Drumcondra English Profiles

A Framework for Assessing Oral Language, Reading, and Writing in Primary Schools

Educational Research Centre

Gerry Shiel
Regina Murphy

DRUMCONDRA ENGLISH PROFILES

A Framework for
Assessing Oral Language, Reading,
and Writing in Primary Schools

Gerry Shiel and Regina Murphy

CONTENTS

Contents

APPENDICES

FOREWORD

In 1990, the Review Body on the Primary Curriculum proposed an assessment system for primary schools that would include profiling the achievement by individual pupils of key curriculum objectives.[1] Specifically, the Review Body proposed that:

- a pupil profile should be entered on a record card to be developed by the Department of Education;
- the items on the profile record card should correspond to areas of the curriculum (subjects);
- the entries on the card should be in accordance with (i) the informal assessments made by the teacher of the pupil's mastery of key objectives; and (ii) the results of formal tests;
- a report based on the profile card should provide parents with useful assessment information;
- a balance should be maintained between providing a comprehensive profile and making the profile easy to interpret;
- standardised summary marks, grades or comments should be provided that would indicate a pupil's overall level of achievement in the subjects on the curriculum.

In considering ways in which profile marks or grades might be standardised, the Review Body recommended using a combination of: (a) standardised test results; (b) group moderation procedures (in which agreement on the meaning of scores would be reached through a consensus process involving teachers); and (c) 'verbal descriptions of prototypes' corresponding to different levels of achievement within a subject.

In a subsequent policy document that addressed assessment at the primary level, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment recommended that 'a new standardised pupil profile should be designed to provide a common format for recording in all schools' and added that 'categories within the pupil profile should correspond with aspects of the primary school curriculum'.[2] The Council called for marks or grades on the profile to be clearly defined but did not specify how this might be done.

Since the early 1990's, curriculum profiles — cumulative records of pupils' achievement in one or more areas of the curriculum — have been developed and implemented in such countries as Australia, Great Britain and the United States.[3] In 1995, the Educational Research Centre reviewed this work,[4] and embarked on the development of profiles for English (the *Drumcondra English Profiles*).

The following definition of curriculum profiles guided the Centre's work:

> Curriculum profiles contribute to the development of comprehensive and continuous records of pupil achievement across the curriculum. They are based on the judgements made by teachers about a pupil's achievement in the context of ongoing classroom teaching and assessment activities. Within schools, curriculum profiles provide teachers, parents and pupils with meaningful formative and summative assessment information.

A key principle underlying the development of the *Drumcondra English Profiles* was that they must be related to the revised English curriculum, which was available in draft form.[5] After carefully studying the content statement and teacher guidelines, it was decided to structure the *English Profiles* around the areas of oral language, reading and writing, which incorporate relevant skills and strategies in the four strands specified in the curriculum content statement: 'Receptiveness to language', 'Competence and confidence in using language', 'Developing cognitive abilities through language', and 'Emotional and imaginative development through language'.

A primary purpose of the *Drumcondra English Profiles* is to provide summative or overall indices of a pupil's achievement in oral language, reading and writing at or near the end of the school year. It is hoped that this information will be used for record keeping, and for communicating with other teachers and with parents/guardians. A secondary purpose is to provide teachers with formative information that can guide planning and teaching throughout the school year.

This handbook is divided into six chapters. In the first chapter, the main elements of the *Drumcondra English Profiles* are described, and some issues that need to be considered before implementing the *Profiles* in schools are addressed. The second chapter examines how the *English Profiles* might be used by teachers to rate and record the achievement of individual pupils in oral language, reading and writing, at or near the end of each school year. The third, fourth and fifth chapters provide the indicator sets for oral language, reading and writing respectively. The sixth and final chapter describes the technical development of the *Drumcondra English Profiles*. The handbook includes six appendices. Appendix A contains Tables of Norms which can be used to convert profile ratings to standardised scores. Appendices B and C provide a Class Profile Rating Form and a Pupil Profile Record Card respectively. Suggestions for the assessment of oral language, reading and writing throughout the school year are provided in Appendices D, E and F respectively.

We wish to acknowledge the assistance of those who contributed to the development of the *Drumcondra English Profiles*. Particular thanks are due to the teachers who participated in development studies, and to the pupils in their classes who completed standardised tests and/or submitted samples of their work to us. Thanks are also due to our colleagues at the Educational Research Centre who supported us in our work: Alan Brimer, who advised on the conceptual and technical aspects of the work; Michael O'Leary, who worked on the early stages of developing the *Profiles*; Thomas Kellaghan, who read and commented on earlier drafts of this handbook; Mary Rohan, who provided administrative support throughout the project; and John Coyle, who provided computer support.

It is intended that this handbook will function as a discussion document as teachers consider how best to evaluate their pupils' achievement on the revised English curriculum. The developers welcome comments on the handbook and on the model of assessment that it presents.

---

[1] Review Body on the Primary Curriculum (1990)
[2] National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1993)
[3] See Rowe and Hill (1996); O'Leary and Shiel (1997)
[4] O'Leary, Shiel and Forde (1995)
[5] National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1997a). The final version of the English content statement (Ireland, 1999a) is similar in most respects to the 1997 draft.

x

x

CHAPTER 1

WHAT ARE THE DRUMCONDRA ENGLISH PROFILES?

Curriculum profiles are cumulative records of achievement in one or more areas of the curriculum (often defined as subjects) that are based on teacher judgements. In implementing profiles, the teacher reflects on and interprets a pupil's performance in relevant assessment contexts, and records a judgement regarding whether or not important curriculum outcomes (based on key content objectives) have been achieved.

This chapter begins with a consideration of the principles underlying the construction of the *Drumcondra English Profiles*. Following this, the main elements of the profiles — individual indicators of achievement, indicator sets, assessment contexts, and record/reporting frameworks — are described. In the remainder of the chapter, issues that may be of concern to schools and teachers who wish to implement the *Profiles* are examined. These include links between the *Profiles* and the revised English curriculum for primary schools, links between the *Profiles* and other assessments of achievement in English, anticipated effects of the *Profiles* on teaching and learning, and the comparability of *Profile* ratings across schools and teachers.

PRINCIPLES GUIDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DRUMCONDRA ENGLISH PROFILES

In developing the *Drumcondra English Profiles*, the recommendations of the Primary Curriculum Review Body were followed. The *Profiles* are based on teachers' observations of and judgements about pupils' achievement of the curriculum in English. They yield quantified summaries of achievement, but also reveal the qualitative performances characterising that achievement. They relate to the curriculum intended for each class level and do not seek to place achievement on a class-wide ability scale (i.e., a single scale covering several different class levels).

Ratings (scores) on the *Drumcondra English Profiles* can be viewed from two perspectives — criterion-referenced and norm-referenced. When looked at in relation to the intended curriculum for a class level, they compare what the pupil has achieved with what would satisfy the curriculum. This is their criterion-referenced mode. When looked at in terms of the achievement of pupils relative to one another, they compare the status of a pupil's achievement with that of a representative sample of the pupils' peers at the same class level at the end of the school year. This is their norm-referenced mode.

ELEMENTS OF THE DRUMCONDRA ENGLISH PROFILES

Four elements of the *Drumcondra English Profiles* — indicators of achievement, indicator sets, assessment contexts, and recording/reporting frameworks — are described in this section.

Indicators of Achievement

Indicators of achievement are statements that describe pupil achievement, and are based on important content objectives in the revised English curriculum.[1] Although derived from content objectives, the indicators are worded in terms of pupil behaviours that can be observed in classroom settings. The following are examples of indicators of achievement in oral language that may be found in the *Drumcondra English Profiles*:

* Constructs an imaginary story based on a sequence of pictures;
* Listens attentively to stories and poems read aloud by the teacher;
* Follows simple directions and instructions;
* Describes an experience or event to the class with confidence, focusing on the topic and including key information;
* Persuades or argues a point of view in real or imaginary situations;
* Participates in class discussions, by sharing relevant background knowledge about a topic;
* Identifies and understands the functions of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs;
* Identifies the main ideas and supporting details in a spoken report, and summarises it for others.

Indicators of achievement were identified for each class level (Junior Infants to Sixth inclusive) for oral language, reading and writing, resulting in 24 indicator sets. Each set consisted of 8-12 indicators (see next subsection).

Profiling systems vary in terms of the level of support they provide to teachers to assist with the interpretation of individual indicators. In the case of the *Drumcondra English Profiles*, support comes from two sources: teachers' knowledge and understanding of the curriculum appropriate to the class level(s) they teach; and teachers' skill in conducting assessments of their pupils throughout the school year. For teachers who may need additional information about conducting assessments of English throughout the school year, Appendices D (Oral Language), E (Reading) and F (Writing) in this handbook may be useful.

Indicator Sets

In line with the recommendations of the Review Body on the Primary Curriculum[2] the *Drumcondra English Profiles* focus on class level as the point of reference. This feature enables teachers to assess each pupil's achievement in relation to the main curriculum content (represented by the indicators) for the pupil's class level.

Once sets of indicators had been identified for each class level in oral language, reading and writing, representative groups of teachers were asked to order the indicators in terms of their relative difficulty, from most difficult to least difficult. Indicators on whose relative importance teachers disagreed among themselves were dropped and the remaining indicators were ordered in a way that reflected the aggregated judgements of the teachers (see Chapter 6). As an example, Table 1.1 provides the ordered set of indicators for oral language for third class

Table 1-1 Indicator Set for Oral Language – Third Class

8.	Supports a personal view of a poem with reference to content, format and language
7.	Persuades or argues a point of view in real or imaginary situations
6.	Delivers a prepared report to the class on a project topic, using appropriate vocabulary and giving relevant information
5.	Listens to and summarises short stories or informational texts by recalling several important points
4.	Listens to stories and poems and identifies and comments on humour
3.	Conducts a short interview with another pupil or adult to obtain information about a topic
2.	Talks clearly, audibly and with confidence to different audiences in the school environment (individuals, groups, own class)
1.	Listens to longer stories and predicts future events and likely outcomes

In this set, the highest indicator ('Supports a personal view of a poem with reference to content, format and language') was regarded by teachers as being most difficult for pupils who are at or near the end of third class. The indicator 'Listens to and summarises short stories or informational texts by recalling several important points' was regarded as being at an intermediate level of difficulty. Finally, the indicator 'Listens to longer stories and predicts future events and likely outcomes' was regarded as being the easiest indicator in the set.

In estimating a pupil's achievement at or near the end of the school year, the teacher begins at the top of the indicator set and works down until he/she has identified the highest indicator that has been achieved by the pupil more than once, without assistance. This is the pupil's raw profile score.[3] This raw score can then be converted to a standardised or scaled profile score using the appropriate table of class-level norms (see Chapter 2). Hence, there are two ways in which a pupil's performance or level of

3

achievement on the *Profiles* can be reported — as a raw score, and as a scaled score. Scaled scores can be used to compare the achievement of two or more pupils at the same class level, or to compare a pupil's achievement in, say, oral language and reading, at a given point in time.

While the main purpose of the *Drumcondra English Profiles* is to provide an overall index of a pupil's achievement in each area of English at the end of the school year, the *Profiles* can also provide formative assessment information. Indicators *above* the highest indicator achieved by the pupil (i.e., the pupil's ceiling level) point to skills or strategies that have not yet been achieved. The non-achievement of indicators below the pupil's ceiling level generally points to skills and strategies to which increased attention might be allocated. Although these lower-level indicators may often reflect lower-level processes, failure to address them adequately could lead to difficulties in subsequent learning. However, it should be noted that the indicators in any given set are a sample of the universe of indicators that could have been included. Therefore, to base a curriculum or plan of study only on those indicators included in the *Profiles* would be inappropriate.

Assessment Contexts

Assessment contexts refer to situations in which teachers gather evidence to use in rating a pupil's achievement on the *Drumcondra English Profiles*. Assessment contexts that are particularly relevant to the *Profiles* include:

- Ongoing teaching and learning activities, during which the teacher makes and records informal observations (e.g., class discussions, writing conferences[4]);
- Outcomes of informal assessments (e.g., homework, oral reading/ spelling errors made by pupils);
- Outcomes of more formal assessments (e.g., teacher-made tests, writing portfolios, project work).

Implementation of the *Drumcondra English Profiles* does not require the use of specific assessment tasks, nor have direct links been established between performance on specific tasks and achievement levels on the *English Profiles*. Instead, it is recommended that teachers draw on information gleaned in a broad range of assessment contexts. The use and synthesis of information from multiple assessment contexts is consistent with the idea of teachers arriving at a 'holistic' or 'best fit' judgement of a pupil's overall achievement, based on relevant assessment information.

Recording/Reporting Frameworks

The scores achieved by pupils on the *Drumcondra English Profiles* may be recorded and reported in a variety of ways. Two formats for reporting achievement on the *Profiles* are described in Chapter 2 of this handbook:

- *A Class Profile Rating Form*, which allows teachers to record summary profile scores for oral language, reading and writing for each pupil in a class group

- *A Pupil Profile Record Card*, which allows teachers to record their observations of an individual pupil in various assessment contexts in English throughout the school year, as well as summary profile scores generated at the end of the school year. If updated on an annual basis, this *Record Card* can serve as a long-term record of a pupil's achievement.

LINKS BETWEEN THE ENGLISH PROFILES AND THE REVISED ENGLISH CURRICULUM

A fundamental issue concerning the validity of the *Drumcondra English Profiles* is the extent to which the levels and the indicators represent the knowledge and skills inherent in the revised curriculum, and its objectives. A second important issue is the degree to which the ordering of indicators in each set represents the progression through which pupils pass as they develop competence in the area of English represented by the set.

The revised English curriculum, [5] as specified by the content objectives in the four strands, 'Receptiveness to language', 'Competence and confidence in using language', 'Developing cognitive abilities through language', and 'Emotional and imaginative development through language', guided the development of the *English Profiles*. The indicators were selected by a team of teachers and researchers with regard to their perceived importance for pupils' acquisition of language and literacy, and the likelihood that they could be assessed by teachers. Key content objectives, including important skills and strategies, were transformed into indicators. The division of indicators into sets was done on the basis of the appropriateness of the indicators for particular class levels.

One aspect of the *Profiles* that does not relate directly to the curriculum is the ordering of indicators within each set in terms of their relative difficulty. The rank ordering of indicators was based on the aggregated independent judgements of teachers. The teachers (a representative group of 15 at each class level) were asked to rank order the indicators of oral language, reading and writing for their class levels from most difficult to least difficult for pupils at the end of the school year. In general, within class levels, the

teachers achieved satisfactory levels of agreement with each other (see Chapter 6). When there was substantial disagreement among teachers regarding the difficulty of a particular indicator, the indicator was dropped unless curriculum considerations dictated that it should remain. The *Profiles* may be regarded as an adequate representation of the content of the revised English curriculum to the extent that the indicators represent important content in the revised curriculum, and the ordering of the indicators reflects their difficulty relative to one another.

LINKS BETWEEN THE ENGLISH PROFILES AND OTHER ASSESSMENTS OF ENGLISH

The *Drumcondra English Profiles* are designed to provide a tool for synthesising the outcomes of various assessments that teachers administer during the school year. To this extent, one would expect to find reasonably strong correlations between profile ratings and other measures of achievement. In a study which compared teacher ratings of pupils on the *Reading Profile* with the pupils' scores on a standardised test of reading achievement (see Chapter 6), correlations between these two measures ranged from .44 (third class) to .82 (sixth class). In another study, which examined the validity of the *Writing Profile* (see Chapter 6), a correlation coefficient of .73 was obtained between teacher ratings of fifth-class pupils' achievement on the *Writing Profile,* and the performance of the same pupils on an independently-scored writing task. These coefficients suggest that, while the *Profiles* provide a valid measure of achievement in English, they also differ in some ways from other approaches to assessing achievement.

EFFECTS OF IMPLEMENTING THE ENGLISH PROFILES

A year-long study of the implementation of the *Profiles* involving 64 teachers (8 at each of 8 class levels) in 12 schools was conducted during the 1996-97 school year.[6] Teachers in participating schools were provided with guidance on using the *Profiles*, and were given support materials in the form of information about different assessment tasks. The outcomes of the study indicated that teachers found the *Profiles* to be useful for a variety of teaching and assessment purposes including:

- long-term planning;
- clarifying teaching and learning goals;
- delivering a sequenced programme of work;
- providing feedback to pupils;
- recognising the progress of pupils with different learning abilities; and
- reducing pupils' anxiety over assessment.

The implementation study also indicated that teachers could integrate the *Profiles* with existing assessment procedures without undue difficulty. These outcomes point to the potential benefits of implementing the *Profiles* in schools and classrooms.

COMPARABILITY OF PROFILE SCORES

The *Drumcondra English Profiles* are designed for use within schools or clusters of schools. If profile scores are to be comparable within these settings, it is important for teachers at a particular class level and/or teachers at adjacent class levels to develop a shared understanding of meanings of individual indicators through discussion in the context of:

- the revised English curriculum for primary schools;
- work completed by pupils in their classes (for example, oral presentations, tape recordings of oral reading, writing samples, completed projects);
- the outcomes of the formal and informal assessments carried out in pupils' classrooms.

If teachers within schools or clusters of schools achieve an agreed understanding of the meanings of the indicators and their links to the curriculum, it is likely that a level of consistency in rating pupil achievement using the *English Profiles* will emerge over time.

In the context of developing the *English Profiles*, a small-scale study was conducted to examine the accuracy of teachers' judgments of pupils' achievements (see Chapter 6). The outcomes of the study indicated that teachers were reasonably accurate in their judgments, but that a pupil's profile scores should be interpreted as estimates of the pupil's 'true' scores.

SUMMARY

The *Drumcondra English Profiles* are designed to provide teachers with an assessment tool to assist them in making judgements about their pupils' achievement of key curriculum outcomes in English. The *Profiles* generate two major types of assessment information: formative assessment information to inform planning for instruction; and summative assessment information for profiling pupils' achievement over time, and for reporting to other teachers and to parents. The *Profiles* primarily represent a criterion-referenced approach to assessment since pupils are judged on whether or not they have achieved specific learning outcomes or indicators. However, a norm-referenced interpretation of scores is also possible.

Separate sets of indicators based on content objectives in the revised English curriculum have been developed for oral language, reading and writing at each of eight class levels (Junior Infants to Sixth Class, inclusive). The indicators within each set have been ordered from most difficult to least difficult, on the basis of teachers' judgments. The procedure for assessing a pupil's achievement involves beginning at the top of the appropriate indicator set, and proceeding downwards until the first indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil more than once is identified. The number corresponding to this indicator represents the pupil's *raw score*. This can be converted to a *scaled score*, using an appropriate table of norms. Any indicators below the highest indicator that have not been achieved by the pupil can be noted for diagnostic purposes. A pupil's scores can be recorded along with those of his/her peers on a *Class Profile Rating Form*. More detailed information, including comments about a pupil's performance in various assessment contexts, can be recorded on an individual *Profile Record Card*.

Users of the *Profiles* are advised not to interpret profiles ratings (scores) in an absolute sense, and to recognise that there is error associated with profile scores. Considerable care should be exercised when comparing the scores achieved by different pupils on the *Profiles*. Scores achieved by pupils in a particular school should not be averaged and compared with those achieved by pupils in other schools unless procedures have been put in place to ensure the comparability of ratings across schools. Similarly, scores achieved by pupils in different classes within a school should not be compared unless procedures have been established to ensure comparability of teacher ratings within the school.

---

[1] National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1997a); Ireland (1999a).

[2] See Review Body on the Primary Curriculum (1990).

[3] It should be noted that measurement error is attached to profile scores in the same way as it is attached to scores obtained by pupils on standardised tests of achievement. This issue is addressed in more detail in Chapters 2 and 6.

[4] Writing conferences are meetings involving the teacher and one or more pupils at which various aspects of a piece of written text are discussed (See Appendix F).

[5] National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1997a); Ireland (1999a).

[6] Shiel and Murphy (1999).

