

Drama Plan

Rationale:

We, the staff at St. Colman's National School are writing this document as a record of our agreement to teach a comprehensive Drama curriculum. We will endeavour to deliver a broad-based and balanced programme.

It is the intention that our Drama programme will expand the children's means of exploring, expressing and coming to terms with the world they inhabit in a structured and enjoyable way.

This document will serve as a source of information for teachers, parents, Board of Management and the Department of Education.

Vision Statement:

Drama activities enable the child to make connections between the imaginative life and the real world, to organise and express ideas, feelings and experiences in dramatic form. Through the use of drama we aim to promote strong communication and social skills and help children to deal with day to day experiences in a positive way.

Aims

The aims of the drama curriculum are

- To enable the child to become 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 this knowledge of drama through the active exploration of themes drawn from life (past and present), whether they have their source in other curriculum 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.
- To form the criteria with which to evaluate the drama texts, written or performed, to which he/she is continually exposed.

Broad objectives

When due account is taken of intrinsic abilities and varying circumstances, the drama curriculum should enable the child to

- Develop the ability to enter physically, mentally and emotionally into the fictional drama context and discover its possibilities through cooperation with others.
- Develop empathy with and understanding of others and the confidence needed to assume a role or character.
- Experience and create an atmosphere where ideas, feelings and experiences can be expressed, where conflict can be handled positively, and life situations explored openly and honestly.
- Develop personal adaptability, spontaneity, the ability to co-operate, verbal and non-verbal skills, and imagination and creativity, in order to ensure that the drama text reflects real life in a fresh and valid way.
- Develop the ability to decide what course is likely to lead to significant drama action.
- Develop the ability to steer the drama towards areas that are likely to lead, through whatever genre, to insights into the subject matter to be explored.
- Develop the ability to co-operate with others in solving, out of role, the problems that are presented in making the drama.
- Develop the ability to co-operate with others, in role, in keeping the drama alive, in creating context, and in exploring the problems that are presented in making the drama.
- Develop the ability to use drama to promote or express a view on a subject on which he/she may have strong views or feelings.
- Develop the ability to use drama to examine and explore unfamiliar material so as to reach an understanding of the patterns, meanings and concepts contained in it.
- Develop concern, curiosity and understanding of the increasingly sophisticated patterns that comprise drama content and of the increasingly refined insights that can flow from it.
- Use drama to explore actively the human aspect of all learning as a means of curricular integration.
- Become aware of subtexts, which manifest themselves involuntarily, in drama and in life.
- Begin to develop, through active story-making in drama, an appreciation of plot and theme so that these can form the basis of an understanding of drama literature and how it relates to text-making in a specific time and place.
- Begin to be able to discern the covert or overt messages in drama texts, ranging from advertising to Shakespeare, through becoming aware of how values and attitudes are woven into drama.

- Begin to develop the ability to assess critically the validity of the meanings hidden in drama texts and what can be learned from them.

Curriculum

Content strand

The content is presented in one strand at each level:

Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding.

The title of the strand defines the nature of drama. The learning experience encompasses both the cognitive and the affective abilities of the child and involves an exploration that will lead to a greater understanding of him/herself and of the world.

Strand units

Within the strand the detailed elements of content are presented in three strand units which describe aspects of drama exploration, experience and activity. The strand units are:

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

The elements of drama

Drama is characterised by certain features that give it its unique power. These may be called the elements of drama. They are:

- belief
- role and character
- action
- place
- time
- tension
- significance
- genre

The prerequisites for making drama

The approach to drama in the curriculum may be termed process drama. It involves children in a process of improvisation and exploration that leads to definable drama outcomes and learning outcomes. In order to make the process effective three prerequisites are necessary:

- content

- the fictional lens
- a safe environment.

Content will supply the subject matter of the drama. This will be based on some aspect of life, on the child's experience or on the content of some other curriculum area.

By using the fictional lens the teacher can look at the content through the medium of a story and frame it as a dramatic fiction. He/she can then suggest that the children improvise an enactment in which they engage with characters who find themselves in the particular dilemma, location or situation suggested by the action.

