

Letterfrack National School

Drama Whole School Plan

Guiding Principles

The guiding principles which underpin the teaching and learning of Drama in our school are:

- Drama is a subject
- Drama is for all teachers and all children
- Process Drama explores the real world through the fictional world

Introductory Statement

This plan is intended to facilitate the development of drama on a whole school basis as a subject in the school. The plan is a response to the requirements of the revised curriculum for primary schools and should be seen as a starting point from which the provision of drama, in accordance with curricular requirements, will develop over future reviews and through on going classroom practice. While individually teachers have been including drama in their work, this plan seeks to detail a whole school approach.

Rationale

We believe that drama can make unique contribution to the development of the child. Its purposes, and the particular character of its activity, provide the means by which the child can achieve an enhanced awareness of self and can experience a unique model of learning. This document seeks to review current practice in drama and improvise across the school to develop a coherent and integrated school policy for drama.

Vision

In line with the mission statement of Letterfrack NS, through the teaching of Drama as part of a balanced curriculum which aims to develop the whole spectrum of the child's intelligence, it is hoped that the child will have an opportunity to develop his/her aesthetic, intellectual, emotional, creative, expressive and cultural development through engagement in positive Drama experiences.

Aims

We endorse the aims of the Primary School Curriculum for Drama

- To enable the child to become a 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 questing, 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 the 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.

Curriculum Planning

The Strand and Strand Units

Drama has one strand at each class level- Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding.

The strand is divided into three strand units

- Exploring and making drama
- Reflecting on drama
- Co-operating and communicating in making drama

Approaches and Methodologies

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 fictional consequences of drama and a willingness to explore.

Building a safe environment based on trust and mutual respect

(a) Drama Contract

Each teacher is also encouraged to use a drama contract to establish a safe environment. The safe environment is important for effective drama work to take place. In our school each class may develop a drama contract. To build confidence and further embed the safe environment, classes will play appropriate warm up games to develop various drama skills necessary for their drama work. Discussion about the contract and the safe environment may be included where appropriate both before and after the drama activity

(b) Warm up activities

Warm-up games should be seen as an integral part of the drama process and are essential in allowing children the opportunity to develop the three C's:

- Concentration
- Communication
- Co-operation

The development of these skills contributes to the creation of a safe environment, as well as deepening the children's ability to engage in the dramatic process.

Content for Drama

The strand 'Drama to explore feeling, knowledge and ideas leading to understanding' will be important for teachers in this school in informing the content they choose for Drama activities. Content for drama will come from life experience. It will be from something:

- That the children have experienced
- Something they have read
- Something that emerged in another subject area
- A worry or concern that the teacher might have
- Something generally that the teacher wants them to explore.

The Fictional Lens

The fictional lens is the story used through which specific themes or content are explored. Teachers will carefully select a fictional lens for their chosen content. A character or story will be selected in which the children will easily believe, whose context will allow for the content to be explored i.e

Goldilocks and The Three Bears – content covered:-
 Number Three: The ritual of setting the table;
 Respect for other people's property;
 Telling the Truth.

Reflection

We see reflection as being of vital importance to the drama process. We still strive to ensure that reflection takes place at the appropriate points in the drama experience. We will also strive for a balance of methods of reflection using:

Discussion

Writing

Visual Arts

Speaking

Listening

Doing

Questioning

A list of drama reflection methods is to be found in the appendix.

Strategies

In this school we recognise the usefulness of Drama strategies. Below is a table showing some suitable strategies for the different class levels. This is not an exhaustive list, rather a list of suggested strategies. Teachers have the freedom to introduce other strategies that they might find useful for their own particular class or for a particular dramatic context.

