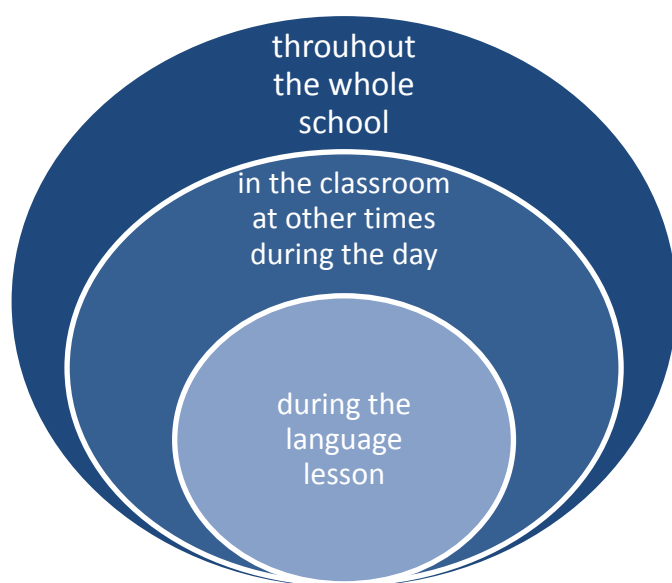


Promoting language use throughout the school

This information sheet describes how a number of schools in the NCCA's Primary School Network support children's language learning by fostering a school environment that gives prominence to language learning, and by providing opportunities for children to use the language(s) they learn in real and meaningful ways.



Let's think about three contexts for informal language use



The diagram shows how these contexts build on one another.

By expanding language use from during the language lesson, to informal use with the teacher in the classroom, to use throughout the school, children can see, hear and use the language(s) they are learning with a wider range of people, for a wider range of purposes and in a wider range of contexts.

When children have the opportunity to use the language they are learning it increases motivation, creates opportunities for real communication and provides more practice and contact time. This supports progression and development.

During the language lesson

All language lessons should be taught through the medium of the target language. This is equally relevant for Irish, for English as an Additional Language (EAL) or for any other languages the children are learning.

The videos from the Primary School Network show teachers using Irish as the only medium of communication during Irish lessons, with children from infants to sixth class. Follow the links to the videos and stories from the network on www.ncca.ie/primary/languages.

The videos also show how mime, intonation, gesture and demonstration can be used effectively to aid comprehension, particularly with younger children.



During the rest of the day

The teachers in the network create as many opportunities as they can for children to hear and use Irish during the day. In classrooms where the children are learning French, Spanish, German or Italian through the *Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative* the teachers also use that language informally.

Some of the strategies they use are:

- ☒ Signs, labels and notes in the classroom are presented in a variety of languages.
- ☒ The target language is used for instructions and class management.
- ☒ Opportunities in other subjects to use words or phrases that the children have learned are taken advantage of: numbers, colours, food, greetings, questions, etc.

School stories

- ✓ Reward strategies are used to motivate children to ask questions or use phrases they have learned.
- ✓ Careful placement of visual or written cues help the children to remember the correct phrases to use in different situations – for example *Is liomsa é* next to the coats and hats or *Ní féidir liom sin a fheiceáil* next to the whiteboard.

You can find more ideas in the [information sheet](http://www.ncca.ie/primary/languages) about Informal Irish on www.ncca.ie/primary/languages

Promoting language use throughout the school



Stories from schools

Listen to two principal teachers describe how they promote a positive language learning environment in their schools at www.ncca.ie/primary/languages



In the schools in the Primary School Network, language learning doesn't stop at the classroom door. They actively promote languages throughout the whole school. This impacts positively on student and teacher motivation, and on children's achievement. Here are some of the features of their practice.

- ✓ There is a school plan for how they will encourage informal use of languages, at different times in school life.
- ✓ Leadership is important. A teacher with a post of responsibility often leads the work, with the support of the principal. This ensures that teachers get the resources and support they need to put the plan into action. Leaders also inspire and motivate children and teachers, coordinate the work, and give advice, or sometimes just reminders!
- ✓ Most of the schools organise *Lá na Gaeilge* or *Maidin Ghaeilge* each week. Everyone gets involved. In some schools children from senior

classes help to teach *nath na seachtaine* to younger children. In others, children from one class greet everyone as *Gaeilge* at the entrance in the morning, play music, and encourage them to get involved. Parents even get stickers for taking part! Other schools ask teachers to use some Irish in another subject during *Lá na Gaeilge*.

- ✓ Parents get a list of useful words and phrases that they can use on different occasions at school or home.
- ✓ The schools create a language-rich environment, with signs and notices in as many languages as possible. If there are families in your school whose home language is neither English nor Irish, get parents to help you make signs and notices in their languages.
- ✓ Announcements are made in Irish, or sometimes in a modern foreign language if that is taught in the school.
- ✓ Most importantly of all – they show they value all languages by using them whenever possible.

Further reading and information

This information sheet summarises how schools in the NCCA's Primary School Network give prominence to language learning in the school and provide opportunities for children to use the language(s) they learn in meaningful ways. You will find other resources about supporting progression in language learning at www.ncca.ie/primary/languages.