CHAPTER **2**

USING THE DRUMCONDRA ENGLISH PROFILES

In this chapter, procedures for using the *Drumcondra English Profiles* in classrooms are described. First, activities that can be undertaken throughout the school year in preparation for using the *Profiles* are identified. Second, the process of rating a pupil's achievement on the *Profiles* is outlined. Third, the raw and scale scores that arise from rating a pupil's achievement are defined. Fourth, the interpretation of these scores in the context of the *Class Rating Form* is considered. Fifth, the process of developing and interpreting the *Individual Profile Record Card* is outlined.

One of the key lessons learned in developing the *Drumcondra English Profiles* is that teachers must become very familiar with the indicator sets and be able to identify specific indicators during teaching and learning activities. Teachers will develop some familiarity with the indicators in the course of learning about and implementing the revised English curriculum. Additional information on links between the indicators and a range of classroom assessments of oral language, reading and writing is given in Appendices D, E and F of this handbook.

PREPARING TO USE THE PROFILES

Although the *Drumcondra English Profiles* are primarily designed to be used as an end-of-year assessment, preparatory work can be conducted at various times during the school year.

Early in the School Year

The first opportunity to use the *Profiles* will occur early as teachers engage in long-term planning that spans the school year. In addition to drawing on curriculum documents, school plans, textbooks and other classroom materials, teachers may wish to consider the indicator sets for the class level(s) for which they have responsibility, and how best to plan for and assess the learning experiences of children in oral language, reading and writing. Teachers will recognise that they already assess some of the indicators, either formally or informally. The suggestions for assessing oral language, reading and writing that are provided in Appendices D to F of this handbook may also prove useful in the context of yearly planning.

During the School Year

At certain points during the year, teachers may wish to engage in activities that lead to a greater understanding of the indicators, and generate assessment information that can be used to rate the achievement of pupils on the *English Profiles* at the end of the school year. Opportunities to observe engagement in oral language, reading and writing activities may arise as pupils perform everyday tasks such as:

- interacting with other pupils in the class;
- contributing to class discussions;
- following simple directions;
- describing personal experiences;
- retelling a story read aloud by the teacher;
- delivering a report on a project to the class;
- reading a text aloud;
- responding to a text that has been read;
- summarising an informational text;
- planning a writing activity;
- composing a story or poem.

Informal observations about pupils' learning should be recorded in a notebook so that they can be referred to at the end of the school year. These 'anecdotal notes' should address (a) instances in which particular indicators were achieved; and (b) whether the indicators were achieved with or without teacher support. Two to three observations of each pupil every month can provide very useful information.

Many of the outcomes of the more formal language assessments that teachers conduct throughout the school year are also relevant to profiling a pupil's overall achievement using the indicator sets. Among the tools that can be used to record assessment outcomes throughout the year, in preparation for using the *Profiles* are:

- checklists (for example, lists of skills in oral language);
- running records (records of pupils' oral reading errors);
- annotated writing portfolios (collections of pupils' writing samples on which the teacher has noted the achievement of relevant indicators);
- reading logs (lists of and/or reactions to books that pupils have read);
- results of teacher-made tests (for example, spelling tests);
- records of reading and writing conferences (i.e., notes on meetings in which the teacher has discussed reading and writing texts with individual pupils or with small groups).

Where two or more teachers in a school or cluster of schools teach the same or adjacent class levels, it may be useful to work together to reach an agreed interpretation of the meanings of specific indicators. In oral

language, for example, teachers could listen to and discuss tape recordings of pupils' retellings of stories, or their contributions to a discussion. In writing, samples of pupils' written texts could be examined and discussed with reference to the indicators that are appropriate to the pupils' class level(s). Activities of this nature lead to the development of agreed standards — shared expectations about achievement for particular class levels. Many of the assessment activities described in Appendices D to F provide opportunities for collaboration among teachers.

End of the School Year

Towards the end of the school year, it is useful to assemble and examine the available assessment information before rating each pupil's overall achievement on the *English Profiles*. As indicated earlier, this information will include annotated observations of pupils, checklists, reading logs, portfolios of writing, and work samples. In some cases, it may be necessary to conduct additional assessments to confirm that particular indicators have been achieved. Once the necessary information has been assembled and reviewed, the process of deciding on and recording profile ratings can proceed.

DECIDING ON AND RECORDING PROFILE RATINGS

The process of summarising a pupil's achievement on the *English Profiles* entails examining the indicator sets in oral language, reading and writing for the pupil's class level, and identifying in each set the highest indicator that has been achieved by the pupil on the basis of knowledge about the pupil's achievement and available assessment information. To be credited with having achieved an indicator, the pupil must have demonstrated ***independent performance on the indicator on at least two occasions.*** Once a pupil's profile ratings have been decided on, they can be recorded on an appropriate record sheet such as a *Class Profile Rating Form* or an *Individual Profile Record Card*.

Figure 2-1 shows how the informal and more formal assessments conducted by teachers can contribute to their judgements about pupils' achievement on the *Profiles*.

Figure 2-1   Assessments that Contribute to Teacher Ratings of Pupils' Achievement on the Profiles

DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR	*END OF THE SCHOOL YEAR*

Informal Assessments
- teacher observations
- teacher's anecdotal notes
- teacher-pupil conferences
- running records
- records of pupils' oral and written work

Synthesis of Assessment Information

Rating of Pupils' Achievements on the *English Profiles*

More Formal Assessments
- standardised, norm-referenced tests
- criterion-referenced tests
- teacher-made tests
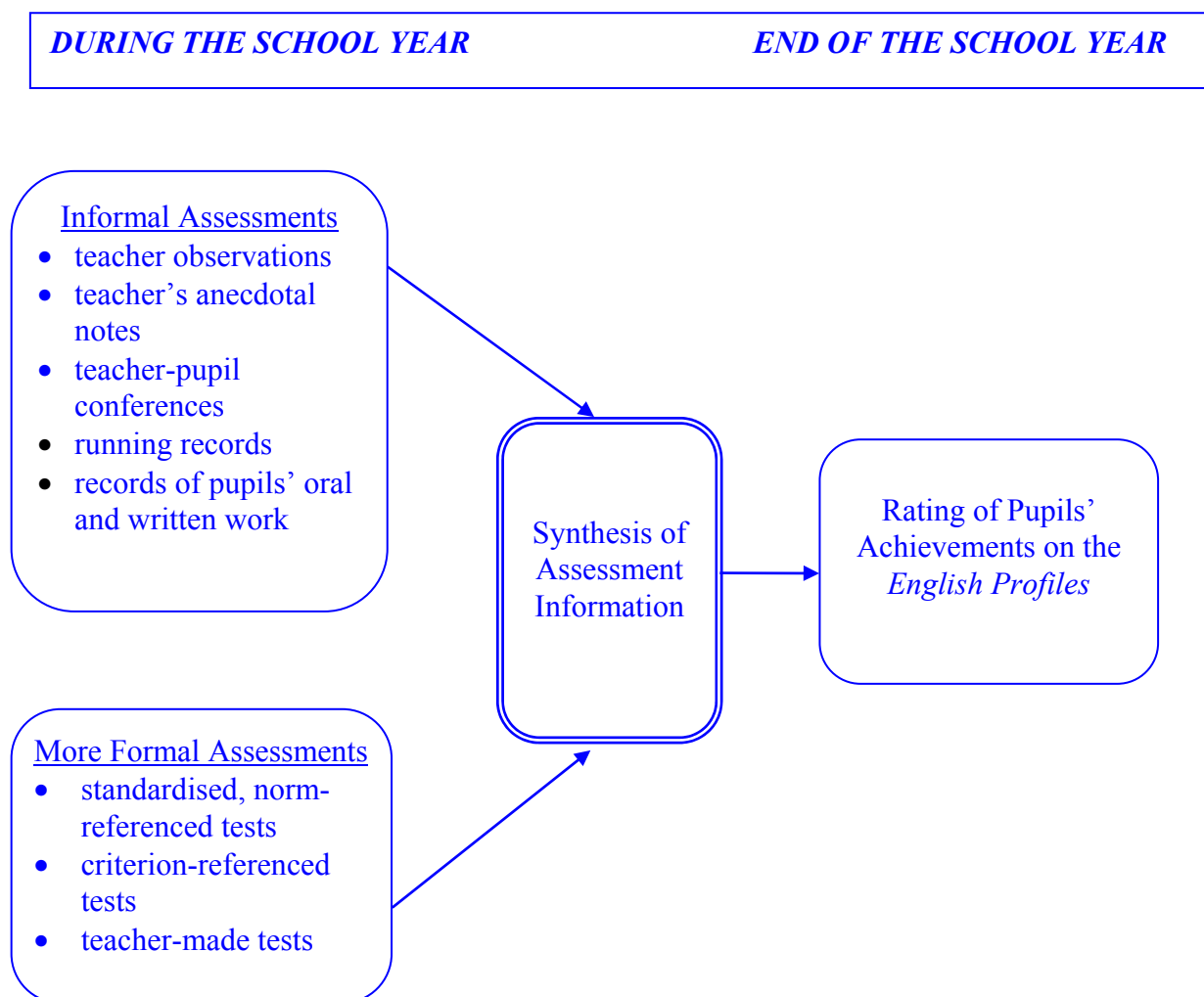
Procedures for Profiling a Pupil's Achievement

The procedures for profiling a pupil's achievement are:

1. Assemble and review records and notes. In the case of oral language, these might include records of oral presentations made by pupils, and notes on the performance of pupils in various language activities such as predicting the outcomes of stories, responding to stories and poems, or delivering oral reports.

2. List the names of pupils on the *Class Profile Rating Form* (see Figure 2-2). (A blank photo-copiable form may be found in Appendix B.)

3. Review the relevant indicator sets corresponding to the pupil's current class level. These may be found in Chapter 3 (Oral Language), Chapter 4 (Reading) and Chapter 5 (Writing).

4. For each pupil listed on the *Class Profile Rating Form*, begin at the *top* of the indicator set for oral language, and continue *downwards* until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil on more than one occasion. Record this information (the indicator number or raw score) in the first column following the pupil's name on the *Class Profile Rating Form*.

5. Refer to the appropriate table of norms in Appendix A to convert the indicator number (raw score) to a scale score, and record the scale score on the *Class Profile Rating Form*. For example, according to Table A-5 on page 70, a raw profile rating of 7 on the oral language indicator set converts to a scale score of 9.

6. Continue down the set of indicators below the pupil's ceiling level (i.e., the highest indicator achieved) to establish if there are any indicators farther down the list that have not yet been achieved by the pupil. If there are, enter their numbers in the appropriate column on the Form.

7. Assessment of reading should be conducted by applying Steps 3 to 6 to the appropriate reading indicator set and table of norms for each pupil on the *Class Profile Rating Form*.

8. Assessment of writing should be conducted by applying Steps 3 to 6 to the appropriate writing indicator set and table of norms for each pupil on the *Class Profile Rating Form*.

Figure 2-2   Partial Class Profile Rating Form

School:	Year: *1999*		Class level: *Third Class*		Teacher: A.N. Other		
	Oral Language			**Reading**			**Writing**
Pupil Name	Highest indicator achieved **Raw Score**	**Scale Score**	Lower indicators not yet achieved	Highest indicator achieved **Raw Score**	**Scale Score**	Lower indicators not yet achieved	Highest indicator achieved **Raw Score**	**Scale Score**	Lower indicators not yet achieved
1. Byrne, Mary	7	9	3	8	9	-	10	10	5
2. Kelly, John	4	6	-	5	6	-	6	7	-
3. Murphy, Patricia	2	4	-	4	5	3,2	3	4	-
4. O'Brien, Seán	1	3	-	2	4	1	-	-	-

13

DEFINITIONS OF PROFILE SCORES

In this section, the scores — raw scores and scale scores — that arise from rating the achievement of pupils on the *English Profiles* are defined. The need to consider measurement error when interpreting profile scores is also addressed.

Raw Scores

A pupil's raw profile score (rating) is the number corresponding to the highest indicator achieved by the pupil on a particular indicator set. In a set with 10 indicators, a raw score between 8 and 10 generally indicates high achievement in the area of English represented by the indicators, while a score of 4 or lower generally indicates low achievement. Because of the variation in the number of indicators in different sets, and in the difficulty level of the indicators within sets, raw profile scores may not be very useful to teachers. They do not show how a pupil's score in one area of English compares with his/her scores in the other areas, nor do they indicate how a pupil's performance compares with that of some appropriate comparison group. For purposes of comparison, raw scores are converted to scale scores called C-scale scores.

Scale Scores

A C-scale score is a normalised score with a mean of 5 and a standard deviation of 2.[1] The lowest score is 0 and refers to the lowest 1% of the population; the highest score is 10 and refers to the top 1% of the population. Because C-scale scores are normalised scores, they have exact correspondence with percentile ranks[2] in the same way as the more familiar standardised scores. Table 2-1 indicates the approximate percentage of cases falling within each score unit as well as percentile ranks corresponding to the centre of each unit.

Table 2-1 **Percentage of Cases Falling within Each Scale Score Unit, and Percentile Ranks Corresponding to Various Scores**

Scale Score	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Percent of Cases	0.9	2.8	6.6	12.1	17.4	20	17.4	12.1	6.6	2.8	0.9
Percentile Rank	99	98	93	84	69	50	31	16	7	2	1

Scale scores for the *Drumcondra English Profiles* were obtained by equating the scores achieved by a representative sample of pupils on standardised tests of achievement in English reading with the profile ratings in oral language, reading and writing that were assigned to them by their teachers

(see Chapter 6). The resulting tables of norms for each class level are given in Appendix A.

Measurement Error

Measurement error is associated with the raw profiles scores and scale scores that result from rating a pupil's achievement on the *English Profiles*. A statistic called the Standard Error of Measurement (SEM) allows users of the *Profiles* to take measurement error into account when interpreting and/or comparing individual profile ratings. The average SEM associated with individual indicators is estimated to be in the order of 0.35 indicator levels. This means that, when interpreting a pupil's achievement from a criterion-referenced perspective, there is a 95% probability that the pupil's 'true' level of achievement is within one level (2 x .35) of his/her assessed level. Hence, the 'true' raw profile score of a pupil who receives a raw score of 6 is most often between 5 and 7. The limits of confidence for scale scores are directly related to the limits for raw scores and can be read off the conversion table in the same way as the scale scores themselves. To find the scale score range within which the above pupil's 'true' scale score is likely to fall, the scale scores equivalent to the raw scores at either end of the confidence interval (for example, 5 and 7) should be read from the appropriate conversion table in Appendix A.

INTERPRETING SCORES ON THE CLASS PROFILE RATING FORM

When completed, the *Class Profile Rating Form* provides information on the performance of each pupil in a class. Raw scores and scale scores are reported for oral language, reading and writing (see Figure 2-2, page 13) The raw profile scores reported in Figure 2-2 are based on the indicator sets for third class in oral language, reading and writing. Table A-5 in Appendix A was referred to in converting raw scores to scale scores.

The highest indicator achieved by the first pupil on the list in Figure 2-2 in the oral language set for her class level is indicator 7 ('Persuades or argues a point of view in real or imaginary situations'). This raw profile score converts to a scale score of 9, which is 2 standard deviations above the mean scale score of 5. Just 4% of pupils in third class would be expected to achieve a rating in oral language that is this high or higher (see Table 2-1). Although this pupil achieved a raw profile score of 7, her teacher felt that she had not demonstrated satisfactory achievement on indicator 3 ('Conducts a short interview with another pupil or adult to obtain information about a topic'), even though opportunities to engage in interviewing for this purpose had been provided. The pupil's raw profile score on reading is 8 ('Reads and summarises informational texts, providing several important points'). This rating converts to a scale score

15

of 9, indicating above average achievement in reading. In writing, this pupil was judged by her teacher to have satisfied indicator 10 ('Deliberately chooses words, including adjectives and adverbs, to refine meaning'). Her raw profile rating in writing converts to a scale score of 10. Although she was judged to have satisfied indicator 10, her teacher felt that her performance on indicator 5 ('Makes appropriate use of capital letters, full stops, question marks, exclamation marks and commas') was less than adequate for her class level. In overall terms, the pupil was judged to have a high level of achievement in the curriculum in English for third class, and to have performed well relative to pupils in the representative group who contributed to the development of norms for the *Profiles.*

According to his teacher, the highest indicator of oral language achieved by the second pupil is indicator 4 ('Listens to stories and poems and identifies and comments on humour'). A raw profile score of 4 converts to a scale score of 6, which is one half of a standard deviation above the mean scale score of 5. In reading, the highest indicator achieved is indicator 5 ('Interprets and follows the printed directions in recipes, maps, games and timetables'). This converts to a scale score of 6, which is one-half of a standard deviation above the mean. In writing, indicator 6 ('Identifies and uses spelling rules and spelling patterns') is satisfied. A raw score of 6 converts to a scale score of 7. This pupil's scale scores in oral language, reading and writing indicate that his performance relative to other pupils at his class level is in the average to above average range.

The third pupil achieved raw profile scores of 2 in oral language, 4 in reading and 3 in writing. These scores convert to scale scores of 4, 5 and 4 respectively, indicating achievement in the average to below average range. Although the pupil satisfied indicator 4 in reading ('Divides unfamiliar words into syllables to assist with identification'), she was judged not to have satisfied indicators 2 ('States how the illustrations in a narrative text contribute to the development of setting and characters) or 3 ('Reads a story and draws conclusions about the setting, characters, events, outcome and theme'). In overall terms, her scores suggest that she may continue to experience difficulties in English in the future unless steps are taken to address those areas in which she is exhibiting problems.

The last pupil achieved a raw profile score of 1 in oral language ('Listens to longer stories and predicts future events and likely outcomes') and 2 in reading ('States how the illustrations in a narrative text contribute to the development of setting and characters'). In writing, he was judged not to have achieved any of the indicators for his class level. His scale scores for oral language and reading are 3 and 4 respectively, indicating relatively low achievement. In overall terms, the scores suggest that this pupil has experienced very limited success on the curriculum in English for his class level, and that his relatively low achievement would need to be taken into

account in planning future learning experiences. A more comprehensive diagnostic assessment of the pupil's development in English might also be undertaken, with a view to identifying more precisely his strengths, weaknesses, and learning needs.

Clearly, a completed *Class Profile Rating Form* can provide valuable information about the learning needs of a group of pupils. Teachers can identify and teach groups of pupils who have common learning needs such as pupils who have not achieved a particular indicator.

Interpreting Differences between a Pupil's Profile Ratings in Oral Language, Reading and Writing

When making comparisons between the achievement of an individual pupil in the areas of oral language, reading and writing, it is appropriate to attend to scale scores rather than raw profile ratings. In some cases, differences between the scores of the same pupil on these three aspects of English may occur by chance. Consequently, observed differences must be large before real differences can be inferred. As a rule of thumb, one should look for a difference of at least one standard deviation (i.e., 2 scale score units) before concluding that there is a difference in the achievement of a pupil across two aspects of English (such as reading and writing). No differences of this magnitude were observed for any of the pupils profiled in Figure 2-2. In this context, the inter-relatedness of oral language, reading and writing should be borne in mind, where achievement in one area may be linked to achievement in the others.

Inferences based on scaled profile scores can be drawn about a pupil's development from year to year in the same aspect of English, although, again, it is recommended that one should look for a difference of a full standard deviation (2 scale score units) before concluding that a pupil's achievement has improved or declined. For example, if a pupil achieves a scale score of 5 in reading in third class, and a scale score of 8 in fourth class, it can be concluded that the pupil has improved in achievement.

COMPLETING THE INDIVIDUAL PROFILE RECORD CARD

Some teachers may wish to develop a more complete record of their pupils' achievement in English than that provided by the *Class Profile Rating Form*. An additional form, the *Individual Pupil Record Card*, would be appropriate for this purpose.