In order to increase children's confidence, allay their fears and dissipate their inhibitions they must be allowed to make the drama in a safe environment, where what they do is valued and validated by other children and by the teacher.

First and Second Class

Strand: Drama to explore feelings knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding

Strand Units:

Exploring and Making Drama

- Use the ability to play at make-believe and to enter fully into participation in Drama.
- Use his/her emerging awareness of the differences in people in order to begin to develop an understanding of the relationship between role and character.
- Experience how context is built and a Drama reality created through the use of space and objects.
- Experience how the fictional past and the desired fictional future influence the present Dramatic action.
- Develop the ability to help maintain the focus in the Dramatic action.
- Begin to see how tension adds to Drama and the suspense that ensures the interest of the participants.

Reflecting on Drama

- Use reflection on a particular Dramatic action to create possible alternative courses for the action.
- Experience through Drama, the relationship between story, theme and life experience.
- Share insights while experiencing the Drama or insights that arise out of the Drama.

Co-Operating and Communicating in Making Drama

- Develop out of role, the ability to co-operate and communicate with others in helping to shape the Drama.
- Develop in role, the ability to co-operate and communicate with others in helping to shape the Drama.
- Develop fictional relationships through interaction with the other characters in small-group or whole-class scenes as the Drama text is being made.
- Re-enact for others in the group a scene that has been made in simultaneous small-group work.

Teaching Strategies and Methods:

Defining the Space, Mimed Narration, Teacher in Role, Whole Group Improvisation, Still Images, Thought Tracking, Paired Improvisation, Improvisation in threes, Hot seating

Reflecting on the Drama:

Writing, Speaking, Questioning, Listening, Doing, Creating

Third and Fourth Class

Strand: Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding

Strand Units:

Exploring and Making Drama

- Enter into the fictional dramatic context with the same spontaneity and freedom that he/she has earlier applied to make-believe play.
- Understand the relationship between role and character and develop the ability to hold on to either role or character for as long as the dramatic activity requires.
- Discover how the use of space and objects can help in building the context and in signifying dramatic themes.
- Explore how the fictional past and the desired fictional future influence the present dramatic action.
- Begin as a member of a group, to include in Drama activity the elements of tension and suspense.
- Begin the process of using script as a pre-text.

Reflecting on Drama

- Use reflection on and evaluation of a particular dramatic action to create possible alternative courses for the action.
- Learn through Drama, the relationship between story, theme and life experience.
- Use the sharing of insights arising out of dramatic action to develop the ability to draw conclusions and to hypothesise about life and people.

Co-Operating and Communicating in Making Drama

- Develop out of role, the ability to co-operate and communicate with others in helping to shape the Drama.
- Develop in role, the ability to co-operate and to communicate with others in helping to shape the Drama.
- Develop fictional relationships through interaction with the other characters in small-group or whole-class scenes as the Drama text is being made.
- Enact spontaneously for others in the group a scene from the Drama, or share with the rest of the class a scene that has already been made in simultaneous small-group work.

Teaching Strategies and Methods:

Defining the Space, Teacher in Role, Mimed Narration, Still Images, Thought Tracking, Improvisation in Pairs, Briefing, Conscience Alley, Whole Group Improvisation, Small Group Improvisation, Ritual, Flashback/Flash-forward

Reflecting on the Drama:

Writing, Speaking, Questioning, Listening, Doing, Creating

Strand: Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding

Strand Units:

Exploring and Making Drama

- Enter appropriately and with facility, whether watched or unwatched, into the fictional dramatic context.
- Extend playing in role and in character to include the ability to accept and maintain a brief that has been decided on by either the teacher, the group or himself/herself.
- Discover how the use of space and objects helps in building the context and in signifying the Drama theme.
- Explore how the fictional past and the desired fictional future influence the present dramatic action.
- Become adept at implementing the 'playing rules' that maintain focus in dramatic action.
- Help to plan dramatic activity to include the particular tension and suspense appropriate to the theme being explored.
- Distinguish between various genres, such as comedy, tragedy, fantasy.
- Become comfortable with script and understand the basic processes by which script becomes action.