Class Level	Suggested Strategies
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Jun. & Sen. Infants	Defining the Space, Still Images, Teacher in Role, Mimed Narration, Whole Group Improvisation, Hot Seating.
1 st & 2 nd Classes	Defining the Space, Mimed Narration; Teacher in Role; Whole Group Improvisation; Still Images; Thought Tracking; Paired Improvisation; Improvisation in Threes; Hot Seating.
3 rd & 4 th Classes	Defining the Space; Teacher in Role; Mimed Narration; Still Images; Thought Tracking; Improvisation in Pairs; Briefing; Conscience Alley; Whole Group Improvisation; Small Group Improvisation
5 th & 6 th Classes	Defining the Space; Teacher in Role; Mimed Narration; Still Images; Thought Tracking; Improvisation in Pairs; Briefing; Conscience Alley; Whole Group Improvisation; Small Group Improvisation; Hot Seating; Flashback/flashforward.

An explanation of each strategy is contained below.

Still Image

Groups use their bodies to create an image of a moment(s) in the Drama e.g. the moment the bears see Goldilocks asleep in the bed. The older groups may depict a more complex or abstract idea ('winning', 'fear'). Similarly an individual can act as a sculptor to another student or group.

Thought-Tracking

This technique involves the teacher freezing the action and tapping her hand on the shoulder of some student (or students) in the still image or drama. This student-in-role then reveals publicly her private thoughts/reactions at that specific moment e.g. one of Christopher Columbus' sailor's thoughts when they finally sight land.

Mime

The class mime action as the teacher describes what a character or occupation or as she narrates a story. Older students may develop more abstract mime sequences.

Narration

The teacher can narrate in or out of the lesson text. Narration has many uses. These include: providing a link or commentary between drama moments; creating an atmosphere; initiating a drama; moving the action on; create tension. Similarly, the participants might report back in story form, providing narrative to accompany or bridge action – 'We came to the river and saw that the bridge has been destroyed, so we...'

Hot-Seating

This involves students questioning a character (teacher-in-role or student-in-role). The students who are questioning the character may be working as themselves or in role as journalists. Hot-Seating can be used to start a drama or improvisation may be frozen at any point so as in-role characters are released to answer questions often formally seated facing questioners.

Caption-Making and Headlines

This strategy can be used at any point of action. Individuals or groups are asked to give a title or caption or newspaper headlines/slogans to a piece of drama. They summarize their own scene or another group's scene and when used with still images several headlines can be given to the same still image in order to highlight points of view or bias.

Conscience Alley

A character that has a difficult decision to reach, walks down a corridor of people who, one after another from either side, give conflicting advice about a given situation. This can be done in role by other characters in the lesson and by voices in the character's head played by other members of the group. It is possible to develop this convention by allowing the character to engage in conversation with the voices and thus challenge the advice being offered.

Defining Space...

Available furniture, objects, clothing are used to represent the 'ship', 'castle', 'bears' and 'house' where the drama is happening. They may also represent the physical scale of someone (Daddy bear) or something (the beanstalk) in the drama. Also they may be used to fix the position or proximity of rooms, houses, places where events have taken place.

Soundtracking...

Sound may be used in different ways in the drama; narration can be devised to accompany some mime; animal sounds, human sounds, environmental sounds can be devised to accompany a moment of action. Voices or instruments are used to create a mood.

Living Picture

The teacher asks the group to bring their improvisation alive for a few moments. She does not necessarily add tension by briefing some students. The living picture, however, may develop into an improvisation – the difference being that 'living picture' has no particular tension in it whereas the improvisation usually features some tension.

Briefing

Before a whole group improvisation, the teacher takes aside an individual or a number of individuals, and gives him/them a set of instructions that create tension. This will drive the drama forward. The teacher may choose to give another set of further conflicting instructions to a different individual/individuals. As the children develop their drama skills, they will begin to offer their own briefs. Briefing is a key strategy in creating tension in a drama. The teacher can build tension by suggesting any of the following – 'You have a secret...'; 'Something strange and mysterious has happened', 'You are planning a surprise', 'You are in a hurry', 'You are all crowded together', 'You have an unusual object' or through a challenge.

