in ensuring the support and development of language skills.
- It reflects classroom practice in relation to the statutory learning experiences within the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

Definitions of Literacy and Numeracy

**Count, Read: Succeed**

Para 1.7 defines literacy as:

‘The ability to read and use written information and to write appropriately and legibly, taking account of different purposes, contexts, conventions and audiences. It involves the development of:

- an integrated approach to the acquisition of talking, listening, reading and writing skills across the curriculum;
- knowledge that allows a speaker, writer and reader to use language appropriate to different social situations;
- formal and informal language across all area of social interaction; and
- the ability to read, understand and use information in multiple formats and platforms, including traditional print and on-screen material’.

Para 1.10 defines Numeracy as:

‘The ability to apply appropriate mathematical skills and knowledge in familiar and unfamiliar contexts and in a range of settings throughout life, including the workplace. It involves the development of:

- an understanding of key mathematical concepts and their inter-connectedness;
- appropriate reasoning and problem-solving;
- the proficient and appropriate use of methods and procedures (formal and informal, mental and written); and
- active participation in the exploration of mathematical ideas and models’.
The Literacy and Numeracy policy must reflect the provision in line with the four characteristics of effectiveness as set out in *Every School a Good School* and also the requirements of *Count, Read: Succeed*

1. Child Centred Provision

In this section you should refer to page 14 of *Every School a Good School*. Discuss how these indicators are reflected in your provision for Language and Literacy and Mathematics and Numeracy. You may wish to consider how planning and practice ensure that the child is at the centre of your provision.

You may consider:

- The range and effectiveness of curricular planning
- Expectations that all children will achieve to the best of their ability
- How the school intervenes to support *all* learners
- The involvement of pupils in school life – both curricular and extra-curricular

2. High Quality Teaching and Learning

In this section you should refer to page 15 of *Every School a Good School*. Discuss how these indicators are reflected in your provision for Language and Literacy and Mathematics and Numeracy. You may wish to consider how your school’s provision for Literacy & numeracy ensures that there is:

- A broad and relevant curriculum promoting all three interdependent modes of language ie Talking & Listening, Reading and Writing and the areas of Mathematics
- A variety of teaching approaches which meet the requirements of para 5.3 *Count, Read: Succeed* ‘Teachers, drawing on their professional expertise, will use a variety of teaching strategies including whole-class teaching, co-operative small group work and individual work, differentiated where appropriate’.
- The use of the three key strategies (modelled, shared and guided) for developing Language & literacy
- Adequate procedures for your school to address underachievement as set out in para 5.1 of *Count, Read: Succeed*
- Use of practical materials, language development, symbolic representation and application for developing mathematical concepts
• Effective use of all data, including qualitative and quantitative to inform teaching and learning

• Rigorous self-evaluation to promote improvement

• Effective use of digital technology to support learning

• Infusion of Assessment for Learning strategies, Thinking Skills & Personal Capabilities, activity based learning/drama strategies & collaborative working

3. Effective Leadership

In this section you should refer to page 16 of *Every School a Good School*. Discuss how the individual leadership roles of the following people:

- Board of Governors
- Principal
- Senior Leadership team
- Literacy/numeracy Co-ordinator
- Head of English/Head of Mathematics

will contribute to:

• The School Development Planning process

• The setting of annual targets for improvement, in consultation with the literacy/numeracy co-ordinator/Head of English/Head of Mathematics

• The management and analysis of all data

• Tracking pupils’ progress

• Supporting staff within the school to address continuing underachievement (para 5.16, 17, 18)

• Professional development opportunities of all staff

• Sharing and learning from best practice

• Monitoring and evaluation

• Ensuring that channels of communication are open and active (internal and external)
4. A School Connected to its Local Community

In this section you should refer to page 16 of *Every school a Good School*. Discuss how these indicators are reflected in your provision for Language and Literacy and Mathematics and Numeracy. Discuss how your school develops and maintains partnerships with parents and the wider community.

You may wish to consider the following:

- **Links with parents** – systems the school has in place for informing and reporting to parents; homework; any literacy based programmes the school runs which involves parents; eg Paired Reading, Reading Partnerships, Parents’ information sessions, activities to which parents are invited or have an input eg assemblies, school productions, book fairs, World Book Day, World Maths Day, fund-raising for resources; school website eg tips for parents to support their children’s learning

- **Links with other schools** – clusters for staff development; visits to other schools to observe good practice; joint productions; links with pre and post primary schools for transition

- **Links with the community** – local library; local competitions, challenges, feis, county show; trips; visits to school by local people/businesses; neighbourhood renewal group projects

- **Links with bodies in the workforce** – story tellers, authors, poets, local reporters, journalists, bank officials, accountants

- **Links with external agencies** – staff development/information sessions eg by peripatetic services, Educational Psychology Service, Speech & Language.

(See also *Count, Read, Succeed* paras 2.21-2.24)

**Monitoring and Evaluation of Policy**

The Literacy and Numeracy policy will be:

- regularly reviewed and updated in consultation with staff, particularly SMT and SENCO;
- presented to the Board of Governors regularly;
- shared with parents;
- in line with whole school learning and teaching policy.