Reflecting on Drama

- Reflect on a particular dramatic action in order to create possible alternative courses for the action that will reflect more closely the life patterns and issues being examined.
- Learn through Drama, the relationship between story, theme and life experience.
- Use the sharing of insights arising out of dramatic action to develop the ability to draw conclusions and to hypothesize about life and people.

Co-Operating and Communicating in making Drama

- Develop out of role, the ability to co-operate and to communicate with others in helping to shape the Drama.
- Develop in role, the ability to co-operate and communicate with others in helping to shape the Drama.
- Develop fictional relationships through interaction with the other characters in small-group or whole-class scenes as the Drama text is being made.
- Enact spontaneously for others in the group a scene from the Drama, or share with the rest of the class a scene that has already been made in simultaneous small-group work.

Teaching Strategies and Methods:

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Reflecting on the Drama:

Writing, Speaking, Questioning, Listening, Doing, Creating

Drama strategies and conventions

Drama games

Many drama games are useful in helping to establish trust, confidence and a sense of playfulness, and some are used to help the children experience some aspect of the drama (for example blind man's buff, to equate with searching for a friend in a big city).

Games can promote the social integration of the class, but if used indiscriminately they can become a substitute for drama.

We will endeavour to use these games as a warm-up activity at the start of our drama lessons. (List of 20 games included with this plan.)

Still image and montage

Groups compose a still picture to illustrate an idea or capture a moment. In montage such an image is set against a contrasting image or a contrasting soundscape so as to question the content of the still picture (for example, a still picture of emigrants with a sound-track of sounds from home).

This strategy can help greatly in reflection and in slowing down the drama but if overused can lead to talk about drama rather than action.

Hot-seating

A character sits in the centre while the others ask questions about his/her life and he/she answers as the character. As a variation the others can also sometimes ask the questions as their own characters.

Hot-seating can help to clarify aspects of character for all concerned, but it has limited usefulness in primary school drama.

Thought-tracking

Some of the class do actions silently or make still images while the others speak their thoughts aloud about them, either simultaneously or individually.

This can be useful for reflection on the meaning of particular significant moments but should not be used as a substitute for entering into the drama.

Sound-tracking

Some of the class do actions silently or make stills while the others make the sound-track to go along with them.

This strategy is useful in situations where the teacher is working towards a loosening of control but unsure about how far to go. It is also a useful substitute for 'showing' a particular section of small-group work. However, if overused it can lead to intellectual rather than physical drama, staying outside the drama rather than entering playfully into it.

Voices in the head

At a moment of choice for a particular character others in the group articulate the conflicting voices the character can hear in his/her head.

This can lead to reflecting on the meaning of a moment for a character. It should not be used as a substitute for putting the characters in situations where such considerations are articulated spontaneously as part of the action.

Briefing

A suggestion or instruction given to one character, of which the other characters may or may not be aware, which has the purpose of giving a new direction to the drama.

Framing

The process through which a fiction is transformed into directions and suggestions for an enactment. (It is through this process that the drama text is distanced sufficiently from the children to be safe but remains close enough to be explored effectively.)

Improvisation

The spontaneous dramatic enactment of a fiction.

Teacher in role

The teacher taking a role in the drama and moulding it from within.

Mimed Narration

Story teller reads a narrative directly to audience while rest of cast move forward in turns to create the characters.

Defining the Space

The area that is available for children to move around in. Use of space and movement within the space must be planned keeping health and safety issues in mind at all times.

Conscience Alley/ Thought Tunnel

Used when a character is faced with a decision. The class forms two lines facing each other. One person (Usually the teacher) takes on the role of that character as each member of the group speaks their advice. It can be organised so that those on one side give opposing advice to those on the other. When the character reaches the end of the tunnel he/ she makes the decision.

Flashback/Flash forward

Chronological sequence of events is interrupted by putting in a past or future event.

There are many more strategies and conventions that are used in the drama. Their common advantage is that they allow creativity within a controlled situation. However, they should be used with selectivity and discrimination. By overusing them the teacher can keep for himself/herself too much control of the children's creative impulses, and process drama is thereby reduced to a series of drama strategies rather than the lifelike ebb and flow of productive dramatic action.