The *Individual Profile Record Card* allows teachers to report the following information for each pupil in a class or group:

- The pupil's raw profile scores (ratings) and scale scores in oral language, reading and writing;
- Indicators below the ceiling (highest achieved) indicator that have not been achieved by the pupil;
- Results of an analysis of the pupil's oral reading errors (see Appendix E);
- Comments on the pupil's strengths and learning needs in oral language, reading and writing;
- Comments on the pupil's attitude toward and interest in various aspects of English.

It may be useful to communicate information at this level of detail to parents and/or other teachers in the school who will work with the pupil in the future.

Figure 2-3 shows a completed *Individual Profile Record Card* for one of the pupils whose summary scores appear on the *Class Profile Rating Form* in Figure 2-2. A blank, photocopiable *Individual Profile Record Card* may be found in Appendix C (page 73).

As indicated in Figure 2-3, the teacher believes that the profiled pupil is reluctant to contribute to class discussions, unless called upon to do so. His raw score of 4 on the oral language indicator set is elaborated on by comments relating to needs in the areas of language comprehension (summarising ideas) and oral presentation (presenting oral reports on completed project work). Difficulties with receptive (meaning) vocabulary are also noted.

According to his teacher, this pupil does not engage in reading as a leisure activity, and needs encouragement to do so. Analysis of the pupil's oral reading led his teacher to conclude that he makes few if any oral reading errors. However, lack of background knowledge is found to hinder reading comprehension. Ability to summarise texts is raised as a problem. A standard score of 105 was achieved on a standardised reading test with a mean score of 100 and a standard deviation of 15, indicating achievement in the average range. This is broadly consistent with the pupil's scores on the *Reading Profile*, where he achieved a raw profile score of 5, and a scale score of 6.

In writing, this pupil achieved a raw profile rating score of 6. His teacher noted that he writes independently for short periods of time, mainly producing texts based on his own interests. Increased flexibility in using word processing skills was identified as a learning need. The pupil's spelling is deemed by his teacher to be adequate.

Figure 2-3   Completed Individual Profile Record Card

Name: *John Kelly*		**Date of birth:** *21-10-90*	
School: *Scoil Mhuire*		**Home address:** *145 East Road*	
Class: *Third*	**Year:** *1999-00*	**Teacher:** *E. Williams*	

Oral Language	**Reading**	**Writing**
Informal classroom language *Reluctant to contribute to class discussions unless called upon to do so.*	*Interest in reading* *Rarely selects reading during free time at school. Needs encouragement.*	*Writing process* *Can write independently for 5 minutes on areas of interest ; needs to develop use of word processor to revise texts*
Oral presentations *Needs considerable support in summarising ideas, presenting outcomes of projects to class, and arguing a point of view*	*Analysis of oral reading errors* *Reads stories in reader with almost 100% accuracy and fluency.*	*Narrative and informational writing* *Mostly writes about own experiences; might extend this to imaginary stories; has begun to distinguish between narrative and informational text*
Meaning vocabulary *Receptive vocabulary limited. Wider reading and increased participation in oral language activities would help.*	*Reading comprehension* *Summaries of text incomplete and often reflect lack of background knowledge.*	*Spelling* *Spelling appropriate for class level; has made considerable progress in applying rules for doubling consonants and adding -ing.*

	Standardised tests			*Dictionary skills*
	Test name and date administered	**Standard Score**	**Reading Age**	*Some difficulty in selecting appropriate definitions for words*
	DPRT (Lev 3) – May '98	*105*	*n/a*	*Handwriting* *Legible; reflects emerging personal style*

Profile rating – Oral Language			*Profile rating - Reading*			*Profile rating - Writing*		
Raw Profile Score	**Scale Score**	**Other indicators not achieved**	**Raw Profile Score**	**Scale Score**	**Other indicators not achieved**	**Raw Profile Score**	**Scale Score**	**Other indicators not achieved**
4	*6*		*5*	*6*		*6*	*7*	

Comments: *Comprehension (recall) and writing (composition) would benefit from wider reading and attention to narrative and informational text structures. Activities to develop background knowledge and meaning vocabulary should be emphasised in the classroom and at home.*

19

SUMMARY

Preparation for using the *English Profiles* can be made at different points during the school year. At the beginning of the school year, teachers can refer to the indicator sets for oral language, reading and writing as plans are devised for teaching and assessment activities in English. During the school year, it is important to maintain records of pupils' achievements. Among the records that may be useful are anecdotal notes, writing portfolios, records of pupils' oral reading errors, and notes on the outcomes of reading and writing conferences. At the end of the school year, records of pupils' achievement should be assembled and reviewed by the teacher applying the *Profiles*.

The procedure for rating a pupil's achievement involves attending to the meaning of the indicators in a set, and identifying, on the basis of available knowledge and information, the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil on at least two occasions. Performance relative to additional indicators below the ceiling (highest) indicator can be noted for formative assessment purposes.

Two scores derive from rating a pupil's achievement on an indicator set — a raw profile score (the number corresponding to the highest achieved indicator), and a scale score. The interpretation of these scores should take measurement error into account.

Two forms for recording pupils' achievement on the *Profiles* are available — a *Class Profile Rating Form*, and an *Individual Profile Record Card*. The former can be used to record the profile scores achieved by all the pupils in a class and to generate a useful overview of the achievement of the whole class with reference to the curriculum in English. The latter is more useful when the need arises for a comprehensive profile in English for an individual pupil that yields detailed formative information as well as summary scores.

---

[1] See Guilford and Fruchter (1978). Each score refers to an interval of half a standard deviation, within which the score is central and the top and bottom limits are boundaries, separating it from scores above and below.

[2] A percentile rank indicates a pupil's standing in relation to other pupils in a norm group. A pupil who achieves a percentile rank of 69 did as well as, or better than, 69% of pupils in the norm group.

CHAPTER 3

ORAL LANGUAGE INDICATOR SETS

In this chapter, the oral language indicator sets for junior infants to sixth class (inclusive) are provided. The rating of pupils' achievements should be conducted in line with the procedures outlined in Chapter 2. Additional suggestions for assessing pupils' competence in oral language are provided in Appendix D.

ORAL LANGUAGE INDICATORS: JUNIOR INFANTS

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

11.	Constructs an imaginative story based on a sequence of pictures (See Note 11)
10.	Predicts future activities and events, with reference to own experiences
9.	Shows an interest in the meanings of new words in stories and poems by asking questions
8.	Demonstrates understanding of stories, songs and rhymes through mime and role-play
7.	Identifies repetition and rhyme in stories and poems
6.	Speaks audibly, clearly and with confidence on most occasions (See Note 6)
5.	Listens attentively to stories and poems read aloud by the teacher
4.	Recites some rhymes, poems and songs from memory
3.	Communicates easily with other pupils during seatwork (See Note 3)
2.	Follows simple instructions and directions (See Note 2)
1.	Expresses simple personal needs (See Note 1)

Notes:

11. Includes pictures in books, classroom posters, photographs etc.
6. Includes pronouncing most familiar words clearly.
3. For example, focuses on the task in hand and makes simple requests of other pupils. (*Please give the red crayon to Paul*).
2. Examples: *Put the paintbrush in the jar on the top shelf* (Visual Arts*); Crawl under the first bench and climb over the second* (Physical Education).
1. Examples: *I need a pencil. I want a drink* etc.

ORAL LANGUAGE INDICATORS: SENIOR INFANTS

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

10.	Identifies problems in stories and in other texts, and proposes possible solutions
9.	Plans, predicts and orders future activities and events with reference to own experiences
8.	Discusses the meanings of new words in stories, poems and songs, paying some attention to context clues
7.	Demonstrates understanding of characters and events in stories and poems through mime and role-play, sometimes extending storylines (See Note 7)
6.	Initiates and sustains a conversation on a familiar topic with the teacher or with other pupils, demonstrating understanding of class rules for turn taking
5.	Listens attentively and expresses personal reactions to stories, poems and rhymes read aloud by the teacher
4.	Follows instructions, directions or explanations that include two or three elements (See Note 4)
3.	Retells stories heard in class, recalling main characters and events in appropriate sequence (See Note 3)
2.	Speaks audibly and pronounces familiar words clearly and confidently on most occasions
1.	Recites a range of rhymes, poems and songs from memory, with some attention to tone of voice and actions

Notes:

7.   Includes appropriate use of gesture and body language.
4.   For example, *Go around the chair, through the hoop, and under the bench.* Stop and state position (Physical Education).
3.   Retelling occurs immediately or soon after listening to a story.

4. ORAL LANGUAGE INDICATORS: FIRST CLASS

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

9. Uses some complex sentences which include phrases and clauses to describe events, experiences and objects

8. Identifies a speaker's topic and initiates questions seeking explanations or more information, while demonstrating awareness of class rules on turn-taking

7. Identifies problems in stories and in other texts, and justifies possible solutions

6. Suggests alternative words to describe objects, experiences or events

5. Expresses the emotions and reactions of characters in stories and poems through mime and role-play (See Note 5)

4. Describes an experience, event or situation to the class with confidence, focusing on the topic and including key information

3. Listens attentively to group and class discussions, contributing at appropriate times

2. Explains familiar procedures, or gives instructions to peers, showing awareness of the steps involved (See Note 2)

1. Retells a story heard in class, attending to the main events and preserving their sequence

Note:

5. Includes appropriate use of gesture and body language.
2. For example, explains to the class how to make something or go somewhere.

ORAL LANGUAGE INDICATORS: SECOND CLASS

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

9. Attempts to persuade others to a point of view or action, presenting a few reasons (See Note 9)

8. Suggests alternative words and phrases to describe objects, experiences or events

7. As a member of a group, initiates and sustains a conversation on a specific topic with confidence, recognising the needs of listeners

6. Identifies similarities across stories in terms of setting, characters, problems presented, attempts to solve problems, and resolutions

5. Interprets and expresses the feelings and reactions of characters in stories and informational texts, drawing on personal knowledge and experiences (See Note 5)

4. In talk, interprets the themes and major ideas in stories and informational texts, drawing on personal knowledge and experiences

3. Identifies a speaker's topic, and initiates questions seeking explanations or more information

2. Gives a short description or report of an event, attending to key information and relevant details

1. Recites a repertoire of favourite poems and rhymes from memory, giving attention to phrasing and expression (See Note 1)

Note:

9. Occurs during structured class discussions.
5. Includes appropriate use of gesture and body language.
1. Phrasing and expression should reflect an appreciation of the meaning of the poem or rhyme.

ORAL LANGUAGE INDICATORS: THIRD CLASS

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

8.	Supports a personal view of a poem with reference to content, format and language
7.	Persuades or argues a point of view in real or imaginary situations
6.	Delivers a prepared report to the class on a project topic, using appropriate vocabulary and giving relevant information
5.	Listens to and summarises short stories or informational texts by recalling several important points
4.	Listens to stories and poems and identifies and comments on humour
3.	Conducts a short interview with another pupil or adult to obtain information about a topic
2.	Talks clearly, audibly and with confidence to different audiences in the school environment (individuals, groups, own class)
1.	Listens to longer stories and predicts future events and likely outcomes (See Note 1)

Note:

1. Stories may be played on a tape recorder or read aloud by the teacher.

ORAL LANGUAGE INDICATORS: FOURTH CLASS

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

8.	Listens to and compares two poems on the same theme or by the same author, and supports a personal interpretation (See Note 8)
7.	Delivers a prepared report to the class on a project topic, using appropriate vocabulary and giving relevant, organised information
6.	Talks clearly and audibly to different audiences (e.g., group, own class, other class), varying pace of delivery as appropriate
5.	Prepares for and conducts an interview with another pupil or adult to obtain information about a topic
4.	Predicts and justifies future events and likely outcomes at appropriate points in book-length stories read aloud by the teacher
3.	Presents a point of view to the class, offering some reasons or arguments
2.	Identifies and comments on humour in stories and poems read aloud by other pupils or by the teacher
1.	Participates in class discussions by sharing relevant background (prior) knowledge about a topic

Note:

8.   In interpreting poems, considers content, format, mood and language.

ORAL LANGUAGE INDICATORS: FIFTH CLASS

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

9. Recognises and discusses the effectiveness of similes, metaphors and idioms in stories and poems read aloud by the teacher

8. Contrasts a personal interpretation of a story or poem with another's interpretation, evaluating the validity of both

7. Presents constructive counter-arguments on a given theme to refute arguments presented by others, while demonstrating tolerance towards their views (See Note 7)

6. Identifies and comments on some elements of specific stories that make them interesting or effective (See Note 6)

5. Tells stories confidently, using techniques that make them interesting (See Note 5)

4. Identifies a range of non-verbal cues in photographs and on television/video and comments on their purposes and appropriateness (See Note 4)

3. Presents an organised, interesting report to the class about a project topic, using illustrations as appropriate

2. Identifies and understands the functions of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs

1. Identifies the main idea in a short, spoken report, and summarises it for others

Notes:

7.   Occurs during structured class discussions.
6.   Includes choice of vocabulary, use of dialogue and structural elements (e.g. flashback, suspense).
5.   Techniques include use of interesting phrases, clarity, repetition, variation in pitch, pace and tone, gesture, eye-contact and facial expression.
4.   Non-verbal cues include gesture, facial expression, audibility and clarity in enunciation.

ORAL LANGUAGE INDICATORS: SIXTH CLASS

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

9. Recognises and comments on the effects on language of local idiom, accent and dialect in different formal and informal situations (See Note 9)

8. Identifies criteria for evaluating spoken texts (e.g., prepared speech, argument, report) and uses these to evaluate own contributions and those of others (See Note 8)

7. Evaluates own knowledge about a topic or process, stating what is known and identifying aspects that are not known

6. Selects two or more poems related to a theme or topic, and justifies selection, referring to content, language and rhyme

5. Listens and responds constructively to alternative ideas or viewpoints, and expresses ideas and opinions without dominating a discussion

4. Identifies elements of persuasion and appeal in radio and television advertisements, commenting on their purpose and impact (See Note 4)

3. Tells stories with a keen awareness of plot and character, using techniques that make them interesting (See Note 3)

2. Presents an organised, interesting report to the class about a topic, using gestures and illustrations as appropriate

1. Identifies the main idea and supporting details in a short, spoken report, and summarises it for others

Notes:

9. Includes situations encountered in real life and on radio/television/video.
8. Includes criteria for evaluating presentation and content.
4. Elements include pace, volume, tone, stress, background music, emotive language, one-sided presentation of information and exaggerated claims.
3. Techniques include use of interesting phrases, repetition, variation in pitch, pace and tone, gesture, eye-contact and facial expression.

CHAPTER 4

READING INDICATOR SETS

In this chapter, the reading indicator sets for junior infants to sixth class (inclusive) are provided. The rating of pupils' achievements should be conducted in line with the procedures outlined in Chapter 2. Additional suggestions for assessing pupils' competence in reading are presented in Appendix E.

READING INDICATORS: JUNIOR INFANTS

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

10.	Uses two or more cues to read unfamiliar words appearing in context (See Note 10)
9.	Reads simple stories and retells significant events and details (See Note 9)
8.	Identifies initial and final sounds in spoken words
7.	Responds to and understands print concepts such as letter, word, sentence, line and page
6.	Understands the one-to-one correspondence between written and spoken words
5.	Identifies words that rhyme in a set of spoken words
4.	Recognises and names most lower-case letters of the alphabet
3.	Identifies words that are the same or different in a set of printed words
2.	Relates printed signs, labels and notices in the classroom to their meaning
1.	Identifies a set of basic sight words in familiar and unfamiliar contexts (See Note 1)

Notes:

10. Cues include sentence context, some letter-sound correspondences, and pictures.
9. Refers to stories that pupils at this class level might be expected to read towards the end of the school year.
1. Familiar contexts include stories that have been read several times, word banks and word lists. Unfamiliar contexts include new stories in readers, library books etc.

READING INDICATORS: SENIOR INFANTS

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

10.	Modifies initial expectations (predictions) about the content of a story based on new information in the story
9.	Breaks spoken words into their constituent sounds (phoneme segmentation) (See Note 9)
8.	Recognises simple differences between text types (See Note 8)
7.	Reads stories and retells them with reference to setting, characters and main events
6.	Uses spelling patterns (rimes) in known words to identify unknown words (See Note 6)
5.	Uses knowledge of sentence context and letter-sound correspondences to read unknown words
4.	Identifies words that rhyme in a set of spoken words
3.	Reads signs, labels, notices and messages in the classroom
2.	Identifies the names of most upper- and lower-case letters of the alphabet
1.	Identifies a broad set of sight words in familiar and unfamiliar contexts (See Note 1)

Notes:

9.   For example, when presented with the spoken word *keep*, the pupil can name its three sounds in sequence "/k/ /ee/ /p/".
8.   For example, differences between a story and a poem.
6.   For example, a new word such as *sand* may be identified with reference to the known rime -*and*.
1.   Familiar contexts include stories that have been read several times, word banks and word lists. Unfamiliar contexts include new stories in readers, library books etc.

READING INDICATORS: FIRST CLASS

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

10. Demonstrates flexibility in combining several cues to read unknown words in a range of texts (See Note 10)

9. Reads and retells stories and informational texts in sequence, incorporating important ideas and relevant details

8. Identifies and blends consonant and vowel patterns (such as onsets and rimes) in attempts to read unfamiliar words (See Note 8)

7. Justifies, on the basis of personal experience, the likelihood of settings, actions, events, and outcomes in stories

6. Identifies inflectional endings (*-ed*, *-s*(*-es*), *-ing*, *-ly*, *-er*, and *-est*) while reading words in context

5. Generates appropriate expectations about the content of simple stories or informational texts based on title, illustrations and layout/headings

4. Locates items of information in simple informational texts

3. Sorts sets of sight words in alphabetical order, based on the first letter

2. Describes simple differences between text types (e.g., stories, poems and informational texts)

1. Identifies and states the topic of a story or simple informational text

Notes:

10. Cues include sentence context (semantic and syntactic) and letter-sound correspondences. Flexibility implies trying a different approach if the first attempt is unsuccessful.
8. Onsets are initial consonant sounds in syllables (e.g., /s/ in *sand*); rimes are vowel sounds and the consonants that follow them (e.g., *and* in *sand*). *Each* and *end* have no onsets and are therefore rimes.

READING INDICATORS: SECOND CLASS 35

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

9. Makes inferences about the ideas and actions in stories (See Note 9)

8. Generates appropriate expectations about the content of informational texts

7. Uses context to define the meanings of words (See Note 7)

6. Interprets the themes and major ideas in stories and informational texts, drawing on personal knowledge and experiences (See Note 6)

5. Demonstrates speed and flexibility in combining a range of cues to read unfamiliar words in texts (See Note 5)

4. Identifies common prefixes, suffixes and inflectional endings while reading words in context (See Note 4)

3. Locates information in a table of contents and in simple diagrams

2. Divides unfamiliar words into syllables to assist with identification (e.g., win/dow, some/one; care/ful/ly, so/lo)

1. Reads independent-level texts silently for longer periods of time (See Note 1)

Notes:

9. For example, infers character motives, relationships between characters, causal and sequential links between events etc.
7. Includes meanings of different words that have the same sounds, e.g., *would, wood*; *main, mane* etc.
6. 'Theme' refers to the underlying message or meaning in a story
5. Includes cues found in sentence context (semantic and syntactic), word structure (e.g., prefixes and suffixes), and letter-sound correspondences. Flexibility implies trying a different approach if the first attempt is unsuccessful.
4. Examples of prefixes: *dis-, un-, re-, in-*; suffixes: *-ful, -less, -ness*; inflectional endings: *-ly, -er, -est*
1. Independent-level texts are texts in which most of the words are known to the pupil. Pupils at this level should read independent-level texts without help for *5 to 10 minutes*

READING INDICATORS: THIRD CLASS

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

10.	Establishes appropriate purposes for reading narrative and informational texts, and evaluates the extent to which purposes have been achieved
9.	Identifies the meanings of new words in running text by using a range of cues (See Note 9)
8.	Reads and summarises informational texts, providing several important points
7.	Uses a dictionary to locate words and interprets their meanings in context (See Note 7)
6.	Understands and uses terms such as *index*, *table of contents*, *chapter heading*, *paragraph* and *dialogue*
5.	Interprets and follows the printed directions in recipes, maps, games and timetables
4.	Divides unfamiliar words into syllables to assist with identification (e.g., fi/nal, dol/phin, ex/am/ple)
3.	Reads a story and draws conclusions about the setting, characters, events, outcome and theme
2.	States how the illustrations in a narrative text contribute to the development of setting and characters
1.	Evaluates the outcomes of stories or poems and suggests other likely outcomes

Notes:

9. Cues include semantic and syntactic sentence context and word structure (prefixes, suffixes, roots).
7. Involves use of alphabetical order (up to the second letter).