Small-Group Play-Making

Small group and whole group improvisation constitute the heart of the drama curriculum. The children make up the story as they go along. This story usually explores a character(s) in a dilemma. Small groups plan, prepare, sequence and present their improvisations to their understanding of that moment in the drama. Briefing (See above) helps to drive the improvisation forward. The teacher can greatly enhance the drama by adopting a role herself.

Flashback Flashforward

The children select and depict a moment through such strategies as still image, mime, and narration or improvisation. They can then move backwards and forwards in time creating other such moments in time in the drama. This enables the children to reflect on the characters and their dilemmas.

Ritual

Ritual in Drama is a stylized activity that shows a special occasion or some daily routine that shows that a character is part of a community. Some rituals in drama include; a meal, saying goodbye, the night before a battle, praying.

Teacher-in-Role

The teacher takes on a role in the drama. This allows her to do a number of things. She can manage the learning opportunities within the drama by adopting a suitable role in order to excite interest, control the action, invite involvement, provoke tension, challenge superficial thinking, create choices and ambiguity, develop the narrative, create possibilities for the group to interact in role.

3. Children with Different Needs

In line with the underlying principles of this curriculum, we believe drama to be for all children and all teachers. Therefore, each child in this school will be involved in all drama, regardless of difference or ability.

It is the policy of our school that all children in mainstream classes or in special classes will participate in Drama activities. Based on a teacher's professional judgement, and in co-operation with other teachers and special needs assistants, drama activities will be differentiated as necessary in order to meet the needs of the children in a particular class. This will be done by careful grouping of children, consciousness by the teacher of children's abilities when giving briefs and by providing opportunities for different methods of reflections.

4. Linkage and Integration

Drama can be integrated with many curricular areas e.g. English, Gaeilge, SESE, SPHE, Music, Visual arts

Exemplars

English/Gaeilge

- Using story or poetry as a fictional lens, or exploring themes from class novel. E.g., the story of Goldilocks, with, e.g. the social theme of learning how to set a table

SESE

- Dramatising actual historical events, e.g. the Famine, through a fictional lens in order to explore specific themes, e.g. family loyalty, making difficult choices, poverty.

SPHE

- SPHE issues can be explored, e.g. bullying, relationships, healthy eating.

Music

- Music can be used as a stimulus to draw the children into a drama activity, to create a scene.

Visual Arts

- Visual art can be used by the children themselves to help create a scene, and is also useful as a means of reflecting on the drama.

Linkage occurs naturally throughout the 3 strand units. Each lesson will include aspects of exploration, reflection, co-operation and communication.

Assessment and Record Keeping

As been outlined in our schools Assessment and Record Keeping Policy we recognise the importance of assessment and record keeping in the delivery of the Drama Curriculum.

Teachers will use teacher observation as a primary tool when assessing drama work in class. Other forms of assessment can include basic teacher-designed tests and tasks, projects, recordings of children's work, and graphic/pictorial scores.

Teachers should approach assessment in Drama by referring to the Curriculum Statement and examine children's engagement in terms of the three strand units.

- 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 the making Drama – the child's ability to contribute to the shaping of the Drama, both individually and in group in-role and out-of-role discussion about the drama as the action takes place

The table below outlines how the teacher might begin to observe the development of the elements in class

Elements in Drama	How the elements might look...
Belief	How can the child be encouraged to enter into the drama with full belief? <i>Evident in the child's trust in and ease with make-believe play</i>
Role and Character	How will the child move from role playing to entering into character? <i>Taking on the characteristics, attributes and thought process of another person</i>
Action	What is happening in the drama? <i>Action in drama comes from the interaction between characters and situations in which they find themselves in the drama</i>
Tension	How will tension drive forward the action of the drama? <i>The characters will be faced with choices, desires and uncertainties. Such tension causes characters to make decisions and moves the drama forward</i>
Significance	What is the relevance of the drama to the child's life? In what way can the child relate to the drama?
Place	Where is the action taking place? How is real place and space used to represent this?
Time	When is the action taking place? <i>The fictional past and fictional future will have a bearing on the drama</i>
Genre (Fifth and Sixth Classes only)	Is the drama naturalistic, absurd, tragic, comic or fantasy? <i>Genre is the style of the drama</i>

Equality of Participation and Access

Equal opportunity of access to Drama will be given to all children

Timetable

Infant classes will have a maximum of 50 minutes Drama per week while 1st to 6th classes will have a maximum of one hour per week of Drama.