Glossary

Action	The interaction between character and situation in the drama, involving the resolution or attempted resolution of conflict and tension.
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 the fictional consequences and a willingness to explore.
Character	The entire intellectual, emotional and physical make-up of a real or fictional person.
Content	The subject matter of a drama, based on the child's general experience and needs or drawn from the content of some other curriculum area.
Enactment	The action in which the text of the drama is created.
fictional lens	The choice of fictional characters and the situation they are placed in that creates the dramatic context for the enactment.
Genre	The form of dramatic expression-naturalistic, comic, absurd, etc.
improvisation	The spontaneous dramatic enactment of a fiction.
in role	Doing or saying something from the standpoint of role or character.
mantle of the expert	The process by which the teacher implies that the children are 'experts' in some particular topic so as to encourage them to research that topic within the drama.
out of role	Talking about issues, choices and possible directions in the drama when outside the enactment.
Place	Where the action takes place in the drama.
Plot	The coherent series of incidents that, together with the theme, make up the drama.
pre-text	An effective starting point that will launch the dramatic world in such a way that the participants can identify their roles and responsibilities and begin to build the dramatic world together.
process drama	The process by which drama texts are made.
Role	Pretending to be someone or something other than oneself.
Scene	A short play, an improvised text or a dramatic action.
Significance	That which signals something important about plot, theme or life.
sub-text	The non-verbal signals by which thoughts, feelings and attitudes are transmitted.
Tension	The expression in drama of the conflict inherent in the needs and desires of the different characters in the drama that drives the action forward.
Text	A class text is the selection, enactment and linking of scenes in the drama, and all the class activities related to this. A drama text is an enacted drama fiction, watched or

	unwatched, whether it takes place in the class or in a theatre-like situation. A written text is a script that describes a dramatic action
Theme	The underlying patterns by which the plot of the drama is connected to life.
Time	When the action takes place, in the past, present or future.

Children with Differing Needs:

Our Drama Curriculum will provide opportunities for children with special educational needs to show capabilities and independent achievement. With the help and guidance of Special Needs Assistants we will encourage these children to reach their own individual potential.

The drama experience in general and the activities in the strand unit 'Co-operating and communicating in making drama' provide learning opportunities that are crucial to children with special needs. It can, in particular, contribute to the child's language development in extending vocabulary and expressive ability. The physical dimension of drama will also assist non-verbal expression. In developing the child's concepts of drama, elements such as place and time, spatial awareness and more accurate perceptions of time relationships are cultivated. Furthermore, the story base of process drama will help to develop the child's ability to understand and express the sequential nature of events, and the importance of focusing on different aspects of a drama activity will foster powers of concentration.

Because drama is a co-operative activity, it provides a valuable experience in turn-taking and in working with others in order to achieve particular goals. One of the essential learning benefits of drama is that it provides the opportunity to deal with questions of choice and conflict by distancing them in the fictional context, thus helping to provide a safe environment in which to explore them. Above all, because it gives such scope for self-expression and self realisation, the contribution drama can make to the child's self-esteem is incalculable.

Opportunities for Linkage and Integration:

Opportunities for Linkage and Integration will be provided for where possible in the Drama Programme at St. Colman's. This process will help extend the child's understanding of both the Drama curriculum and the subject areas with which they would be integrated.

Sample areas for integration will include:

- Gaeilge- ag déanamh agallaimh agus drámaí beaga bunaithe ar na téamaí sa Ghaeilge.
- English- Close links with the Oral Language programme, active responses to stories, poems etc
- History- characters from history, certain time periods etc
- Geography- explore incidents in other countries through drama, dramatise stories from other countries, interviews, the local environment as a stimulus for drama.
- Music- express feelings created by music in a dramatic way.

- Religion- participation in nativity play, conscience alley could be used for decision making type activities and moral dilemmas.
- Art- use of pictures as stimulus for drama, represent some work from drama in art.
- S.P.H.E. - encourage team work, co-operation, empathy, respect for others and their personal space etc.
- P.E. – integrate drama with the gymnastics strand, sports theme in drama e.g. feelings experienced in sport, winning and losing, team work etc.