READING INDICATORS: FOURTH CLASS

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

10. Summarises stories and informational texts, distinguishing between main ideas and important details

9. Identifies organisational patterns in informational texts (See Note 9)

8. Demonstrates flexibility in implementing a range of strategies to identify the meanings of unknown words in running text (See Note 8)

7. Recognises logical relationships within and between sentences (See Note 7)

6. Identifies and understands the contribution to meaning of prefixes, suffixes and word roots (See Note 6)

5. Locates information in documents such as maps, diagrams, timetables, tables of contents, indices, and brochures

4. Locates words in a dictionary using alphabetical order, and selects the appropriate meanings of multiple-meaning words with reference to the contexts in which they occur

3. Evaluates outcomes in stories and informational texts with reference to other books read and personal experiences

2. Reads familiar texts (including plays and poems) aloud with attention to print conventions (See Note 2)

1. Generates appropriate expectations for stories and informational texts based on chapter headings, section headings and graphics/illustrations

Notes:

9. Organisational patterns include descriptions, comparisons, events in chronological order etc. Informational texts include encyclopaedia excerpts, newspaper articles, magazine articles, brochures etc.
8. Strategies include application of sentence context, word structure (prefixes, suffixes and roots), and letter-sound correspondences.
7. Examples of words that signal relationships: *because*, *in comparison to*, *first*, *next*, *however*, *like*, *different from* etc.
6. Examples of prefixes: *dis-, in-, pre-, re-, un-* ; suffixes: *-ful, -sion, -tion, -al, -ity;* roots: *reject, injection; construct, destruct; television, invisible, visor*
2. Print conventions include capital letters, full stops, commas, exclamation marks, speech (quotation) marks, etc. Appropriate stress, pauses and emphasis are evident.

READING INDICATORS: FIFTH CLASS

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

10. Reads complex texts silently, recognising a range of organisational structures (See Note 10)

9. Recognises and interprets the meanings of figures of speech and idioms in stories and poems (See Note 9)

8. Identifies the structural elements of persuasive texts (See Note 8)

7. Compares and synthesises information about a topic, drawing from two or more informational texts (See Note 7)

6. Identifies changes that occur in characters' feelings and behaviour (actions), and in their relationships with one another in shorter and longer (book-length) stories

5. Adjusts reading speed for specific purposes and for different texts (See Note 5)

4. Uses the dictionary and thesaurus to select the meanings of words relative to their contexts, including words with multiple meanings

3. Locates and interprets information in documents such as maps, timetables, tables of contents, indices, brochures, menus, recipes etc

2. Reads a simple text and summarises the main points, relating them to the full text

1. Identifies the main theme (or moral) in a story or poem, and relates it to other texts and to everyday life

Notes:

10. Structures include descriptions, comparisons, causal relationships, ideas supported by evidence, events in chronological order etc.
9. Includes figures of speech such as similes, metaphors, analogies and personification, and idiomatic phrases such as clichés, colloquialisms and slang
8. Elements of persuasive texts include statement of thesis, main argument, supporting arguments, opposing points of view etc.
7. Informational texts include encyclopaedia excerpts, descriptive passages, letters, newspaper articles, advertisements etc.
5. Reading speeds include scanning, skimming, slow careful reading, re-reading.

READING INDICATORS: SIXTH CLASS

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

9.   Distinguishes between fact and opinion in texts, referring to other sources to justify interpretations (See Note 9)

8.   Reads and understands a range of complex texts, analysing structures, ideas and themes

7.   Employs several strategies when reading informational texts for research purposes (previewing, skimming, scanning, note-taking, summarising, etc.)

6.   Identifies different non-fiction genres (biographies, descriptions, arguments, explanations, procedures, etc.) and their principal functions and elements

5.   Identifies the main and supporting arguments in persuasive texts, noting implications and inconsistencies

4.   Identifies and evaluates the themes and values in stories and poems, with reference to other texts and to own experiences

3.   Formulates research topics and questions, and locates and collates relevant information from more than one reference source

2.   Identifies simpler features of style in narrative texts and, where appropriate, in poems (e.g., character depiction, description, vocabulary choice, etc.)

1.   Uses a dictionary/glossary or thesaurus to clarify the meanings of words (See Note 1)

Notes:

9.   Intentional and unintentional bias may also be considered.
1.   Refers, where appropriate, to the pronunciation key and to information about word origins.

CHAPTER 5

WRITING INDICATOR SETS

In this chapter, the writing indicator sets for junior infants to sixth class (inclusive) are provided. The rating of pupils' achievements should be conducted in line with the procedures outlined in Chapter 2. Additional suggestions for assessing pupils' competence in writing are presented in Appendix F.

WRITING INDICATORS: JUNIOR INFANTS

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

10.	Writes two or more sentences that are readable and are related in meaning
9.	Identifies different writing forms (See Note 9)
8.	Approximates the spellings for unknown words, using the most obvious consonant sounds (e.g., *d* or *dn* for *down, kt* for *kitten, wt* for *went*)
7.	Constructs written statements using words and captions in the classroom
6.	Spells a few common words correctly and without help (e.g., frequently-occurring words encountered in reading, names of family members, favourite toys)
5.	Understands and uses the vocabulary of writing: *letter, word, capital letter, full stop*
4.	Writes using left-to-right and top-to-bottom orientation of print
3.	Traces neatly over teacher's script or copies underneath
2.	Uses drawings to represent own ideas on paper
1.	Produces the basic strokes of handwriting: circles, diagonals, horizontals and verticals

Notes:

9.   Forms include reports of own experiences (e.g., news), lists of recorded items and simple greetings such as '*Happy birthday from Anne*'.

WRITING INDICATORS: SENIOR INFANTS

43

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

10.	Suggests simple changes that can be made to own text to clarify meaning
9.	Writes an extended description using ideas from familiar stories or personal experiences
8.	Explains the key ideas in own writing
7.	Recognises different forms of writing, explaining their purposes (See Note 7)
6.	Uses capital letters and full stops correctly in more than one sentence
5.	Makes a systematic attempt to match sounds and letters by including obvious consonant and vowel sounds in spellings (e.g., *roks* for *rocks*, *whitch* or *wich* for *witch*, *ther* for *there*)
4.	Spells some common words correctly (See Note 4)
3.	Writes from left-to-right and top-to-bottom, spacing words correctly and with few or no reversals of letters
2.	Writes own first and last names using capitals as appropriate
1.	Copies two or more sentences correctly from the blackboard

Notes:

7.   Includes reports of own experiences, lists of recorded items, simple greetings and letters.
4.   Includes frequently-occurring words encountered in reading; some numbers, colours, days of the week, notices - e.g. '*stop, pull, exit*', family, friends, games and toys.

WRITING INDICATORS: FIRST CLASS

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

10.	Explains how own text was constructed with reference to selecting ideas, drafting and revising
9.	Suggests changes that can be made to own first drafts of texts
8.	Incorporates basic characteristics of selected genres in own writing (See Note 8)
7.	Writes sentences which include statements, questions and forms modelled on dialogue in books and spoken language (See Note 7)
6.	Writes stories with some elements of structure present (e.g., character, setting, problem, events, solution/outcome)
5.	Writes sentences which include common linking words (See Note 5)
4.	Spells familiar, important and regularly occurring words correctly (See Note 4)
3.	Uses capital letters, full stops and question marks correctly in sentences
2.	Uses correctly orientated, legible print script (or cursive writing), differentiating lower- from upper-case letters correctly in most instances
1.	Begins most names with capital letters

Notes:

8. Genres include story, poem, letter, recipe, list, description, etc.
7. For example, *'Go home', said the boy.*
5. Linking words include *and, then, so, but* etc. These should not be overused.
4. Words encountered in reading, notices, names of family, friends, places, days, months, numbers, colours, television characters, games, toys, etc.

WRITING INDICATORS: SECOND CLASS

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

10. Makes constructive comments about the processes used in composing own texts (See Note 10)

9. In written stories, describes one or more characters faced with a problem and traces how the problem is resolved

8. Organises written texts in relation to the purpose of writing (See Note 8)

7. Plans for writing by selecting topics and ideas with minimal help

6. Approximates spellings of difficult words using strategies such as syllabification, analogy with known spellings, and spelling rules (See Note 6)

5. Produces rough drafts of texts independently (See Note 5)

4. Demonstrates fluency in writing by generating longer texts (See Note 4)

3. Uses many common spellings and spellings arising from reading correctly

2. Writes simple factual accounts based on own experiences, oral presentations and own reading

1. In final drafts, spaces letters and words correctly and writes neatly

Notes:

10. Processes include: selection and organisation of ideas, choice of words, punctuation, revisions.
8. Includes the use of appropriate structures for stories, diaries, lists, letters, poems, recipes, invitations etc.
6. Uses syllabification '*sand-wich*'; analogy *-and* in *sand, band*; rules e.g., doubling consonant: '*stopping*'; omitting 'e' in '*coming*'; common letter sequences, e.g., *-ing, th-, -ght, -ly.*
5. Understands that improvements can be made in later drafts.
4. Completes a full page.

WRITING INDICATORS: THIRD CLASS

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

10.	Deliberately chooses words, including adjectives and adverbs, to refine meaning
9.	Uses direct and indirect forms of speech in narrative writing (See Note 9)
8.	Proofreads for spelling and other transcription errors in final drafts
7.	Writes an imaginative story in which character, setting and plot are briefly described, and in which events are clearly related to the resolution of the problem
6.	Identifies and uses spelling rules and spelling patterns (See Note 6)
5.	Makes appropriate use of capital letters, full stops, question marks, exclamation marks and commas
4.	Checks the meaning of words in a dictionary using alphabetical order (up to the second letter of a word)
3.	Lays out a conventional, personal letter and addresses an envelope
2.	Writes uniformly and legibly in cursive script, demonstrating control of a variety of writing implements (See Note 2)
1.	Generates longer texts (about one page) with fluency and ease

Notes:

9. Quotation marks should be used appropriately in direct speech e.g. *"I'm off now", said Tom.*
6. For example, adding –ing (*making*), doubling (*scrubbed*), plurals (- s, -es, y → ies), silent letters, hard and soft '*c*' and '*g*'; prefixes (*pre-, dis-*) and suffixes (-*ful, -ment, -tion).*
2. Writing implements include pencil, ink pen, biro, felt tip pen.

WRITING INDICATORS: FOURTH CLASS

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

10. Makes simple global judgements about own writing which go beyond one word rejection or praise

9. Elaborates the meanings of sentences through use of phrases and clauses (See Note 9)

8. Returns independently to a piece of work and redrafts to improve meaning

7. Writes a range of informational texts, recognising the functions of each (See Note 7)

6. Selects own topics and ideas for writing and writes own interpretation of 'set' topics to suit purpose and audience

5. Writes stories with a clear beginning, middle and end which include at least one related episode and details of setting, character, plot and resolution (See Note 5)

4. Uses knowledge of known spelling patterns, word roots and spelling rules in attempts to spell unknown words

3. Writes uniformly, legibly and fluently in cursive script with various writing implements

2. Checks spellings and meanings of words using alphabetical order (up to the third letter) in a dictionary or thesaurus

1. Uses capital letters and a range of punctuation marks correctly in own writing (See Note 1)

Notes:

9. e.g., '*They watched a film which was not at all suitable for Mary*'; '*One cold, misty day I decided to go on a trip walking in the Wicklow mountains*'.
7. Informational texts include reports on project topics related to history, geography, civics, science or nature, book reviews, procedures and a personal log of learning.
5. Includes stories based on own experiences, fantasy, adventure, folktales.
1. Punctuation marks include full stops, question marks, exclamation marks, commas and quotation marks.

WRITING INDICATORS: FIFTH CLASS

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

10. Writes texts that are persuasive, argumentative or explanatory and are appropriate for their intended audiences (See Note 10)

9. Demonstrates control of metre and form in writing short poems (See Note 9)

8. Uses words which reflect knowledge and understanding of a widening technical and literary vocabulary (*telescope, patients, Taoiseach, cheque, exaggerate*)

7. Concentrates on meaning and intention while drafting a text, often rereading what has been written so far

6. Considers audience and point of view in own writing by including relevant background information

5. In narrative writing, chooses interesting words which convey a specific impression and reflect a developing personal style (e.g., *encounter, devastated, auditioning, volunteer, acquaintance*)

4. Recognises uncertainties in own spelling and uses a dictionary to check spellings

3. Organises writing with logical use of paragraphs and, where appropriate, headings and subheadings

2. Lays out a conventional, formal or business letter

1. Uses capital letters and a broad range of punctuation marks correctly in own writing (See Note 1)

Notes:

10. Texts should include contrasting points of view and generalisations, with supporting facts.
9. Metre can refer to the number of syllables or beats e.g., '*Good afternoon Sir Smasham Uppe, We're having tea, do take a cup*'; Form can refer to a rhyme scheme such as haiku or limerick (aabba)
1. Punctuation marks include full stops, question marks, exclamation marks, commas, quotation marks, and apostrophes for contraction (*didn't*) and possession (*the dog's tail*).

WRITING INDICATORS: SIXTH CLASS

When rating a pupil's achievement, begin at the top of the list (the indicator regarded as being the most difficult) and continue downwards until you reach the highest indicator that has been achieved independently by the pupil, on more than one occasion.

9. Writes a range of narrative genres, for different purposes and audiences, taking objective and personal perspectives as appropriate (See Note 9)

8. Uses language economically to convey images in poetry, integrating knowledge of different formats with individual style

7. Writes in a persuasive, argumentative or explanatory style for a variety of purposes and audiences

6. Uses an extensive body of common and unusual spellings, integrating spelling rules and checking with a dictionary where necessary (See Note 6)

5. Modifies words, phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs to clarify precise meaning

4. Writes fluently without redrafting in appropriate contexts

3. Writes a formal letter independently using appropriate lay-out and language

2. Writes a summary which incorporates the main points of an oral or written text

1. Uses capital letters and a broad range of punctuation marks correctly (See Note 1)

Notes:

9. Includes some of the following genres: biography and autobiography, fantasy, fairytale, adventure, humorous writing and plays.
6. Includes some foreign terms and abstract concepts, e.g., *de rigeur, status quo, rheumatism, orchestra, prejudice, democracy, receipt, biodegradable.*
1. Punctuation marks include full stops, question marks, exclamation marks, commas, quotation marks, and apostrophes for contraction (*didn't*) and possession (*the dog's tail*). Evidence of emerging use of colon, semicolon, parentheses and hyphen may also be present, but are not necessary for the achievement of this indicator.

CHAPTER **6**

TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DRUMCONDRA ENGLISH PROFILES

This chapter describes the technical development of the *Drumcondra English Profiles*. First, the procedures used in identifying, selecting and scaling indicators are described. Second, the reliability of profile ratings is considered. Third, evidence to support the validity of the indicator sets is offered.

IDENTIFICATION, SELECTION AND SCALING OF INDICATORS

A fundamental principle underlying the *Drumcondra English Profiles* is that each indicator set adequately represents the objectives of the revised English curriculum for the relevant class level. One approach to establishing a direct link between the *Profiles* and the curriculum would have been to develop a complete checklist of indicators for each aspect of English (oral language, reading, and writing) at each class level. However, this would have resulted in very large, and probably incomplete, sets of indicators; it was considered preferable to select sets of indicators for each area of English at each class level that would represent the most important curriculum content.

Indicators of achievement in oral language, reading and writing for each class level were identified by a panel of three teachers who were experienced in the teaching of English, and had expertise in the areas of curriculum development and assessment. Explanatory footnotes were written for any indicators that the panel felt teachers might not be familiar with.

It was necessary to screen and organise the identified indicators in the process of building scales. While belonging to one aspect of English, the selected indicators were heterogeneous, and could not be assumed to fit a unidimensional scale.[1] Any attempt to fit them to such a scale would result in eliminating those that did not conform with the majority, thereby weakening the representativeness of the indicator set.

The scale would require some unifying attribute that lent itself to ordinal treatment. Just as objects of totally different kinds can be ordered in terms of their weight or value (provided that either is relevant to the use of the resulting order), so the indicators could be ranked in order of

difficulty of achieving them. While one measure of the relative difficulty of indicators would be the proportions of pupils achieving them, the indicators are criterion-referenced, and require interpretation by the teachers who make the assessments, and whose experiences of pupil achievement differ.

It was therefore appropriate that in May 1996, a representative sample of teachers (15 at each class level) should be asked to arrange the indicators in each set in order of difficulty. Some indicators were found unsuitable for use in a scale in that their relative difficulty was not uniformly recognised by different teachers, and were therefore dropped. Similarly, some teachers who might readily assess pupils using a developed scale were found to be less perceptive than their colleagues in recognising in the abstract the relative difficulty of indicators. Such teachers were identified and more mutually consistent teachers allowed to form the final set.

The particular statistic that was used to assess the agreement of teacher/judges with one another was Kendall's *Coefficient of Concordance – W* (Kendall, 1952). A computer programme was developed to allow the contribution of individual teachers and indicators to the level of *W* to be assessed, and to permit stepwise deletion of a teacher or an indicator until the required level of W was attained.

Application of the programme involved evaluating the impact on *W* of deleting specific indicators and teachers until a satisfactory level of *W* was achieved, and the resulting set of indicators was deemed to be representative of the curriculum in terms of the content of the indicators, and the order in which they appeared.

Table 6-1 indicates the *W* value for each of the final indicator sets in oral language, reading and writing, the Chi-square test of significance, and the degrees of freedom for each set. As indicated in the Table, the final indicator sets all achieved levels of *W* that were statistically significant beyond the 1% level.

After the indicators in each set had been ordered in the manner indicated, it was decided to scale the sets so that a pupil's scores in the different areas of English might be compared with each other, and a pupil's achievement in a particular area of English compared with that of another pupil in the same area. Scale scores were generated by equating the *Profile* ratings assigned to a sample of 150 pupils at each class level by their teachers with the pupils' scores on standardised tests of reading achievement appropriate to their class levels.[2] The particular tests that were used were the Letters and Words subtest of the *Kaufman Survey of Early Academic and Language Skills* (Kaufman, 1993) in junior infants, the *Infant Reading Test* (Brimer & Raban, 1979) in senior infants, and the *Drumcondra Primary Reading Test* (Educational Research Centre, 1994, 1997) in first to sixth classes inclusive.

The distributions of profile ratings that resulted were converted to C-scale scores[3] to facilitate interpretation of the ratings. An examination of the C-score distributions for each class level indicated that the greater discrimination in scale scores occurred amongst the highest ranking indicators, while the tails were relatively undifferentiated. It may be that indicators at the tail can co-occur, despite the fact that they could be ranked successfully by teachers. These surplus indicators may be useful to teachers in planning for instruction, even if they are not among the indicators that are considered in rating individual pupils.

