

An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta,
Corn a Madadh,
Baile Atha Luain,
Co. na hIarmhí.



Department of Education and Science,
Cornamaddy,
Athlone,
Co. Westmeath

Circular 0053/2007

To: The Managerial Authorities of Primary, Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools and to the Vocational Education Committees

Meeting the needs of pupils for whom English is a second language

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Circular is to assist schools in providing an inclusive school environment to meet the needs of pupils for whom English is a second language and outline the resources that are available to assist schools in this task.

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

An inclusive school environment reflects values and affirms linguistic, ethnic and cultural, diversity. It is important that schools have policies and procedures in place that promote and facilitate the inclusion of all children. The school's commitment to creating an inclusive school environment should be evident in the school plan, the promotion of parental involvement, the provision of equality of curriculum access, the facilitation of professional development opportunities and in whole-school and classroom practice. Pupils should also be encouraged and facilitated in maintaining a connection with their own culture and language through curricular activities and displays.

THE ROLE OF THE LANGUAGE SUPPORT TEACHER

Language support teachers are appointed to assist schools in providing additional language support teaching for pupils. In collaboration with parents and class teachers, language support teachers identify pupils requiring additional support, administer the assessment materials developed by Integrate Ireland Language and Training, devise appropriate language programmes, deliver the programmes and record and monitor pupils' progress. It is important that expertise is shared and good practice is communicated and disseminated in order to optimise the opportunities pupils have for developing their proficiency in English.

ASSESSMENT OF PUPILS' LEVELS OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

In order to assist schools in assessing pupils' levels of language proficiency, the Department of Education and Science has commissioned assessment packs to assist in determining language proficiency of pupils and these will be distributed to all schools shortly. The tests of English language proficiency contained in this pack were compiled by Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT), which is a campus company of Trinity College, Dublin, funded by the Department of Education and Science. The tests have been designed for use at primary level. The tests are being adapted to make them more age appropriate for use in post primary schools. However, the primary tests may be used by post primary schools in the interim.

The tests of English language proficiency are based on IILT's English Language Proficiency Benchmarks (revised version, September 2003), and are structured with reference to three proficiency levels (1, 2 and 3) as set out in the table below.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Very poor comprehension of English and very limited spoken English	Understands some English and can speak English sufficiently well for basic communication	Has competent communication skills in English

The English Language Proficiency Benchmarks specify what pupils should be able to achieve in English at each level and thus reflect the task-based approach to teaching and learning promoted by ILLT. Tasks have been selected to reflect what pupils encounter daily in the classroom. Scoring procedures have been designed to achieve accurate results, provided the tests are administered strictly according to the instructions provided. All documentation in relation to the administration of tests must be retained by the school for audit/inspection purposes.

ALLOCATION OF ADDITIONAL TEACHER SUPPORT

The level of additional teacher support allocated to primary and post primary schools will continue to be determined by the number of enrolled pupils for whom English is a second language and the associated assessed levels of pupils' language proficiency.

It is necessary for schools to apply for the additional allocation certifying the number of such pupils enrolled on form NN1 for primary schools and form NN 07/08 for post primary schools as already notified to all schools.

The table under sets out the resources that can be accessed to cater for such pupils where the number of pupils in the school is 14 or more:-

Number of pupils	Posts	Number of pupils	Posts	Number of pupils	Posts
14 to 27	1	42 to 64	3	91 to 120	5
28 to 41	2	65 to 90	4	121 or more	6

Schools with less than 14 pupils will have their needs addressed as outlined in previous circulars.

It is a matter for the school authority to deploy this teacher allocation having regard to the proficiency levels of individual pupils involved and in line with their evolving needs.

The allocation of additional language support teachers is based on allowing schools flexibility in the deployment of support. It is recommended that pupils receive additional language support teaching in the classroom or in small withdrawal groups in addition to the support they receive from the class teacher. It is intended that this revised allocation facilitates and provides for a high level of flexibility and will enable schools to successfully meet the needs of pupils who require additional language support teaching.

A defined whole-school policy in relation to the identification of pupils requiring support, assessment of pupils' levels of language proficiency, programme planning, recording and monitoring of pupils' progress and communication with parents are key features of effective language support provision. While duties and responsibilities vary in every school context, it is important that the roles of all school personnel in relation to meeting the needs of pupils for whom English is a second language are clearly defined and understood by all. It is important that expertise is shared and good practice is communicated and disseminated in order to optimise the opportunities pupils have for developing their proficiency in English.

Additional teaching hours are made available for schools catering for pupils with significant English language deficits assessed as having a language proficiency of either level 1 or 2. Should these extra resources be required for individual pupils for longer than two years, details of the assessed level of language competence and specific details of how the school has addressed the needs of these pupils in the previous two years must be outlined. Details must also be outlined of how it is proposed to optimise the opportunities of the pupils for whom an additional year is being sought.

The allocation is subject to confirmation by the school authority of actual attendance by the pupils through their inclusion in the school's certified October Returns.

Schools must retain a copy of all relevant documentation for audit purposes.

USEFUL MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

A wide range of materials and resources has been developed to assist schools in meeting the needs of pupils for whom English is a second language. The following is a list of materials that schools may find useful in responding to linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity.

Department of Education and Science (DES) (2003) Looking at our School: An Aid to Self-Evaluation in Primary Schools, Dublin: (DES).
Development and Intercultural Education (2005) Global and Justice Perspectives in Education: A Literature Review, Dublin: Church of Ireland College.
Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) (2005) Intercultural Education in the Primary School, Dublin: INTO.
Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) (2002) INTO Intercultural Guidelines for Schools, Dublin: INTO.
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) (2005) Intercultural Education in the Primary School, NCCA: Dublin.
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) (2005) English as An Additional Language in Irish Primary Schools, NCCA: Dublin.

As part of its continuing commitment to assisting teachers in creating inclusive school environments, the Department of Education and Science is currently involved in a North-South project with the Southern Education and Library Board and Integrate Ireland Language and Training to develop a practical toolkit for primary schools. The aim of the toolkit will be to support the inclusion of pupils for whom English is a second language in primary schools through incorporating best practice and providing suggestions, concrete ideas, exemplars and materials for use by all school staff. It is proposed to distribute this toolkit to all primary schools, both North and South, in the 2007/8 school year.

AVAILABILITY OF SUPPORT

The Regional Office Service of the Department of Education and Science will assist schools in relation to implementation of this circular.
Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT) provides training and materials to assist schools in meeting the needs of pupils for whom English is a second language. A wide range of teaching resources has been developed by IILT and is available at www.iilt.ie. IILT may be contacted directly at 126 Pembroke Street, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4; Telephone: 01 6677232/6677295; Fax: 01 6643726; E-mail: info@iilt.ie.

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May 2007

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Chairpersons of Boards of Management and Principals should bring this circular to the attention of members of the Board and teachers and should retain a copy for future reference.