



St. Colman's College

Literacy Policy

"Literacy is the bridge from misery to hope." (Kofi Annan)

"Failure in reading is the greatest social problem" (Combat Poverty Report)

"To read without reflecting is like eating without digesting." (Edmund Burke)

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

St Colman's College is a secondary school for boys under the patronage of the Archbishop of Tuam. It is located on the Knock Road, Claremorris, Co. Mayo.

1.2 A. Mission Statement

Our mission statement is as follows:

"Colaiste Cholmáin, a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School for boys only, aims to be a Christian community which respects all members of staff and nurtures each and every student to achieve maximum potential and to develop the whole person within a caring and respectful school."

1.2 B. Value Statement/School Motto

Our school value statement is as follows:

"Mol an Oíge agus tíochoaidh said!"

"Praise the youth and they will follow!"

This policy reflects the characteristic spirit of the school which has an ethos of inclusivity, partnership, encouragement and the realisation of individual potential.

2. Literacy

2.1 Definition of Literacy

“Literacy includes the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media and digital media.”
(DES 2011)

2.2 Rationale

Literacy underpins the school curriculum by developing students’ abilities to speak, listen, read and write for a wide range of purposes. Helping students to express themselves clearly orally and in writing enhances and enriches learning in all subjects. All departments and all teachers have a crucial role to play in supporting students’ literacy development.

2.3 A Whole School Approach

In St. Colman’s College, Whole-School Literacy is seen as an essential part of the teaching and learning process. We recognise the importance of literacy in the school environment, to life within wider society and to the personal growth of individuals. We are committed to the development of a whole-school approach to literacy and recognise the need for a multi-stranded approach. We are committed to using a whole-school approach to literacy to improve learning and raise standards. The stakeholders within the St Colman’s College community are aware that in order to tackle the growing problems in literacy, then a whole school approach is warranted. “Improving literacy and numeracy standards in our schools are urgent priorities for our education system (Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life, 2011, p14). In order for our Literacy Policy to be effective, it needs to be adopted, promoted and enacted in every subject area and by every teacher.

In order to implement a rational, meaningful and targeted literacy programme we have decided to target 1st year students (2012/2013 & 2013/2014) for literacy development. This will obviously benefit these students in their future years in the school. We feel that this will have a beneficial effect for all students in the school especially when we have developed a literacy-rich environment.

2.4 The Literacy Working Group

The Literacy Working Group will be responsible for:

- Developing and implementing a plan for a whole school approach to literacy development, encompassing teacher development, short-term interventions and a school wide enrichment policy.
- Establishing a schedule/calendar for literacy development.
- Putting in place structures to monitor, evaluate and review the literacy development plan in action
- Driving and activating the school literacy development plan, focusing particularly on first year students and on developing a whole school aspect.

3. Priorities & Aims:

Aims 2012/2014:

We have prioritised the following areas for the school year 2012/2013. Over that time:

- All subject departments will include literacy in their meeting agendas
- Subject department plans will be updated in light of literacy initiatives
- St Colman's will be developed as book-rich and literacy rich environment [see below]
- Teachers will focus on revision skills and summarising skills [see below]
- Teacher will focus on the keywords strategy [see below]
- Promotion of oral literacy (oracy)
- Promotion of digital literacy

4. Key Strategies:

4.1 Creating a book-rich culture

Personal reading Profiles with 1st years: September/October

National Poetry Day (2nd Thursday in January)

World Book Day (April)

Competitions both local and national

Emphasis on prominent labelling throughout school environment

Various extra-curricular initiatives, e.g. debating skills

Book tokens as prizes

DEAR: Drop Everything and Read classes

Working literacy notice board

4.2 Developing Summary Skills:

The goal of summarisation is to capture the essence of the text clearly and concisely. The ability to summarise has significant benefits for comprehending and ultimately retaining and recalling information. Teaching students to effectively summarise helps them learn to synthesise information, a higher-order thinking skill which includes analysing information and identifying key concepts.

Summary strategies:

- **KWL**

A KWL table, or KWL chart, is a graphical organizer designed to help in learning. The letters KWL are an acronym for "what we know", "what we want to know", and "what we learned".

- **SQ3R**

SQ3R or SQRRR is a reading comprehension method named for its five steps: survey, question, read, recite, and review.

- **5-4-3-2-1**

5-4-3-2-1 can be used when first introducing the skill of summarising. The idea is to give students a chance to pick out some key ideas, tap into their prior knowledge, focus on information they find interesting and then pose a question that can reveal where their understanding is still uncertain.

4.3 Developing a Keywords Strategy:

The Keywords Strategy is our primary aim for literacy development on a whole-school basis.

- **Keywords**

Check texts and identify essential words.

Make a list, keeping it as short as possible.

Pre-teach keywords

Revise keywords

Encourage students to identify and define key words.

- **Key concepts**

Identify key concepts.

List key concepts

Discuss and explain each concept

- **Literacy development:**

Spellings: Carefully choose a small number of key spellings you want all students to know.

Focus on the main words: Select a small number of keywords per topic.

Explain: Pre teach these words - meanings, context and usage.

Write: Have students write a keyword list in the back of copies or literacy journals.

Posters: Display keywords lists on walls.

Reinforce: Use them regularly and read them frequently.

Oral skills: Give students the opportunity to discuss, use and revise them.

Assessment/marking: Check comprehension and spelling regularly

Revision: Revise often.

4.4 Oral Language Development

Speaking and presenting are key components of literacy. We encourage students to improve their oracy by:

- Regularly asking them to read from the textbook, where appropriate
- Regularly asking them to read their homework aloud, where appropriate
- Daily dialogue and engagement
- Individual/group presentations
- Debating: English, Irish etc.
- Walking debates: Religion, CSPE, SPHE, History etc.

4.5 Digital Literacy

We are committed to building digital literacy levels in our school. Central to our achieving this are:

- Digital monitors located in the front hall and lunch room
- Two state-of-the-art fully serviced multimedia labs

- iPads with our 1st year students
- Subjects like Art and Technical Graphics and English (film studies/advertising)

5. Longer Term Aims:

Our current policy runs to 2014 and is due for review in late 2013. At that stage we will assess how our initial literacy strategies are working. We have a myriad of ideas and initiatives that we hope to develop in the future.

6. Conclusion:

This Literacy Policy works in conjunction with several school policies and plans already devised, for example our School Plan, ICT and Learning Support Policy. It will form part of our assessments practices and self-evaluation practices as it develops.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in September 2012. A review date of November 2014 has been set for this policy.