Table 6-1 *W* **Values and Chi-Squares for Final Indicator Sets for Oral Language, Reading and Writing**

Area of English	Class Level	*W* Value	Chi-Square*	Degrees of Freedom
Oral Language	Junior Infants	0.73	73.42	10
	Senior Infants	0.72	72.31	9
	First Class	0.66	42.00	8
	Second Class	0.71	39.89	8
	Third Class	0.61	29.95	7
	Fourth Class	0.72	45.22	7
	Fifth Class	0.69	43.30	8
	Sixth Class	0.66	37.13	8
Reading	Junior Infants	0.72	43.48	9
	Senior Infants	0.71	70.50	9
	First Class	0.66	53.70	9
	Second Class	0.73	40.84	8
	Third Class	0.70	56.68	9
	Fourth Class	0.72	45.20	9
	Fifth Class	0.74	66.70	9
	Sixth Class	0.75	42.02	8
Writing	Junior Infants	0.74	60.15	9
	Senior Infants	0.79	77.92	9
	First Class	0.73	71.81	9
	Second Class	0.69	43.30	9
	Third Class	0.65	46.58	9
	Fourth Class	0.78	56.29	9
	Fifth Class	0.66	53.63	9
	Sixth Class	0.72	52.12	8

*$p < .01$ for each Chi-Square value

RELIABILITY, GENERALIZABILITY AND STANDARD ERROR OF MEASUREMENT

A number of factors suggest that conventional methods of estimating reliability are not directly applicable to the *English Profiles.* For example, internal consistency, which would relate the performance of pupils on each indicator to every other indicator, is biased by the technique of constructing indicator sets so that it is likely that teachers will judge that indicators below the highest achieved will have been satisfied; by definition, none of the above can be.

Likewise, only an indirect method of test-retest reliability can be applied. A teacher's assessment (rating) of a pupil is likely to be influenced on a second occasion by the first assessment if the interval is short enough, and if it is longer, there may well be a significant change in the pupil's performance. Moreover, it is not usually possible to obtain independent assessments from more than one teacher for the same pupils.

Given these difficulties, it was decided to first examine sources of error of measurement without presupposing the existence of a true score for each pupil, and therefore not to invoke directly the concept of reliability as the proportion of score variance which is true variance.

The main sources of variance of assessments (ratings) for an indicator set are:

1. Differences between pupils in their achievement
2. Differences between teachers in their assessment of achievement
3. Fluctuations of displayed pupil achievment over time
4. Fluctuations of each teacher's judgement of achievement.

Differences between pupils in their achievement should be maximised by restricting the effects of other sources of variance and by increasing the relevance of assessments. Differences between teachers in their assessment of achievement should be reduced by deleting indicators over which teachers are likely to disagree, and by ensuring that teachers share a common understanding of the operational implications of each indicator and its relationship to other indicators in the set. Fluctuation in displayed pupil achievement, although a general feature of human learning, is a distracting source of variance in assessments and must be reduced. In the context of the *English Profiles*, it is controlled by crediting a pupil with having achieved an indicator if the relevant behaviour or process has been displayed more than once. Fluctuations in teachers' judgements should be controlled as far as possible by the means suggested for reducing differences between teachers' assessments.

When all possible measures have been taken to maximise differences between pupils, the effect of other sources of variance can be measured by a statistical method — analysis of variance. If a number of classes of pupils are rated on the same indicator set by their respective teachers, so that, for each pupil, performance on each indicator has been determined, a two-way ANOVA can be applied, in which variation between classes and between indicators can be quantified. This approach, which derives from generalizability theory, also allows for the examination of variance arising from the interaction of the indicators and the classes. For example, more able classes would be expected to satisfy more difficult indicators more often.

Of the total variance, the variance within class/indicator cells represents the difference between pupils, within their own classes, in satisfying each indicator. The variance between classes refers to the amount of difference between classes in overall achievement on the indicators. As such, it incorporates both real differences in achievement and differences among teachers in their assessment of achievement. The variance between indicators is a measure of their level of difficulty. The interaction between classes and indicators displays a combination of variation in standards of teachers' judgements and variation arising from the inevitable tendency of classes of different average ability to differ in constant manner in their achievement of indicators of different levels of difficulty.

The separation of these sources of variation was achieved by using a criterion measure — pupils' scores on a standardised test of reading achievement — as a co-variate. An analysis of co-variance drew from the same data but added a variable which was an independent measure of achievement. By removing the effect of achievement differences from the assessment variance, what remains can be regarded as error arising from differences among teachers in making assessments and their inconsistency in assessing different pupils.

The questions to be answered in defending the generalizability of an indicator set necessarily related to the sources of variance:

1.   What error is incurred in the assessment of the ceiling level of achievement within a class by a pupil's own teacher?

The analysis of co-variance allows the variance of assessments within classes to be determined after the effect of the co-variate has been removed. So long as the co-variate is an acceptable criterion measure, the residual variance within classes can be regarded as error. An upper limit of the Standard Error of Measurement can be considered as the standard error of the estimate of assessments within classes. The correlation coefficient employed in estimating the Standard Error of Measurement is that within classes.

2.   What error is incurred in the assessment of a pupil's ceiling level amongst pupils assessed by different teachers?

The total residual variance incorporates the variance between classes and that within classes. The Standard Error of Measurement is derived in the same way as that within classes but using the variance and the correlation for the total scores. Inevitably, the error is larger than within classes.

3.   What error is incurred in the assessment of a pupil's achievement of a single indicator?

Unlike analysis of co-variance, which considers only the ceiling assessments in relation to reading scores, the analysis of variance allows the variance between classes and between indicators to be assessed. By applying the total correlation derived from the analysis of covariance to the total variance of indicators and classes, a Standard Error of Measurement can be obtained. This Standard Error applies to each indicator individually, reflecting the criterion-referenced nature of the assessment process whereby the ranked indicators are considered individually from the top down until one indicator is satisfied which then becomes the ceiling score (i.e., the highest achieved indicator).

Analysis of the Reading Indicator Set for Third Class

The example below illustrates the application of analysis of variance and analysis of covarinace to data from an indicator set. Seven third classes, each of 25 pupils, were assessed on the English reading indicators by their teachers. The *Drumcondra Primary Reading Test* (DPRT) (Educational Research Centre, 1994) was also administered to all pupils. Analyses of variance and co-variance were carried out. The outcomes are summarised in Tables 6-2 to 6-5.

Table 6-2   Analysis of Variance for Reading Indicators — Third Class

Source of Variance	*df*	SS	MS	*F*	*p*
Total	1749	413.72	0.23		
Within Classes	1680	204.48	0.12		
Between Classes	6	21.64	3.6	29.64	<.01
Between Indicators	9	159.68	17.74	145.72	<.01
Interaction term*	54	27.97	0.52	4.26	<.01

*Interaction of classes and indicators

Table 6-3   Analysis of Covariance for Reading Indicators − Third Class

Source of Variance	*df*	SSr	SSa	SSra	SSa.r	MSa.r	*F*	*p*
Between Classes (Among Means)	6	6475	207	349	206	34.33		
Within Classes	167	30356	898	3411	516	3.09	0.746	<.01
Total	174	36831	1106	3760	722	4.15		

SSr = Sums of Squares for reading achievement scores
SSa = Sums of Squares for profile ratings (indicators)
SSra = Sums of Squares of interaction of reading achievement by profile ratings
SSa.r = Sums of Squares of profile ratings, adjusted for differences in reading achievement
MSa.r = Mean Squares of adjusted profile ratings

Table 6-4   Correlations of Reading Achievement Test Scores with Profile Ratings in Reading − Third Class

	R
Between Classes	0.30
Within Classes	0.65
Total	0.59

Table 6-5   Standard Errors of Measurement for Reading Indicators − Third Class

	SE
Scores within Classes	1.73
Total Scores	2.04
Individual Indicator Values	0.39

The results of this analysis lead to the following conclusions:

Variances between indicators and between classes are statistically significant beyond the 1% level and so is their interaction. Even when the variation between classes is controlled by partialling out the effect of the reading test scores, the variance among them is statistically significant. This leads to the conclusion that the teachers differed in their assessments even when they were assessing pupils having the same level of achievement. It suggests that more should be done to alert teachers to the operational implications of the indicators in making assessments.

Standard Errors of Measurement arising from the analysis of covariance are high. Even those within classes, where the difference between teachers does not apply, and the correlation between profile ratings and test scores is higher, would lead to error limits of +/- 3.5 assessment levels (1.73 x 2) at the 5% level of confidence. These standard errors assume a continuous scale of aggregated measures for the indicator set, whereas the ceiling level being assessed relates to each indicator individually, where the value is 1 or 0. The crucial question, therefore, concerns the limits of error applicable to these values, assuming a dichotomous rather than a continuous scale. The error limits of +/- 0.78 (0.39 x 2) are just tolerable.

The appropriate standard error to adopt is that related to individual indicators and the consequent error limits mark the extent to which boundaries between adjacent indicator levels are infringed. A given indicator level may be considered as having a range from 0.5 below to 0.5 above. Adopting a 5% level of confidence would mean, in the case of the example, that the range of dependable assessment extends into the indicator levels immediately above and below the assessed ceiling level.

This set of analyses, and those based on the other indicator sets, used samples drawn from the school population at each class level between the first and sixth classes inclusive. The samples were drawn deliberately to encompass the full range of achievement at each class level. In particular, they included schools in disadvantaged areas so that some of the lowest achieving pupils in the population could be represented. The range of assessments (profile ratings) was in practice from the highest to the lowest level, although relatively few students were assessed as failing to satisfy the lowest level.

Analysis of Remaining Indicator Sets for English

A similar set of analyses was conducted on the three indicator sets for English (i.e., oral language, reading and writing) corresponding to each class level. The outcomes of the ANOVAs are remarkably similar across all class levels. In all cases, the between-classes and between-indicators F values are significant at the 1% level and beyond, while the interactions between classes and indicators are significant except in the cases of oral

language and reading in first class and reading in second class. Again, the significant interactions may be due to the effects of different achievement levels within classes (where teachers of higher-achieving classes would be more likely to provide higher profile ratings), and inconsistencies among teachers in their judgements.

The results of the ANCOVAs indicate that, even when differences in achievement have been removed using an appropriate co-variate (the standardised test of reading achievement), the proportion of variance attributable to within-class differences is significant at the 1% level and beyond for each indicator set. These results point to the need to ensure that teachers become more familiar with the content of indicator sets, and with the process of assessment using the sets.

The between-class correlations between reading achievement and profile ratings range from .76 (first class, oral language) to 0.91 (fourth class, reading) (See Table 6-6). The differences in these correlations from class to class and from set to set may be attributable to differences in the ways in which teachers interpret the indicator sets. The within-class correlations, which were computed after adjusting for differences in reading achievement within classes, range from .51 (writing, third class) to .79 (first class, reading) except in fourth class, where the correlation coefficients were smaller. Finally, total correlations between reading achievement and profile ratings range from .38 (second class, oral language) to .73 (fourth class, oral language and writing).

Standard Errors of Measurement arising from the ANCOVAs for profile ratings within classes are uniformly high (see Table 6-7) and lead to relatively wide confidence intervals around particular profile ratings. However, these error estimates are based on the assumption that profile ratings constitute a continuous scale of aggregated measures for each indicator set. Given that this is not the case, the more appropriate estimate of error to consider is one which arises for an individual indicator. Since the Standard Errors of Measurement for individual indicators does not exceed 0.5 in any instance, the corresponding 5% confidence intervals do not extend beyond one indicator level. Hence, *when used for criterion-referenced purposes, profile ratings can be regarded as being reliable.*

Table 6-6   **Correlations of Reading Test Scores with Profile Ratings — First to Sixth Classes (Inclusive)**

Class Level	Between Classes	Within Classes	Total
First Class			
Oral Language	0.76*	0.78	0.68
Reading	0.60	0.84	0.75
Writing	0.79	0.79	0.72
Second Class			
Oral Language	0.90	0.79	0.85
Reading	0.96	0.82	0.90
Writing	0.94	0.81	0.88
Third Class			
Oral Language	0.16	0.69	0.59
Reading	0.30	0.65	0.59
Writing	0.51	0.51	0.50
Fourth Class			
Oral Language	0.81	0.08**	0.44
Reading	0.74	0.05	0.40
Writing	0.91	0.13	0.50
Fifth Class			
Oral Language	0.32	0.77	0.75
Reading	0.24	0.80	0.73
Writing	0.17	0.75	0.67
Sixth Class			
Oral Language	0.31	0.89	0.85
Reading	0.18	0.90	0.86
Writing	0.32	0.90	0.87

*N=175 for each correlation.

**The within classes correlations at fourth-class level differed substantially from those at other class levels. The correlations at this class level should be regarded as outliers, and therefore disregarded.

Table 6-7 **Standard Errors of Measurement for Oral Language, Reading and Writing Indicators — First to Sixth Classes (Inclusive)**

Class Level	Scores Within Classes	Total Scores	Individual Indicator Values
First Class			
Oral Language	1.49	1.81	0.32
Reading	1.49	1.89	0.24
Writing	1.56	1.84	0.32
Second Class			
Oral Language	1.52	1.90	0.26
Reading	1.44	1.65	0.22
Writing	1.59	1.76	0.24
Third Class			
Oral Language	1.24	1.51	0.39
Reading	1.73	2.04	0.39
Writing	3.50	3.59	0.37
Fourth Class			
Oral Language	0.64	1.30	0.42
Reading	0.83	1.89	0.38
Writing	0.70	1.51	0.38
Fifth Class			
Oral Language	1.43	1.49	0.33
Reading	1.44	1.70	0.34
Writing	1.37	1.65	0.36
Sixth Class			
Oral Language	1.54	1.76	0.26
Reading	1.45	1.69	0.26
Writing	1.30	1.51	0.25

VALIDITY OF THE INDICATOR SETS

According to Messick (1989), validity is 'an integrated evaluative judgement of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the *adequacy* and *appropriateness* of *inferences* and *actions* based on test scores or other models of assessment' (p. 13). In this view, validity is a unitary concept for which various sources of evidence are considered. According to Messick, performance assessments (of which curriculum profiles are a variant) 'must be evaluated by the same validity criteria, both evidential and consequential, as are other assessments' (p. 13). In contrast, Linn, Baker and Dunbar (1991) have proposed specialised validity criteria for performance assessments, including authenticity, content complexity, and generalizability. Moss (1994) has proposed that performance-based assessments be validated using 'critical, evidence-based review and dialogue' (p. 10) that does not include evidence of reliability (defined as consistency among independent measures intended as being interchangeable). The approach taken to validating the *Drumcondra English Profiles* leans heavily on framework proposed by Messick, while, at the same time, acknowledging that issues such as authenticity are also important. First, evidence in support of the content validity and predictive validity of the *Profiles* is provided. Then, preliminary evidence of the consequences of using the *Profiles* is offered.

Content Validity

The content validity of the *Profiles* can be evaluated by examining how well the content of the indicators and the order in which they are presented reflect the revised English curriculum. As indicated in an earlier section of this chapter, the identification of indicators was conducted with reference to draft versions of the revised English curriculum. Moreover, a representative sample of teachers (15 at each class level) contributed to the selection and ordering of the indicators. To the extent that the content of the *English Profiles* is regarded by teachers as being at an appropriate level of difficulty, and representative of the content of the revised English curriculum, it is reasonable to infer that profile scores provide an overall measure of pupils' achievement on the curriculum.

Predictive Validity

To estimate the correlations between profile ratings of pupils at different times of the school year, ratings were obtained for samples of pupils at the beginning of the school year, using the indicator sets for the pupils' class levels in the previous school year, and at the end of the school year, using the indicator sets corresponding to pupils' current class levels.[4]

The correlations over all pupils, irrespective of the class level to which they belong, are affected by the fact that the teachers involved in assessing pupils were unaware of the standards of assessment being used by teachers of other classes. In consequence, the correlations over all pupils are likely to underestimate the correlations in the population. The best estimate would be derived from the correlations within classes. However, since the numbers in each class differ, unlike those in the earlier analyses of covariance, it was necessary to use a different device.

Each class was treated as an independent sample of the population, and the correlation derived from it as an estimate of the population parameter. These correlations were then pooled by employing weighted averages. The results are presented in Table 6-8 below. Overall correlations are given in brackets for comparison.

Table 6-8   Correlations of Beginning and End-of-Year Profile Ratings, by Class Level

Class Level	N	Oral Language	Reading	Writing
Senior Infants	218	0.67 (0.26)	0.66 (0.24)	0.58 (0.19)
First	228	0.71 (0.67)	0.80 (0.73)	0.76 (0.64)
Second	145	0.71 (0.58)	0.70 (0.74)	0.71 (0.71)
Third	244	0.76 (0.99)	0.78 (0.98)	0.54 (0.62)
Fourth	190	0.73 (0.83)	0.75 (0.83)	0.75 (0.83)
Fifth	210	0.73 (0.70)	0.77 (0.68)	0.74 (0.75)
Sixth	200	0.70 (0.50)	0.78 (0.71)	0.76 (0.69)

While these correlations have the appearance of test-retest reliabilities, they are quite different. The interval apart is too long, allowing a real and differential change in performance to have occurred. The ratings are made on different indicator sets and on curricula for successive years. Hence, they are more akin to predictive validities and to this extent, the levels of coefficient can be regarded as highly satisfactory in most cases. This is particularly so when the less easily defined curriculum areas of oral language and writing are considered.

Criterion-Related Validity

Criterion-related validity is usually established by comparing assessment scores with one or more external variables (called criteria) that are considered to provide an alternative measure of the characteristic or behaviour of interest. Evaluation of criterion-related validity typically yields a numerical value in the form of a correlation or validity coefficient.

Correlations between end-of-year profile ratings and the scores achieved by pupils on the *Drumcondra Primary Reading Test* (Educational Research Centre, 1994, 1997) were computed. Again, estimates of population correlations were generated by using pooled within-class correlations. The resulting correlations, which in all cases were significant at the 0.01 level, range from 0.43 (oral language, third class) to 0.82 (reading, first class) (see Table 6-9). These correlations provide some evidence of the criterion-related validity of the *Profiles*.

Additional evidence of criterion-related validity was obtained in a study of the validity of the *Writing Profile*.[5] In that study, the writing samples completed by 30 pupils were analysed for structure, use of conventions, and overall quality. In addition, the pupils' teachers rated their writing using the *English Profiles*. Correlations between the pupils' writing and their profile ratings ranged from 0.42 (structure) to 0.71 (quality).

Table 6-9   **Correlations of End-of-Year Profile Ratings with Reading Achievement Scores**

Class Level	N	Oral Language	Reading	Writing
First	228	0.72	0.82	0.79
Second	145	0.53	0.57	0.64
Third	244	0.43	0.44	0.48
Fourth	190	0.68	0.66	0.67
Fifth	210	0.67	0.73	0.66
Sixth	200	0.69	0.67	0.67

Consequential Validity

Recent conceptualisations of validity include consequential validity — the social consequences of assessment. Some preliminary evidence is available that indicates the positive effects of the *Drumcondra English Profiles* on teaching and learning. During the 1996-97 school year, a study of the implementation of the *Profiles* was conducted in 64 classrooms in a representative sample of schools.[6] The teachers were interviewed during the implementation study, and were asked to complete an 'exit' questionnaire near its completion. Over 90% of teachers indicated that they found the *Profiles* to be very useful or useful for yearly and term planning. The corresponding percentages for daily and monthly planning were 60 and 52 respectively, indicating that teachers found the *Profiles* to be more useful for long-term (yearly and term) than for short-term planning. Many teachers also found the *Profiles* to be very useful or useful for a range of purposes related to classroom teaching. These included clarifying teaching and learning goals (93%), delivering a sequenced programme of work (90%), providing feedback to children on their own work (68%) and day-to-day teaching (75%). Finally, a strong majority of teachers found the *Profiles* to be very useful or useful for a range of purposes relating to recording and reporting assessment results, including maintaining their own assessment records, recording progress on the school record card, communicating progress orally to parents, and communicating progress to parents on a written report card. These results suggest that the *Profiles* can have a positive impact on teaching and learning in classrooms and in schools.

SUMMARY

The indicators comprising the *Drumcondra English Profiles* can be regarded as an adequate representation of the revised English curriculum for primary schools. The indicators in each set were carefully selected to effect a match between the *Profiles* and the revised curriculum. Moreover, the ordering of indicators within sets reflects the relative difficulty of achieving them by pupils.