Assessment and Record keeping:

The assessment of the Drama curriculum at St. Colman’s National School will involve observing certain crucial areas of each child’s ability and more importantly his efforts. These areas include:

- The child’s ability to engage with the task in hand.
- The child’s attitude and enjoyment of the subject.
- The child’s ability to work in a group/with a partner/alone.
- The child’s ability to describe his own process.
- The child’s ability to self-evaluate.

Actual assessment of the above points will be carried out using the following practical guidelines:

- **Teacher observation** By observing closely on a day to day basis the children’s involvement in the various drama activities, the extent to which they are developing the ability to use drama skills and concepts to maximise their learning experiences can be monitored.
- **Teacher designed tasks** The assessment of children’s ability to perform particular tasks will involve teacher observation in a way that is focused on a particular aspect of children’s involvement with drama
- **Work samples** to include art work or written work and other examples of children’s response to, reflection on and extension of their drama experience.
- **Performance** for the class and occasionally for the whole school at assemblies

Organisation

Time Allocation

A time allowance of 3 hours per week will be allocated to Arts. Within this time frame, Drama will be assigned 1 hour per week. However, owing to the practical nature of this subject area, blocked time for project work or integrated studies will sometimes be used as an efficient way of managing time.

The most obvious locations for drama are the classroom and the school hall, although there is no reason why, in good weather, effective drama activities cannot be pursued out of doors.

Teachers can do drama very successfully in the classroom, but the varied nature of drama activity will also require the facility of the greater space that the school hall can provide. The allocation of time for the use of this facility can become an important element of the organisational planning of drama in the school. Each

class will have a weekly time allocation for drama in the school hall available should the class teacher decide to use it.

Whole-school approach

We will include some drama work in our weekly assemblies from time to time. This may include performance by a particular group or class on something they have been working on in class e.g. dráma beag as Gaeilge, historical drama, recitation of a poem etc.

We will hold a Christmas concert every second year so the children get a chance to perform on stage to an audience.

Resources

Mrs Siobhain Coffey will teach Drama to the children which is part funded by Laois Arts Council and St. Colman's NS Parents Council.

Resources already in use in the school include:

- Drama curriculum and teacher guidelines
- Now you're talking
- Chatterbox
- Ideas for Drama
- 100 + Ideas for Drama

Health and Safety

The health and safety of the children in our care is always a top priority in St Colman's NS. The nature of the Drama Curriculum is such that there is a lot of movement and care will be taken to ensure that the area being used for drama is as free from furniture and other obstructions as possible.

The hall will be available for use for drama where necessary if the teacher deems the classroom to be too small or otherwise unsuitable.

Community Links

Children take part in carol service at Christmas each year, performing in a school concert every second year.

Success Criteria

The success of this policy will be measured using the following criteria:

- During their time in the school, it is expected that children will experience a broad and balanced drama programme.
- Participation in and evidence of enjoyment of, the drama programme.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and any amendments will be noted and acted upon. This review will be carried out by all teaching staff.

Ratification and Communication

This policy will be ratified by the Board of Management on _____.

Template For Classroom Planning

Each class teacher will be given the following template for use in his/her own classroom planning.

The grid will be used to plan stimuli for the drama lessons.

This grid, combined with the content sheet for each class level (pgs. 5-7) will form the basis of drama lessons in each class.

The themes, poems, stories etc. listed in the grid are suggestions and can be adapted to suit the needs of the particular class as deemed appropriate by individual teachers.

Class:		Year:	
STIMULUS	Term One	Term Two	Term Three
Seasonal Themes			
Poems			
Stories			
Newspaper Media Pictures/Art Photos			
Children's own experiences			

Class:		Year:		
STIMULUS	Term One	Term Two	Term Three	
Seasonal Themes	Halloween Christmas	Easter St. Patrick	Summer	
Poems	2 poems	2 poems	2 poems	
Stories	1 History - Setanta 1 English - Buster 1 Imaginary - The Three Pigs	1 History 1 English 1 Imaginary	1 History 1 English 1 Imaginary	
Newspaper Media Pictures/Art Photos	1 Article 1 Photo			
Children's own experiences	Bullying Sport	Weather Good News Bad News	TV School tour	