This time allocation may be broken down at the discretion of the individual teacher. Teachers may also choose to block times for Drama to particular times of the year.

Timetables will all record the time allocation for Drama.

Resources

Books

A selection of Drama books have been sources

Internet

A selection of short videos dealing with all curricular areas and teaching issues: www.teachers.tv
Association for Drama in Education in Ireland: <http://www.ict.mic.ul.ie/adei/>
www.creativedrama.com

Props

Teachers will source a variety of props for use in their class rooms.

Health and Safety

As with all curricular areas, the Drama Curriculum will maintain due care to our school's Health and Safety policy.

Care and attention will be given to the following

- Hidden dangers if children are moving around the classroom
- Storage facilities
- Ventilation of the classrooms
- Amount of space for children to sit or stand when engaged in Drama work
- Particular care will be needed when children are setting up the Drama Space
- Appropriate volume levels when using audio equipment or when engaged in a very loud activity.

Individual Teachers' Planning and Resources

Long term plan

Each teacher will be given a copy of this school plan and will be encouraged to refer to it when doing their own long term and short term planning. Teachers teaching the same level are encouraged to plan together.

The elements of the drama should be carefully considered in the short term planning of drama.

Themes

As mentioned in the integration section, teachers in the school approach much of their thematically and are encouraged to do so with drama also. A list of possible themes may include:

- Everyday situations requiring social skills
- Halloween
- Autumn
- Winter
- Christmas
- Spring
- Summer
- Pirates
- The Sea
- Food
- A Journey

Cúntas Míósúil

The Cúntas Míósúil is an important indicator and record of work carried out in Drama. teachers will record their work in Drama for a particular month under two headings.

- Fictional Lens Used
- Content Covered

Staff Development

Teachers have access to reference books, resource materials, equipment and websites dealing with Drama. We will continue to add to this in the coming years.

Teachers will be informed about upcoming courses in the education centres and other bodies providing professional development through the staffroom notice board.

Parental Involvement

Where appropriate parents may be involved in Drama within the classroom. If a parent has a particular expertise they may be invited to be part of the classroom process in Drama. Parents may be invited to open classroom presentations of improvisations or other work created in small group settings e.g. during arts week. Activities such as Christmas plays will naturally be performed for parents and the wider community. Parents with particular skills, e.g. musicians, costume making etc.. will be asked to become involved

Community Links

The local community, actors, theatre professionals living locally, local arts centres and education officers, theatre, local Drama events and national support structures will all be considered as valuable resources as support for The Drama Curriculum.

Events in which the school will consider participation:

- External Children's theatre productions, e.g. Theatre in Galway
- Invitation of theatre productions to the school, e.g. Boboro

Relevant education packs to deepen the children's experience of such theatre productions will be provided where possible. Use of such packs is strongly recommended.

Success Criteria

The teacher's classroom planning will be based on this plan. The aims and objectives of this plan will be followed with the emphasis on developing a whole school programme that allows for development and progression. Based on this, we hope that our Drama plan will prove successful in its implementation. Success of this plan will be based on teacher/pupil feedback and also inspector's reports and recommendations.

Roles and Responsibilities

Each teacher has the responsibility to implement the Drama Curriculum in his/her classroom. Letterfrack NS will support staff in implementation, encourage feedback and update the plan again, if necessary.

Review

This plan was implemented in the 2015/16 school year, reviewed and updated at a staff meeting in the 2022/23 school year and will be reviewed again if necessary with the implementation of the New Primary Curriculum Framework or during the 2026/27 school year.