Conventional methods of estimating reliability were deemed not to be directly applicable to estimating the reliability of the *Profiles*. The approach taken was to examine sources of error without presupposing the existence of a true score for each pupil. Drawing on generalizability theory, a series of analyses of covariance (in which reading achievement was entered as a covariate) was run. However, even when variation between classes (teachers) was controlled by partialling out the effect of pupil achievement differences, such variation was significant, as was that within classes. Although the standard errors associated with between- and within-class correlations were found to be unacceptably

large, those associated with individual indicators were deemed to be acceptable. It was concluded that, when the *Profiles* are used for criterion-referenced purposes (i.e., to assess a pupil's achievement of individual indicators in their own class), the Standard Error of Measurement ranges from 0.22 to 0.39 indicator levels. This implies that the confidence interval at the 5% level around the highest indicator achieved by a pupil extends into the intervals containing the indicators immediately above and just below it.

In addition to evidence of content validity, evidence of the predictive validity, criterion-related validity and consequential validity were provided for the *Profiles*, indicating that the *Profiles* can be regarded as a valid measure of pupil achievement of the curriculum.

---

[1] The application of Item Response Theory to the development of a scale of achievement assumes that the underlying construct (represented by the items) is unidimensional. This assumption did not appear to hold in the case of the *English Profiles* where indicators measuring several different processes may be included in a given set (for example, composition and spelling in Writing).

[2] These data were collected in conjunction with the *English Profiles Implementation Study* which was conducted in the 1996-97 school year (see Shiel and Murphy, 1999).

[3] See Guilford and Fruchter (1978).

[4] These measures were obtained at the beginning and end of the Implementation Study.

[5] See Murphy and Shiel (1996).

[6] See Shiel and Murphy (1999).

APPENDIX A

TABLES OF NORMS

Tables A-1 to A-8 provide norms for the *Oral Language, Reading* and *Writing Profiles* for junior infants to sixth class respectively. Procedures for using these tables of norms and for interpreting raw profile scores and scale scores may be found in Chapter 2.

TABLE A-1   NORMS FOR JUNIOR INFANTS

ORAL LANGUAGE		READING		WRITING	
Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score	Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score	Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score
11	10	10	10	10	9
10	7	9	9	9	8
9	6	8	7	8	8
8	5	7	6	7	6
7	4	6	4	6	5
6	4	5	4	5	4
5	3	4	3	4	4
4	3	3	3	3	3
3	2	2	2	2	2
2	1	1	2	1	2
1	1				

TABLE A-2   NORMS FOR SENIOR INFANTS

ORAL LANGUAGE		READING		WRITING	
Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score	Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score	Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score
10	9	10	9	10	9
9	8	9	8	9	8
8	6	8	6	8	8
7	6	7	5	7	6
6	5	6	4	6	5
5	4	5	4	5	4
4	4	4	4	4	4
3	3	3	3	3	3
2	3	2	3	2	2
1	2	1	2	1	2

TABLE A-3   NORMS FOR FIRST CLASS

ORAL LANGUAGE		READING		WRITING	
Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score	Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score	Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score
9	10	10	10	10	10
8	10	9	10	9	9
7	9	8	9	8	8
6	8	7	9	7	8
5	7	6	8	6	7
4	7	5	7	5	7
3	6	4	7	4	6
2	5	3	6	3	5
1	4	2	5	2	4
		1	4	1	3

TABLE A-4   NORMS FOR SECOND CLASS

ORAL LANGUAGE		READING		WRITING	
Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score	Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score	Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score
9	10	9	10	10	10
8	10	8	9	9	10
7	9	7	8	8	9
6	7	6	8	7	8
5	7	5	7	6	7
4	6	4	6	5	6
3	5	3	5	4	6
2	4	2	4	3	5
1	3	1	3	2	4
				1	3

TABLE A-5   NORMS FOR THIRD CLASS

ORAL LANGUAGE		READING		WRITING	
Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score	Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score	Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score
8	10	10	10	10	10
7	9	9	9	9	9
6	8	8	9	8	8
5	7	7	7	7	7
4	6	6	7	6	7
3	5	5	6	5	6
2	4	4	5	4	5
1	3	3	5	3	4
		2	4	2	4
		1	3	1	2

TABLE A-6   NORMS FOR FOURTH CLASS

ORAL LANGUAGE		READING		WRITING	
Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score	Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score	Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score
8	10	10	10	10	10
7	8	9	8	9	8
6	8	8	8	8	8
5	7	7	7	7	7
4	6	6	7	6	7
3	5	5	6	5	6
2	5	4	5	4	5
1	3	3	4	3	4
		2	4	2	3
		1	3	1	2

TABLE A-7   NORMS FOR FIFTH CLASS

ORAL LANGUAGE		READING		WRITING	
Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score	Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score	Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score
9	10	10	10	10	10
8	8	9	8	9	8
7	7	8	7	8	7
6	6	7	7	7	6
5	5	6	6	6	5
4	4	5	5	5	4
3	4	4	4	4	4
2	3	3	4	3	3
1	3	2	3	2	3
		1	3	1	2

TABLE A-8   NORMS FOR SIXTH CLASS

ORAL LANGUAGE		READING		WRITING	
Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score	Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score	Highest Indicator Achieved	Scale Score
9	10	9	10	9	10
8	8	8	9	8	9
7	8	7	8	7	8
6	7	6	8	6	7
5	7	5	7	5	6
4	6	4	6	4	5
3	5	3	5	3	4
2	4	2	4	2	3
1	2	1	3	1	2

APPENDIX B

CLASS PROFILE RATING FORM

The Class Profile Rating Form may be used to record the achievements of pupils in a class on the *English Profiles*. Guidelines for completing the Class Profile Rating Form are given in Chapter 2 (see pages 16-17).

Drumcondra English Profiles – Class Profile Rating Form

School:		Year:					Class level:					Teacher:			
	Pupil Names	**Oral Language**					**Reading**					**Writing**			
		Highest indicator achieved **Raw Score**	**Scale Score**	Lower indicators not yet achieved			Highest indicator achieved **Raw Score**	**Scale Score**	Lower indicators not yet achieved			Highest indicator achieved **Raw Score**	**Scale Score**	Lower indicators not yet achieved	
1.															
2.															
3.															
4.															
5.															
6.															
7.															
8.															
9.															
10.															
11.															
12.															
13.															
14.															
15.															

Pupil Names	Oral Language			Reading			Writing		
	Highest indicator achieved **Raw Score**	**Scale Score**	Lower indicators not yet achieved	Highest indicator achieved **Raw Score**	**Scale Score**	Lower indicators not yet achieved	Highest indicator achieved **Raw Score**	**Scale Score**	Lower indicators not yet achieved
16.									
17.									
18.									
19.									
20.									
21.									
22.									
23.									
24.									
25.									
26.									
27.									
28.									
29.									
30.									
31.									
32.									
33.									

APPENDIX C

INDIVIDUAL PROFILE RECORD CARD

The Individual Profile Record Card may be used by teachers wishing to develop a more detailed record of their pupils' development in English than can be provided by the Class Profile Rating Form (see Appendix B). Guidelines for completing the Individual Profile Record Card are given in Chapter 2 (pages 16-17).

Individual Profile Record Card – English

Name:	Date of birth:
School:	Home address:

Class:	Year:	Teacher:
Oral Language	**Reading**	**Writing**
Informal classroom language	*Interest in reading*	*Writing process*
Oral presentations	*Analysis of oral reading errors*	*Narrative and informational writing*
Meaning vocabulary	*Reading comprehension*	*Spelling*

	Standardised tests			*Dictionary skills*
	Test name and date administered	**Standard Score**	**Reading Age**	
				Handwriting

Profile rating – Oral Language			*Profile rating – Reading*			*Profile rating - Writing*		
Raw Profile Score	**Scale Score**	**Other indicators not achieved**	**Raw Profile Score**	**Scale Score**	**Other indicators not achieved**	**Raw Profile Score**	**Scale Score**	**Other indicators not achieved**

Comments:

78

APPENDIX D

ASSESSING ORAL LANGUAGE

This appendix provides suggestions for assessing oral language in classrooms. The assessment activities described here are intended to be used in conjunction with the *Drumcondra English Profiles*. First, general issues related to the assessment of oral language are examined. Then, procedures for recording assessment outcomes are suggested. Finally, strategies for assessing specific aspects of oral language are proposed. It should be noted that some of the strategies suggested here might also be used in assessing aspects of reading and writing, while several of the strategies proposed in Appendices E (reading) and F (writing) may also be relevant to the assessment of oral language.

In assessing proficiency in oral language, the emphasis will be on ways in which language is processed (understood) and used (spoken). Nevertheless, it is important to be alert to the possibility that, for some children, hearing problems may affect how well they process what has been said, while, for others, speech difficulties may impede effective communication. Where observation of a pupil suggests that the pupil may have hearing or speech difficulties, the pupil's parents/guardians should be informed and an appropriate assessment should be arranged.

GENERAL ISSUES

Growth and development in oral language is often less obvious than in reading or writing. According to one author, 'Though not impossible, it is a remarkably slow, difficult, painstaking and cumbersome process to assess a child's oral language development, and to determine the level of competence reached'.[1] This, perhaps, reflects the recursive (non-linear) nature of growth in oral language after the initial stage of acquisition. Pupils may return repeatedly to an aspect or stage of competence that had been achieved earlier, to experiment with language or to reinforce their skills.

Another difficulty associated with assessing oral language is that a range of factors can affect performance on a particular occasion. These include, but are not limited to:

- The type of task that has been set to stimulate the use of talk;

- The nature of the audience and the listener (e.g., participating in a group situation, conferencing with the teacher on a one-to-one basis, or reporting to the class as a member of a group);
- The pupil's interest in and ownership of the task;
- The pupil's previous experience in using speaking and listening during this type of task;
- Whether or not English is the pupil's first language;
- The pupil's gender and that of the other group member(s);
- The pupil's personality;
- The composition of the group in which the pupil works.

When an oral language activity is being used for assessment purposes, the teacher should decide which aspects of oral language to assess. The *Drumcondra English Profiles* point to elements of oral language that can be assessed at each class level. In any oral language activity that is also used for assessment purposes, the teacher should decide in advance which particular indicators to assess and provide pupils with opportunities to demonstrate their achievement of those indicators. In assessing the competencies represented by a particular indicator, consideration should be given to observing a pupil's performance on several occasions in different contexts in which the competencies can be achieved.

In the case of oral language in particular, it is important for the teacher to maintain records of what each pupil has accomplished, so that relevant information is available at the end of the school year when the *Profiles* are being applied. Short anecdotal notes or checklists are appropriate recording devices and should be retained. Children's self-assessments of their oral language proficiency can also be recorded and retained.

RECORDING ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

Three assessment records are discussed in this section – anecdotal notes, checklists, and records of pupils' self-assessments.

Anecdotal notes are short notes made by the teacher about the pupil's achievement. In using anecdotal records to record information about a pupil's competence in oral language, it is recommended that just three or four observations on each pupil be recorded each month. As indicated above, it is useful to set tasks that will allow for the observation of relevant performances such as describing an object, telling the news, recalling a story, presenting a report on a topic or participating in a debate. The following guidelines[2] for recording anecdotal notes may be useful:

- Observe and document specific dimensions of a pupil's engagement in oral language;

- Record comments that individual pupils make about their listening, speaking and thinking processes;
- Note any target indicators that have been achieved;
- Note concerns and issues you want to address with the pupil in the future;
- Maintain objective records that can be shared with other teachers or with parents.

An example of a teacher's anecdotal notes on one classroom activity, listening to stories, is given in Figure D-1. In this example, the teacher of a junior infants class records her observations during storytime on three different occasions. In addition to writing short comments that summarised her observation, she recorded the numbers corresponding to those indicators for which some evidence of achievement had been demonstrated. For example, she noted that Anne had observed the patterned structure of Goldilocks, and noted that this provided some evidence of achieving the content implied by Indicator 7 ('Identifies repetition in stories and poems'). Similarly, David was judged to have shown some evidence of achieving Indicator 6 (Speaks audibly, clearly and with confidence on most occasions) when he took the part of narrator in a play about Marvin, the Magic Mouse. Of course, additional evidence would be required before the teacher could conclude that these indicators had been achieved without help on more than one occasion (the operational definition for achieving an indicator).

Figure D-1   Teacher's Anecdotal Notes on Newstelling

Date	Pupil	*Observation*	*Profile Indicator*
21/3	Mark	*Did not appear to pay attention when Goldilocks was being read to the class.*	--
21/3	Anne	*Anne observed that each part of Goldilocks follows the same pattern.*	7
21/3	David	*Absent*	--
25/3	Anne	*Told the class about Marvin, the Magic Mouse, a story that had been read to the class.*	6
25/3	Mark	*Could not remember where Marvin lived.*	--
25/3	David	*Asked about the meaning of 'disgraced'.*	9
29/3	Mark	*Answered two questions about Marvin.*	--
28/3	Anne	*Took part in a play about Martin; showed how Marvin must have felt when he was chased.*	8
28/3	David	*Acted as narrator in the play.*	6

Checklists are also useful for recording pupils' achievements in oral language. Teachers can develop their own checklists, or use those developed by others. Whichever type of checklist is used, it is important to ensure that there is a link between the items on the checklist and the curriculum in oral language. Figure D-2 provides a checklist for assessing the presentation of oral reports that might be useful to teachers of pupils in the fourth, fifth or sixth classes. This checklist allows teachers to give partial credit to pupils who demonstrate some achievement of the target processes. As with Anecdotal Notes, it is possible to signal achievement of relevant indicators on the *Profiles* by appending the indicator numbers to the final column in the checklist, and perhaps circling those indicators that have been achieved. On some occasions, an indicator will appear on a checklist that cannot be found at the corresponding class level on the *Profiles*. This is because the *Profiles* represent a sample of indicators relevant to the curriculum, whereas a checklist designed to assist teachers in assessing a specific aspect of oral language is, by its nature, more comprehensive.

Figure D-2   Checklist for Assessing Presentation of Oral Reports

Name: _____   Class: _____   Topic of Report: _____

Process	First Observation* Date:	Second Observation* Date:	Profile Indicator
Pupil appears interested in topic			
Is knowledgeable about topic			
States main points clearly			
Uses examples or reasons to make point clear			
Summarises main points at end of talk			
Selects words that express ideas clearly			
Keeps attention of audience during talk			
Uses appropriate pictures, objects or diagrams			
Appears to be at ease			
Uses appropriate non-verbal signals and gestures			

*Scoring Key: ++ Process clearly demonstrated
                         + Some evidence of process being demonstrated
                         - Process not demonstrated by the pupil

Pupils' self-assessments also provide useful information about progress in oral language and in other aspects of English. Pupils can rate their own performance on an oral language task, or, in the case of pupils in the senior classes, the performance of their peers. Where possible, pupils should be involved in selecting the criteria on which they will assess themselves. Figure D-3 shows a form for evaluating a speech that can be used by pupils in the senior classes to assess themselves.

Figure D-3   Speech Evaluation Form for Self- or Peer-Assessment

---

Name:_____ **Date:** _____

Topic: _____

Content

Rating*

1. Began in an interesting and attention-getting manner.   _____

2. Stayed with the topic throughout.   _____

3. Supported opinion with at least three facts and/or examples.   _____

4. Presented facts and/or examples in logical order.   _____

5. Had a strong ending.   _____

         Total number of **Content Points** (possible = 25)   _____

Delivery

1. Stood straight and tall.   _____

2. Maintained good eye contact with the audience.   _____

3. Spoke in a voice that was clear, and could be easily heard and understood.   _____

4. Varied expression to make the speech interesting.   _____

5. Spoke at a pace that was neither too fast nor too slow.   _____

         Total number of **Delivery Points** (possible = 25)   _____

*1: needs practice in this area; 2: fair but could improve; 3: good; 4: very good; 5: outstanding

---

83

STRATEGIES FOR ASSESSING SELECTED ASPECTS OF ORAL LANGUAGE

In this section, strategies are put forward for assessing three aspects of oral language: listening and responding to stories, telling the news, and debating a topic.

1. Listening and Responding to Stories

Children's responses to story can be assessed in the context of observing them as they listen to and talk about stories in different classroom contexts. Figure D-4 illustrates the range of indicators of response to story that teachers will need to consider in assessing their pupils on the oral language element of the *Drumcondra English Profiles*. Some of the indicators refer to cognitive aspects of response, such as understanding of story elements, prediction of story outcomes, or recall of main points. Others suggest a more affective response such as commenting on humour and interpreting character feelings through mime. Many of the indicators also have relevance for the assessment of reading, where pupils might also be expected to respond to stories they have read, and for the assessment of writing, where pupils might be expected to plan and structure their stories in particular ways.

Figure D-4   Selected Indicators — Responding to Stories

- Listens attentively to stories and poems read aloud by the teacher (Jnr. Infs., Ind. 5)
- Identifies problems in stories and in other texts, and proposes possible solutions (Snr. Infs., Ind. 10)
- Retells a story heard in class, attending to the main events and preserving their sequence (First Class, Ind. 1)
- Identifies similarities across stories in terms of settings, characters, problems presented, attempts to solve problems, and resolutions (Second Class, Ind. 6)
- Interprets and expresses the feelings and reactions of characters in stories and poems through mime and role-play (Second Class, Ind. 5)
- Listens to stories and poems and identifies and comments on humour (Third class, Ind. 4)
- Predicts and justifies future events and likely outcomes in book-length stories read aloud by the teacher (Fourth Class, Ind. 4)
- Identifies and comments on some elements of specific stories that make them interesting and effective (Fifth Class, Ind. 6)
- Tells stories with a keen awareness of plot and character, using techniques that make them interesting (Sixth Class, Ind. 3)

When reading to the class, teachers can observe pupils' responses as they make predictions, identify parts of a story, discuss characters' feelings and reactions, and evaluate the author's technique. However, it is important to ensure that assessment does not become a series of tedious questions, somewhat removed from the story itself, and that enjoyment of literature remains paramount. The following excerpt, in which a teacher elicits predictions from pupils in senior infants during a reading of *Little Star* by Marita Conlon McKenna, provides opportunities to observe the pupils' ability to predict and justify likely outcomes in stories:

What do you think will happen next?' — Teacher
'I think the star would light up and then the mother would go into James' bedroom to see what was the light. And then she'd throw the star out the window.' — Craig

'What might he have done if he didn't care about the star?' — Teacher.
'He would have let it die.' — Conor

'What would James' mother have done if she had discovered the star?' — Teacher.
'She would have put it in the bin.' — Michael

The next excerpt offers the teacher an opportunity to appraise the depth of children's understanding of the words 'twirled' and 'flickered' in the same text.

'What does 'twirled' mean?' — Teacher
'Like twirling around.' (showing with his hands). — Paul
'If we can't see your hands, can we explain what 'twirled' means?' — Teacher
'Making a loop.' — Paul

'What does 'flickered' mean?' — Teacher
'It means something bad.' — Pat
'It means you tripped over.' — Seán
'Flickered means something that sparkled.' — Jack

The next excerpt again illustrates how the teacher can probe the pupils' understanding of characters and their actions.

'Is there anything in the story to show that James was a kind boy?' — Teacher
'I think he was a kind boy because he was playing with the star and showing him his favourite toys.' — Tom
'He laid him down on the ground in his farm set and it was nice and comfy for a bed.' — Emma
'He threw the star back to where it belongs.' — David
'What might he have done if he didn't care about the star?' — Teacher.
'He would have let it die.' — Rory

A variety of formats can be used to record pupils' response to and understanding of story. Figure D-5 illustrates a class record sheet that can

be used to evaluate pupils' understanding of different story elements as they recall stories that have been read aloud by the teacher. Teachers can record whether story elements have been included, with or without prompting, or whether they have been omitted altogether.

Figure D-5   Class Record Sheet - Story Recall (All Class Levels)

Pupil	*Theme**	*Setting*	*Character*	*Goal/ Problem*	*Attempts/ Events*	*Resolutions*	*Reactions*

* ++The pupil included the story element without prompting
  + The story element has been mentioned after question or prompt
  — The story element has not been included after question or prompt

The record sheet in Figure D-5 can also be used in the context of assessing comprehension of stories that pupils have read (see Page 109), or the structure of their written texts (i.e., whether or not different story elements have been included in their written stories).

