



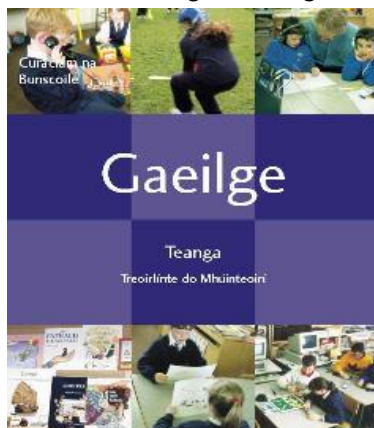
Looking at children’s work: a whole school approach to supporting progression

This story tells how one school used the simple idea of *Nuacht an Lae* to explore children’s progress in Irish from third to sixth class. It is a large, English-medium school, with more than one group of each class. All classes are mixed with boys and girls. Read on to head the story in the words of one of the teachers.



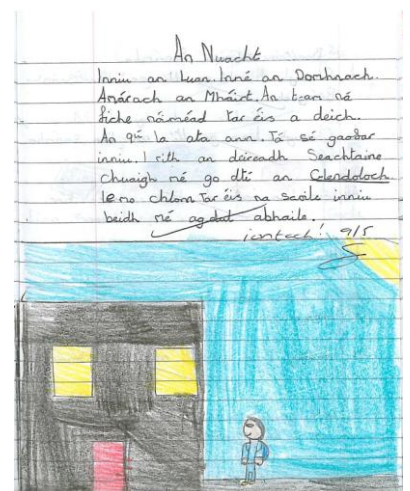
What did we want to achieve?

Our school wanted to see how children’s attainment in Irish was progressing, not just during the school year but right through their time in school. As the same ten themes are used to plan the curriculum in Irish for children right through the *Primary School Curriculum*, we wanted to make sure that as well as revising what they already knew, the children were being challenged to understand and use new language in each new class.



What did we do?

We decided that it would be useful if, from time to time, all classes completed a similar writing task so that teachers could compare children’s work from different classes. We began with *Nuacht an Lae* as everyone was already familiar with this activity.



The teacher with the post of responsibility for Irish prepared a short resource sheet for the teachers. This included some useful phrases, and examples of what children might be writing.

We agreed that all classes would do oral and written *Nuacht an Lae* on a particular day each week.

What did we learn?

We gathered examples from each class. Looking at the children’s work we could see how the children begin by writing short accounts in 3rd class, using a few simple structures and mainly verbs in the past tense. By the time they reach sixth class they are writing longer, more detailed news stories with a wider variety of tenses. It was very encouraging to see the children’s command of Irish expand and develop as they move through the school.

How did we start?

We know that *Curaclán na Gaeilge* emphasises integration and we always base any written activities on oral work – the children are writing what they can say. So we decided to look at samples of the children’s written production as a snapshot of their productive skills in Irish in the different classes.

The teacher with a post of responsibility for Irish visited each classroom from third to sixth, talked to the teachers and looked at samples of the children’s work in Irish. Overall we were happy with what we found, but there was some variety in content and approach, so it wasn’t always easy to see if there was clear progression or not.



School stories



Seeing what the children could already do in previous classes encourages us to challenge them to build on what they know, and develop the range and complexity of language in their stories.

It is very useful for us to see these and get an idea of the standard of written work of children in the different classes: both for teachers who have had the same class level for a number of years and want to see what other classes are doing, and for teachers who may be teaching this class level for the first time in a few years.

What's next?

We have lots of ideas as to how we can develop this simple idea to support children's progression through the school.

- ✓ **Review and planning:** we can use the examples as a starting point for school review and planning. Teachers of the same class can compare them when doing short-term planning together.
- ✓ **Variety of structures and language:** next year, we will change the times or days when the children write their *Nuacht*, so that they will have the chance to use a wider variety of language.

✓ **Variety of themes and genre:** we are going to use this approach for each of the ten themes in *Curaclam na Gaeilge*, so that we will have evidence of the children's learning in different writing genres and about a range of topics.

✓ **Speaking and listening:** we know that writing is only one of four communication skills. In some classes the children are also using self-assessment tasks to record what they can say and understand as *Gaeilge*, and we are considering how to extend that idea in the school.

Keys to the success of this initiative

- ✓ **Leadership:** the teacher with a post of responsibility for Irish led the initiative with support from the principal.
- ✓ **Collaboration:** all teachers from third to sixth class took part.
- ✓ **Support for teachers:** the school developed a resource sheet each teacher could use.
- ✓ **Developing current practice:** this was easy to implement as it was a straightforward idea, using an existing activity in a new way.

Further reading and information

This information sheet summarises the how a school in the NCCA's Primary School Network developed their practice in language teaching and learning. You will find a longer multi-media version of this story, and other resources about supporting progression in language learning at www.ncca.ie/primary/languages.



An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curaclaim agus Measúnachta
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