Where the focus of assessment moves from understanding to the oral production of stories (e.g., 'tells stories with keen awareness of plot and character'), teachers will need to observe and record children's performance in such areas as:

- ability to communicate, including non-verbal communication
- ability to speak clearly and audibly
- range of story telling techniques
- understanding of specific elements in stories that make them interesting or exciting
- understanding of humour
- range of expressions (e.g., local idioms, slang) and vocabulary used
- ability of other class members to listen attentively

2. Telling the News

Another activity in which pupils can demonstrate achievement of many of the indicators in the *Oral Language Profile* is newstelling (see Figure D-6).

Figure D-6   Selected Indicators – Newstelling

- Predicts future activities and events with reference to own experiences (Jun. Infs., Ind. 10)

- Initiates and sustains a conversation on a familiar topic with the teacher or with other pupils, demonstrating understanding of class rules for turn taking (Sen. Infs., Ind. 6)

- Suggests alternative words to describe objects, experiences or events (First Class, Ind. 6)

- Describes an experience, event or situation to the class with confidence, focusing on the topic and including key information (First Class, Ind. 4)

- Identifies a speaker's topic, and initiates questions seeking explanations or more information (Second Class, Ind. 3)

- Gives a short description or report of an event, attending to key information and relevant details (Second Class, Ind. 2).

The teacher can focus observations of children during newstelling by referring to the relevant oral language indicators in the *Profiles*, and recording the outcomes using an appropriate record such as anecdotal notes. If a detailed record is required, a checklist, such as that in Figure D-7, can be developed. This checklist views newstelling from two stances: the pupil as speaker and the pupil as listener. Among the aspects of oral language that can be assessed during newstelling are content, language usage, audience awareness and participation.

Figure D-7   Newstelling Checklist (Infants' Classes)

Pupil's Name: _____   **Date:** _____

Context: _____

(a) Pupil as speaker

Content	*Often*	*Some-times*	*Never*	*Comment*	*Profile Indicator*
Introduces topic					
Provides background information (time, place, participants)					
Provides descriptive detail about objects and/or events					
Sustains a conversation about the topic					
Language Usage					
Speaks fluently					
Uses descriptive words to add to details					
Combines simple sentences through the use of combining words (e.g., *and)*					
Uses appropriate vocabulary to name and describe objects and events					
Awareness of Audience					
Speaks clearly and audibly					
Establishes and maintains eye contact with listeners					
Has appropriate non-verbal behaviours (e.g., facial expressions)					
Uses and interprets tone of voice expressing various emotions					
Responds to questions asked by other pupils					

(b) Child as Listener

Participation	Often	Some-times	Never	Comment	Profile Indicator
Listens attentively to others					
Looks at person speaking					
Offers appropriate comments					
Answers questions					
Asks questions for clarification					
Asks questions for more information					
Uses question forms including *why, when, how, where, what, who* etc.					

3. Debating a Topic

Children from second class onward will be expected to contribute to more formal discussions or debates on a range of issues that are relevant to their needs and interests. Debates provide opportunities for pupils to organise and present their thoughts about an issue. Selected indicators, taken from the *Oral Language Profile,* are given in Figure D-8.

Figure D-8   Selected Indicators – Debating a Topic

- Attempts to persuade others to a point of view or action, presenting a few reasons (Second Class, Ind. 9)
- Presents a point of view to the class, offering some reasons or arguments (Fourth Class, Ind. 3)
- Presents constructive counter-arguments on a given theme to refute the arguments presented by others, while demonstrating tolerance towards their views (Fifth Class, Ind. 7)
- Identifies criteria for evaluating spoken texts (e.g., a prepared speech, argument or report) and uses these to evaluate own contributions and those of others (Sixth Class, Ind. 8)

Pupils can be assessed on their ability to debate a topic, with reference to communication, clarity, knowledge, coherence and team work. As with other aspects of oral language, it is important to maintain a record of what occurs during debates. Teachers' notes may be informal (for example, a short note on a pupil who has argued a point effectively during class discussion), or more formal (for example, a completed checklist or other structured device).

Pupils themselves can play a role in evaluating debates. The class or group should first agree on criteria for making judgements, such as the following:

- Did the speakers communicate their ideas to the listeners?
- Were they confident with their information in both the presentations and the rebuttals?
- Was there evidence that the speakers knew their topics well?
- Was the team mannerly?
- Did the team work well together?
- Were there any links between the speakers? Did they pick up points that had been made by their own team and reinforce them, or by the opposite team and counter them?

Pupils' evaluations can be structured if they develop and use checklists containing these elements. It may also be helpful to video-tape debates so that pupils can reflect on their performance afterwards, identify strengths and suggest improvements.

---

[1] Cregan (1998), p.5.
[2] Collins-Block, 1997

APPENDIX E

ASSESSING READING

This chapter describes assessment activities in reading that support the implementation of the *English Profiles*. First, links between the assessment of reading and reading development are outlined. Second, tools for assessing reading are described. Third, approaches to assessing specific aspects of reading such as emergent literacy, phonemic awareness, oral reading, meaning vocabulary, and reading comprehension are examined.

LINKING ASSESSMENT TO READING DEVELOPMENT

Individual differences in reading development can often be viewed in terms of the extent to which they represent deviations from normal development. The *English Profiles* provide a broad indication of normal (expected) development in reading, in that specific indicators are set out for each class level, and progression can be traced through the indicator sets from one class level to the next. Another vantage point from which to view reading development arises from stage models of reading acquisition. These models outline in considerable detail the phases that children generally pass through from the earliest stages of learning to read (the emergent literacy phase) to the 'reading to learn' stage that many pupils enter in the senior classes in primary school. One such model is presented here[1] to provide a framework with which the assessment of reading can be viewed. The main cues and skills associated with each phase in the model are given in Figure E-1.

Emergent/Pre-alphabetic Phase (up to 5 years)
During this phase, many children acquire the knowledge that is important for subsequent reading development. This includes an understanding of the conventions of print (for example, words consist of letters, text progresses from left to right), the purposes and functions of print, letter name knowledge, and phonemic awareness (an awareness of the sounds in spoken words). Some of this knowledge is acquired informally at home; some may be acquired as a result of structured learning experiences that are offered at school.

In addition to refining their emergent literacy skills, children in this stage acquire a knowledge of some sight words. However, early word reading may be based on forming arbitrary connections between selected aspects of

words and pronunciations or meanings. For example, a reader in this phase might recognise the word 'camel' by the two humps in the middle or the word 'dog' by the tail dangling at the end. Unlike later phases of sight word development, connections are not based on letter names or letter-sound relations, hence the term 'pre-alphabetic'.

Partial Alphabetic Phase (5-6 years)
In this phase, children begin to form alphabetic connections between some of the letters in written words and the sounds detected in their pronunciation. The initial and final sounds are often selected as the cues to be remembered. A child in this phase might substitute a word with another word that begins with the same letter, such as *bird* for *bear*. In order to use initial and final letter cues effectively, partial alphabetic readers need to be able to segment the initial and final sounds in spoken words and know the sounds represented by initial and final letters.

Full Alphabetic Phase (6-7 years)
Beginning readers remember how to read sight words by 'forming complete connections between letters seen in written forms of words and phonemes detected in pronunciations'.[2] Successful reading in this phase hinges on three skills: (i) ability to segment spoken words into their phonemes; (ii) knowledge of letter-sound correspondences; and (iii) ability to blend sounds to form words. Initially, word identification may involve vocalising each sound sequentially before blending. With practice, readers can execute the process rapidly and automatically by applying hierarchical decoding rules (i.e., rules which govern the pronunciation of several letters in a word). Fluency begins to develop through daily independent reading of texts that are at an appropriate level of difficulty.

Consolidated Alphabetic Phase (7-8 years)
 Children who have encountered many different words in their reading begin to consolidate connections between letter patterns that recur across different words. Repeated encounters with a letter sequence that symbolises the same sound(s) across different words can yield a consolidated unit. Consolidation allows readers to operate with multi-letter units that may be morphemes (e.g., -ing), syllables, or syllabic units such as onsets and rimes. At this stage 'children's sight vocabularies grow large enough to support the consolidation of frequently occurring letter patterns into units'.[3] During this phase, children grow in their ability to recognise words automatically, without having to think consciously about word structure or spelling patterns. One authority[4] labelled this stage as 'confirmation, fluency and ungluing' and emphasised the importance of providing children with a range of different text types on which to apply new skills.

Figure E-1   Phases of Reading Development and Associated Cues

Phase/Age Range	Dominant Cues	Associated Skills
Emergent/Pre-alphabetic (Up to 5 years)	Salient visual cues in letters	Knowledge that print has meaning; awareness of words and syllables
Partial Alphabetic (5-6 years)	Some letter-sound correspondences (initial/ final letter sounds)	Segmentation of initial/final sounds in spoken words; knowledge of initial/final letter sounds
Full Alphabetic (6-7 years)	Many letter-sound correspondences	Segmentation of all the sounds in spoken words; knowledge of most letter-sound correspondences; blending
Consolidated Alphabetic (7-8 years)	Multi-letter units (subsyllabic units, prefixes, suffixes, syllables)	Consolidation of multi-letter units (spelling patterns)
Reading to Learn (Ages 9-13)	Multi-letter units, vocabulary knowledge, text structure	Activating background knowledge; applying comprehension strategies; comprehension monitoring

Reading to Learn Phase (9-13 years)
This phase has been described as the one in which the emphasis on teaching basic reading skills decreases, and the focus shifts to helping pupils to acquire functional reading skills and strategies.[5] There is a shift from oral reading to silent reading, and a greater emphasis is placed on functional and recreational reading than on developmental (basic) reading. Comprehension skills and study strategies can be acquired through reading both narrative and informational texts, including texts in the areas of history, geography and science. Pupils develop strategies for activating background knowledge, identifying word meanings (vocabulary development), identifying the structure of narrative and informational texts, identifying important information (such as main ideas) in texts, and monitoring (assessing) their own comprehension so that they can take appropriate steps if comprehension breaks down. While many of these strategies can be introduced during earlier phases of learning to read, they should be emphasised and applied with greater consistency and in a broader range of texts at this stage.

TOOLS FOR ASSESSING READING

Unlike the area of oral language, where relatively few measures of achievement are available, teachers have access to a wide range of formal and informal measures of reading achievement. In addition to the reading element of the *English Profile*, these include standardised tests of reading achievement, diagnostic tests, checklists and portfolios.

Standardised Norm-Referenced Tests of Achievement

Standardised norm-referenced tests of reading include group- and individually-administered tests that cover such aspects of reading as phonemic awareness, word reading, sentence comprehension, reading vocabulary, and comprehension of longer texts. Derived scores, such as standard scores, percentile ranks or indeed reading ages, provide an overall indication of a pupil's achievement with reference to local or national norms. In general, standardised tests do not provide the detailed information about a pupil's reading that is needed to conduct an assessment using the *English Profiles*. For example, if a pupil achieves a low overall score on a standardised test of reading, it may be due to poor word identification skills, difficulties with phonological skills, difficulties with meaning vocabulary/background knowledge, poor reading comprehension skills, or some combination of these elements.

Diagnostic Tests

Diagnostic tests may be administered when more detailed information about a child's reading is required. Among the aspects of reading that are assessed by such tests are:

- visual/auditory discrimination
- concepts about print
- phonemic awareness
- recognition of rhyming words
- letter recognition
- knowledge of letter-sound correspondences
- word identification skills
- reading accuracy
- reading rate/fluency
- listening comprehension
- reading comprehension

Diagnostic tests are generally administered to individual pupils who experience or are likely to experience difficulty in learning to read. The outcomes of a diagnostic test point to a pupil's strengths and weaknesses in reading, and can be taken into account when planning a pupil's learning programme. However, caution should be exercised in moving directly from diagnostic assessment to instruction. A pupil may do poorly on an

aspect of reading (or memory) measured by a diagnostic test, yet there may be little evidence that the construct measured by the test is amenable to instruction, or that it is a priority area of instruction for a pupil. For example, poor performance on a diagnostic test of reading comprehension may be due to difficulties with word identification or poor vocabulary knowledge, and instruction in these areas might need to precede or be provided along with instruction in reading comprehension.

Informal Assessments

Finally, teachers can engage in informal assessment of a child's reading in a variety of instructional contexts. For example, careful observation of one or two individuals during a class activity designed to develop phonemic awareness, blending of letter sounds, or application of a reading comprehension strategy can provide valuable assessment information that can be drawn on in profiling the pupils' achievement at the end of the school year. Checklists (lists of skills that pupils at a particular stage of development might be expected to exhibit), rating scales, and anecdotal notes (short notes composed by the teacher) are useful tools for recording assessment information obtained informally. Checklists can be selected from among those that are commercially available, or can be constructed by teachers to reflect the particular emphasis in their school or classroom as they implement the curriculum.

One informal measure that can easily be applied by class teacher is the running record, a variation of a more detailed approach to analysing pupils' oral reading errors that is known as miscue analysis. Taking a running record of a pupil's oral reading involves counting the number of errors (if any) that are made in a text of given length to obtain a measure of reading accuracy (the percentage of words read correctly), and estimating the pupil's reading rate (measured in words read per minute). The nature of any reading errors that the child makes can provide insights into his/her word recognition strategies, while the pupil's overall performance can guide the teacher in deciding whether or not the text is at an appropriate level of difficulty (see page 101-106).

The informal reading assessments that teachers conduct are particularly relevant to rating pupils achievement on the *English Profiles* since they often assess elements of reading that may not be accessible through the administration of standardised, norm-referenced tests or diagnostic tests.

STRATEGIES FOR ASSESSING SELECTED ASPECTS OF READING

In this section, strategies for assessing the following aspects of reading are addressed: emergent literacy skills, phonemic awareness, word recognition, meaning vocabulary, comprehension of narrative texts, and comprehension of informational texts.

1. *Emergent Literacy (Pre-reading) Skills*

As indicated in the model of reading development presented earlier, the emergent literacy skills that children should acquire before the beginning of formal reading instruction include conventions of print (that words consist of letters, that text progresses from left to right etc.), the purposes and functions of print, letter name knowledge, and phonemic awareness (ability to identify and manipulate the sounds in spoken words). Some of these insights are acquired informally at home or in playschool settings (for example, during storybook reading and daily living routines); others are acquired or built on as a result of structured learning experiences in school, such as shared reading activities or guided writing. Figure E-2 lists some of the indicators of emergent literacy skills that are found in the reading element of the *English Profiles*.

Figure E-2   Selected Indicators — Emergent Literacy

- Responds to and understands print concepts such as letter, word, sentence, line and page (Jnr. Infs., Ind. 7)
- Relates printed signs, labels and notices in the classroom to their meaning (Jnr. Infs., Ind. 2)
- Recognises simple differences between text types (Snr. Infs., Ind. 8)
- Identifies words that rhyme in a set of spoken words (Jnr. Infs., Ind. 5)
- Recognises and names most upper- and lower-case letters of the alphabet (Jnr. Infs., Ind. 4)

A number of formal tests designed to assess emergent literacy skills have been published in recent years. Among the elements of emergent literacy that are measured by such tests are:

- An understanding that print rather than pictures carries meaning
- An understanding that reading proceeds in a left to right direction
- Understanding of terms associated with reading (e.g., *first, last, beginning, end*)
- Ability to discriminate among letters, words and sentences
- Identification of basic elements of punctuation (full stops, question marks etc.)

Children's emergent literacy skills can also be assessed informally in the context of early reading and writing activities. Part of this involves observing children as they interact with stories and other forms of print. Teachers will obtain information on children's knowledge of the parts of a book, their understanding of the language of reading, or their ability to track print when listening to and looking at a book being read aloud. Checklists are useful tools for recording the results of informal assessments of children's emergent literacy skills. In some checklists, reading and writing skills will appear side by side (see Figure E-3).

Figure E-3[6]   **Checklist of Emergent Reading and Writing Skills**

Skill	First Observation* Date:	Second Observation* Date:	Third Observation* Date:
Knows the parts of a book and their functions			
Begins to track print when listening to a familiar text being read or when rereading own writing			
Reads familiar texts emergently (i.e., without reading verbatim from the print)			
Recognises some words by sight, including a few very common ones (a, the, I, my, you, is)			
Correctly answers questions about stories read aloud			
Listens attentively to books teacher reads to class			
Demonstrates familiarity with a number of types of genres or texts (e.g., storybooks, informational books, newspapers, and everyday print such as signs, notices and labels)			
Notices when simple sentences fail to make sense			
Retells, re-enacts, or dramatises stories or parts of stories			
Recognises and can name all upper-case and lower-case letters			
Learns many, though not all, one-to-one letter sound correspondences			
Makes predictions based on illustrations or portions of stories			
Given a spoken word, can produce another word that rhymes with it			
Given a set of spoken sounds, can merge (blend) them into a meaningful target word			
Independently writes most upper- and lower-case letters			
Writes unconventionally to express own meaning			
Can name some book titles and authors			

*Scoring Key: ++ Skill clearly demonstrated
                 + Some evidence of skill being demonstrated
                 - Skill not demonstrated

2. *Phonemic Awareness*

Phonemic awareness — the ability to segment words into their constituent sounds or phonemes — is critically important for acquiring the alphabetic principle (the understanding that the letters and spellings of words can be mapped onto the speech units they represent). Unlike oral language, in which attention to the individual sounds in words is rarely necessary, reading and spelling require children to have a conscious awareness of, and be able to manipulate the sounds in spoken words. Phonemic awareness emerges from a more general collection of phonological awareness skills such as the ability to segment a sentence into words, and the ability to segment a word into its constituent syllables. Phonemic awareness is more difficult, and emerges later than awareness of words in sentences or of syllables in words, though it is more directly relevant to the development of reading and spelling in the junior primary classes than in the senior classes. It has been observed that the relationship between phonemic awareness and reading is causal and reciprocal — causal in that skill in phonemic awareness has been identified as a necessary (but not sufficient) prerequisite for learning to read, and reciprocal in that reading itself contributes to the development of more complex forms of phonemic awareness, such as the deletion or substitution of sounds in words. Figure E-4 shows some indicators of phonemic awareness that appear in the reading element of the *English Profiles*.

Figure E-4   Selected Indicators — Phonemic Awareness

- Identifies initial and final sounds in spoken words (Junior Infs., Ind. 8)
- Understands the one-to-one correspondence between written and spoken words (Junior Infants, Ind. 6)
- Identifies words that rhyme in a set of spoken words (Junior Infs. Ind. 5)
- Breaks spoken words into their constituent sounds (Senior Infs., Ind. 9)
- Identifies words that rhyme in a set of spoken words (Senior Infs., Ind. 4)

As with emergent literacy, a number of standardised and non-standardised tests of phonemic awareness have been developed.[7] Typically, such tests are administered to pupils in the 5-7 years age range who may be at risk of experiencing difficulties in learning to read, and older pupils who have reading difficulties. Among the activities that may be found in tests of phonemic awareness are:

- *Rhyming words* – identifying the words that rhyme in a set of spoken words.
- *Odd-word-out* – identifying the 'odd word out' in a set of spoken words (e.g., {leg, peg, *hen*, beg}, or {sun, sea, sock, *rag*}).

- *Sound to word matching* – indicating whether a particular sound can be found in a spoken word (Is there is a /m/ in *man*?).
- *Blending sounds* – forming a word by blending a sequence of spoken sounds (e.g., blend the sounds /m/ /a/ /n/ to form *man*).
- *Isolating sounds in words* – identifying and stating the sound heard at the beginning, middle or end of a spoken word.
- *Segmenting words into phonemes* – segmenting a spoken word into its constituent sounds (e.g., say *make* slowly so that I can hear all the sounds).
- *Counting phonemes* – tapping the number of sounds in a spoken word (e.g., tap the sounds you hear in *man*).
- *Deleting phonemes* – deleting a specified sound at the beginning, middle or end of a word (e.g., what is *sat* without the /s/?).
- *Substituting phonemes* – substituting a specified phoneme for another at the beginning or end of a word (say *fat*; now take away the beginning sound and replace it with */m/*).

There are several classroom activities that can provide teachers with assessment information about beginning readers' phonemic awareness. For example, pupils' ability to recall and recite nursery rhymes is one broad indicator. Observations of pupils' attempts to spell unknown words can also point to whether or not they have difficulties with phonemic awareness. Pupils who have some phonemic awareness will demonstrate a relationship between sounds and letters in their spelling, even if their attempts are unsuccessful in an overall or conventional sense. The use of children's approximate (invented) spellings to make inferences about their learning needs is addressed in Appendix F.

As with other aspects of English, it is important to maintain informal records of pupils' development in phonemic awareness. These include anecdotal notes, checklists and samples of pupils' work (for example, their approximate spellings).

3. Word Identification

As children emerge from pre-alphabetic/emergent literacy stage, and have acquired some level of phonemic awareness, attention will turn to assessing their word identification skills. The indicators in Figure E-5 point to the range of cues that may be used in word recognition [i.e., semantic (meaning), syntactic (grammatical) and grapho-phonic (phonological)] as well as to other aspects of word identification than can profitably be assessed. In general, pupils in the junior classes will be assessed on their achievement of these indicators. However, the indicators may also be of some use to teachers of pupils in the senior classes who experience problems identifying words.

Figure E-5   Selected Indicators — Word Identification

- Identifies a set of basic sight words in familiar and unfamiliar contexts (Jun. Infs. Ind. 1)
- Uses spelling patterns (rimes) in known words to identify unknown words (Sen. Infs., Ind. 6)
- Uses knowledge of sentence context and letter-sound correspondences to read unknown words (Sen. Infs., Ind 5)
- Demonstrates flexibility in combining several cues to read unknown words in a range of texts (First Class, Ind. 10)
- Identifies and blends consonant and vowel patterns (such as onsets and rimes) to read unfamiliar words (First Class, Ind. 8)
- Identifies inflectional endings (*-ed*, *-s*(*-es*), *-ing*, *-ly*, *-er*, and *-est*) while reading words in context (First Class, Ind. 6)
- Divides unfamiliar words into syllables to assist with identification (Second Class, Ind. 2)

Word identification can be assessed using a range of tools including group-administered standardised tests, individually-administered standardised tests, and informal assessments (see Figure E-6). Where group-administered standardised tests include a word analysis subtest, a pupil's score can provide an overall indication of his/her word identification skills relative to other pupils at the same class level, or in the same age range, and indicate whether further testing, using a more refined diagnostic instrument, might be needed. Standardised graded word and sentence reading tests provide somewhat more information. These tests, which are usually administered on an individual basis, call on a pupil to read aloud a set of words or sentences that are graded in difficulty, until a ceiling level is reached. The tests allow the teacher to estimate the breadth of a pupil's sight word knowledge. In addition, pupil's errors can indicate instructional needs. Among the difficulties that might be observed are:

- inability to use context clues;
- overuse of context clues (e.g., over-guessing);
- poor phonemic awareness;
- poor knowledge of letter/sound correspondences (phonics);
- over-reliance on initial letters/sounds to read unknown words;
- inability to blend sounds to form words;
- inability to segment written words into syllables.

Figure E-6   **Aspects of Word Identification Assessed by Formal and Informal Measures**

	Measure	*Word Identification Elements Assessed*
Formal	Group-administered standardised reading tests	Phonics/word analysis skills Ability to read words, sentences, and paragraphs silently
	Individually-administered standardised word and sentence reading tests	Knowledge of sight words Ability to identify words in sentences
	Diagnostic reading tests	Sight word knowledge Knowledge of letter-sound correspondences (phonics); Ability to blend sounds to form words Ability to identify words in context
Informal	Running records (Records of pupils' oral reading errors)	Sight vocabulary Reading rate Reading fluency Quality of oral reading errors in context (e.g., use of semantic, syntactic and grapho-phonic cues)

Many diagnostic tests include subtests that assess one or more aspects of word identification, including sight word knowledge and a variety of phonics skills. In some cases, phonics skills may be assessed using regularly spelled nonsense or pseudo words in order to eliminate the effects of other word identification strategies (e.g., knowledge of sight words).

An assessment tool that can be incorporated in existing reading programmes is the running record — an informal assessment of oral reading that enables teachers to monitor and interpret, in a systematic manner, the word identification errors that a pupil makes. The analysis of a pupil's oral reading errors can show the degree to which the pupil uses grapho-phonic (phonetic), semantic (meaning) and syntactic (grammatical) information to identify words in context, and the extent to which meaning is being monitored.[8] When time permits, a running record of the oral reading errors of each lower-achieving pupil in the junior classes should be conducted at least once a week. According to one authority 'running records are taken without marking a prepared script. They may be done on any piece of paper. With practice, teachers can take a running record at any time, anywhere'.[9] However, teachers who are new to the technique may wish to record a pupil's errors on a copy of the pupil's text. The following administration procedures should be followed:

1. A passage or story of between 100 and 200 words should be selected. Passages that are shorter than 100 words may be used with children in the infants classes. A set of between 5 and 10 questions about the passage should be developed.

2. The running record may be taken as the pupil reads the text aloud. A record of the pupil's oral reading errors should be made on a copy of the text, or on a blank sheet of paper. Figure E-7 illustrates the most common errors that are recorded and the symbols that can be used to record them, while Figure E-8 shows how a pupil's errors can be recorded on a text

3. After the pupil has finished reading, the number of errors in each of the following scorable categories should be computed — insertions, substitutions, omissions, mispronunciations, non-responses; and the number in each of these non-scorable categories — self-corrections, repetitions, hesitations, and transpositions. Scorable errors are defined as those that interfere with meaning.

4. This and other relevant information about the pupil's behaviours should be recorded using an appropriate recording format such as an Oral Reading Analysis Record Sheet (Figure E-9).

5. The pupil's oral reading accuracy score should be computed. This involves subtracting the number of scorable reading errors from the total number of words in the passage, and dividing the result by the number of words in the passage. For example, if a pupil make 20 scorable errors in a 200 words passage, his/her oral reading accuracy would be 180/200 or 90%.

6. The pupil's reading comprehension score should be computed and recorded. If the pupil correctly answered 7 of 10 questions, his/her score would be 70%.

7. Although not essential, it may be helpful to record a judgement regarding whether or not the text read by the pupil is at his/her independent, instructional or frustration level, using the criteria in Figure E-10
The *independent reading level* is the level at which a pupil should be able to read without help of any kind from the teacher. This is the level at which one would normally expect the pupil to be reading when he or she reads a library book selected voluntarily.
The *instructional reading level* is the reading level at which a pupil would normally be reading when required to read a history, geography or environmental studies text, or a class reader, without having had a chance to read it previously.
The *frustration reading level* is the level at which reading material simply becomes too difficult for the pupil to read.

8. Make a judgement regarding the pupil's reading rate, which is measured in number of words per minute. The following are suggested minimum rates for instructional-level materials: Senior Infants: 50 words per minute; First Class: 60 words per minute; Second Class: 70 words per minute; and Third Class: 80 words per minute. Reading rates

that fall below the suggested levels may point to text that is too difficult, or to general difficulties with word identification processes.

9. Record the number of oral reading errors in each category on the Oral Reading Analysis Record Sheet. The number of non-scorable errors relative to the number of scorable errors is an important indicator of strategy usage in oral reading, with more proficient readers making more non-scorable than scorable errors.

10. Complete the section, 'Analysis of Oral Reading', on the Oral Reading Analysis Record Sheet. For each element, indicate whether (a) there is no difficulty; (b) some attention is required; or (c) there is a clear problem. The errors of pupils who use *semantic* context clues tend to reflect the meaning of a text (e.g., 'I climbed the steps (instead of stairs)'). A syntactically appropriate error usually represent the same part of speech as the word in the original text (for example, 'steps' is syntactically acceptable in the above example since, like stairs, it is a noun). Finally, a grapho-phonically appropriate error shares some elements with the target word (e.g., 'pretend' for 'prevent').

The records of a pupil's oral reading errors that a teacher develops can be used to make inferences about pupils' learning needs, and can also serve as reference sources when the *English Profiles* are being completed at the end of the school year.

Figure E-7   Conventions Used for Recording Oral Reading Errors

Scorable-Error	Marking	Example
Omissions	Circle the omission	He likes the (big) yellow car.
Insertions	Use caret (^), add insertion	He likes the big yellow car. *is* ^
Substitutions	Cross out original, add substitution	He likes the big ~~yellow~~ car. *red* *looks*
Mispronunciations	Write phonetical pronunciation	He likes the big yellow car.
*Non-response (Wait 5 seconds before providing help)	Write NR over pronounced words.	He likes the big yellow car. *NR*
Non-scorable Error	**Marking**	**Example**
Self-Correction	Write SC above the text word.	He likes the big yellow car. *SC*
Repetition	Underline word/phrase each time it is repeated.	He likes the big <u>yellow</u> car.
Hesitation	Put a checkmark at the point of hesitation.	He likes the big ✓yellow car.
Transposition	Put reverse S around transposed items.	He likes the (big yellow) car.

Figure E-8   Example of Marked-Up Text

bench
The children had been playing on the beach all day. It was getting late

bottles
now and they gathered up the buckets, spades, balls, boats and other toys.

NR
As they made their way towards the station, Paula noticed that Scruffy

missed   *fifty*
was missing. 'He was here just fifteen minutes ago,' said Tom. 'I saw him

chasing another dog in the water.' The children looked back to the sea.

mother
There was no sign of Scruffy, or any other dog for that matter. The

children searched ~~everywhere~~, but still they could not find Scruffy. They

quickly   *offer*
walked quietly back to the ~~station~~.* The man in the ticket office said he

would look out for Scruffy, and took their telephone number, just in case

the dog showed up later.

*Non-scorable error (repeated word)

Total Words: 123;   Total Scorable Errors: 9;   Accuracy: 114/123=93%

Figure E-9   Oral Reading Analysis Record Sheet

Pupil's Name: _____	**Class :** _____	**Teacher:** _____	

Reader/Text: _____   **Page(s):** _____   **Date:** _____

Pupil's Behaviours during Oral Reading (yes/no)

	Excessive head movement		Word-by-word reading
	Finger pointing		Poor phrasing
	Disregard for punctuation		Pauses
	Loss of place		Hesitates
	Does not read in natural voice tone.		Voicing or lip movement

Reading Level

Reading Accuracy: _____%   Reading Comprehension: _____%

Pupil's overall reading level for the passage: (Tick one)

Independent __   Instructional __   Frustration __

Reading Rate (Tick one)

Fast __   Adequate __   Slow__

Analysis of Oral Reading Errors

Number	*Error (scorable)*	*Number*	*Error (non-scorable)*
	Omission		Self-correction
	Insertion		Repetition
	Substitution		Hesitation
	Mispronunciation		Transposition
	Non-response		

Word Analysis Skills (Tick one box in each row)

No Difficulty	*Some Attention Required*	*Problem*	
			Uses semantic (meaning) context clues
			Uses syntactic (grammar) context clues
			Uses grapho-phonic clues
			Combines cues to identify unknown words
			Self-corrects oral reading errors
			Breaks longer words into parts
			Identifies long and short vowel sounds

105

Figure E-10   Criteria for Identifying a Pupil's Independent, Instructional and Frustration Reading Levels.

Level	*Reading Accuracy*	*Comprehension*
Independent	99%-100%	90%-100%
Instructional	95% - 99%	50% - 90%
Frustration	< 90%	< 50%

4. *Meaning Vocabulary*

Many pupils who pass through the early phases of learning to read without undue difficulty may run into problems when they encounter more complex texts from third class onwards. Vocabulary knowledge, or knowledge of word meanings, has been identified as a primary factor in limiting reading growth, reflecting an increasing inter-dependence between reading vocabulary and reading comprehension once children's basic word identification skills have been established. Figure E-11 lists some of the indicators of meaning vocabulary in the reading element of the *English Profiles*.

Figure E-10   Selected Indicators — Meaning Vocabulary

- Uses context to define the meanings of words (Second Class, Ind. 7)
- Identifies common prefixes, suffixes and inflectional endings while reading words in context (Second Class, Ind. 4)
- Identifies the meanings of new words in running text by using a range of cues (Third Class, Ind. 9)
- Identifies and understands the contribution to meaning of prefixes, suffixes and word roots (Fourth Class, Ind. 6)
- Uses the dictionary and thesaurus to select word meanings that are appropriate to given contexts, including words with multiple meanings (Fifth Class, Ind. 4)

It is useful to think of a pupil's vocabulary as being represented by schemata or knowledge structures that are linked to one another through networks of varying levels of complexity and degrees of strength. The schema representing a specific word may contain definitional information and information on the attributes of the word (for example, an elephant is a large animal who has thick skin, a trunk and two ivory tusks). As a result of exposure, whether through instruction or by simply encountering a word during reading (or listening), the pupil may (a) develop a new schema or framework for the word; (b) elaborate on an existing schema; (c) establish a new link or strengthen an existing link between a word's schema and the schemas that represent related words or ideas.

106

Not all words may be equally well understood. According to one source, word knowledge can be viewed as a 'continuum from no knowledge to a general sense; to narrow, context-bound knowledge; to having knowledge but not being able to access it quickly; to rich decontextualised knowledge of word meaning'.[10] A useful distinction is that between 'fast mapping' and 'extended mapping' of a word's meaning[11]. In 'fast mapping', the pupil acquires a cursory understanding of a word, sometimes after just a single encounter. In 'extended mapping', a more complete understanding of the word is achieved. It may take multiple exposures to a word in a variety of different contexts in order to achieve extended mapping, while, at any given time, individual pupils may be working on as many as 1,600 mappings simultaneously.

An important source of information about the meanings of words is sentence context. Indeed, the meanings of many words are acquired by encountering them in a variety of sentence contexts with each new context adding an additional layer of meaning. One element of the assessment of vocabulary knowledge will examine whether pupils have the strategies that enable them to use sentence context effectively to deduce word meanings.

Many standardised measures of reading achievement include a measure of vocabulary knowledge. A typical item in such measures requires pupils to select a word that means the same as or the opposite of a target word embedded in a short sentence. A pupil's score on a standardised measure of vocabulary knowledge provides a general indication of the breadth of the pupil's vocabulary.

Informal assessment of individual pupil's vocabulary knowledge can be conducted before or after the pupil reads a text. Assessment information can be obtained by asking the pupil to engage in tasks such as the following, and recording the resulting assessment information:

- provide a definition for a word, that is appropriate to the context in which it appears;
- use a word in a sentence to illustrate its meaning;
- provide a synonym or antonym for a word;
- indicate the super-ordinate category to which a word belongs (Jupiter is a planet);
- state some attributes of a word (e.g., a leopard has spots);
- compare the attributes of a word with some related word;
- discuss how a prefix contributes to a word's meaning;
- explain what information a suffix provides about a word;
- show how a root can contribute to a word's meaning (e.g., *phobia* in *electrophobia*, *acrophobia*)
- explain how sentence context can be used to identify or check the meaning of a word;

- identify words that make a text more interesting or effective;
- substitute words used by an author with alternative words;
- locate the meaning of a new word in a dictionary and check its meaning in the context in which it appears.

Like vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge, or the knowledge that pupils have about topics, text structures, themes and concepts, can have a powerful influence on text comprehension. Although broader than vocabulary knowledge, the background knowledge a reader brings to a text can include an understanding of concepts and word meanings. Reading comprehension in general, and inferential comprehension in particular, improves when readers have an adequate level of background knowledge about the topic of the text, and can establish links between their background knowledge and the information in the text. Hence, assessment of comprehension needs to address whether or not pupils' have adequate background knowledge to understand what they read.

Pupils' background knowledge can be assessed by engaging them in whole-class or group mapping activities. One such activity is semantic or concept mapping,[12] in which pupils develop a diagram that illustrates the links between a target concept and concepts already known. By observing pupils as they engage in semantic mapping, the teacher can make a global judgement about the amount of background knowledge held by a group, and how that knowledge is organised.

Where self-assessment is concerned, it may be useful to ask pupils in the senior primary classes to rate their understanding of each word in a set of vocabulary words, before and after reading a text. Each word can be rated according to whether pupils 'know a lot about it', 'know something about it' or 'don't know it'. Some growth might be expected between pre- and post-reading activities.

5. Reading Comprehension – Narrative Texts

Pupils' understanding of a text can depend on a variety of factors. These include:

- reader-based factors — word identification, background knowledge, knowledge of word meanings, knowledge of reading strategies, general intellectual ability and motivation
- the nature of the comprehension task — what is expected of the reader during and after reading
- text structure — the organisational features of the text that serve as a frame or pattern to help readers to identify the importance, order and relations among ideas.

The assessment of reading comprehension should recognise that comprehension may break down because problems arise with regard to

one or more of these factors. Comprehension is a focus of assessment at each class level, but increases in importance from third-class onwards (i.e., as children move into the 'reading to learn' phase mentioned earlier.

Texts may be broadly divided into narrative texts, which are designed to entertain the reader, and informational texts, which are intended to inform and persuade (see next section). Narrative texts, which may be based on real or fictional experiences, include myths, epics, folktales, short stories, or novels.

Figure E-12 shows some of the indicators of comprehension of narrative text that are assessed in the *English Profiles.*

Figure E-12   Selected Indicators — Comprehension of Narrative Texts

- Reads simple stories and retells significant events and details (Junior Infants, Ind. 9)
- Modifies initial expectations (predictions) about the content of a story based on new information in the story (Senior Infants, Ind. 10)
- Reads and retells stories and informational texts in sequence, incorporating important ideas and relevant details (First Class, Ind. 9)
- Makes inferences about ideas and actions in stories (Second Class, Ind. 9)
- Reads a story and draws conclusions about the setting, characters, events, outcome and theme (Third Class, Ind. 3)
- Summarises stories (and informational texts), distinguishing between main ideas and important details (Fourth Class, Ind. 10)
- Identifies changes that occur in characters' feelings and behaviours (actions), and in their relationship with one another in shorter and in longer (book-length) stories (Fifth Class, Ind. 6)
- Identifies and evaluates the themes and values in stories and poems with reference to other texts and to own experiences (Sixth Class, Ind. 4)

Often, narrative texts include such elements as a statement of problem/goal faced by the main character, episodes in which the main character attempts to achieve the goal, and outcomes of these attempts. Pupils who understand that many stories follow a particular structure, and recognise the main elements of that structure in stories that they read will be helped in carrying out the following comprehension processes:

- predicting outcomes
- identifying problems
- making inferences about interactions among characters and their intentions

- identifying links between background knowledge and events in the text
- inferring causal relations among events
- drawing conclusions
- evaluating ideas
- identifying the sequence of events
- imaging or visualising the text
- asking self-questions during reading

Formal assessment of reading comprehension can occur in the context of administering a standardised, norm-referenced test. A pupil's overall score on a standardised comprehension test can give a general indication of the pupil's reading comprehension level. One difficulty with such tests is that they may not provide the detailed information about a pupil's understanding of narrative text that is necessary to complete the *English Profiles*. A second difficulty is that they may provide relatively little information about a pupil's learning needs. For example, poor performance on a standardised comprehension test can arise from difficulties in one or more of the reader, task or text based factors mentioned at the beginning of this section.

One informal approach to assessing comprehension of stories is to ask comprehension questions that are designed to tap into the required information. For example, if a teacher wishes to probe pupils' understanding of the key structural elements in a text, questions such as the following might be asked:

- Where/when does the story take place? (Setting)
- Who was this story mostly about? (Main character)
- What does the main character want? (Beginning Event/Problem/Goal)
- What obstacles does the main character encounter? (Attempts/Events)
- Does the main character reach his/her goal? (Resolution)
- How did the main character feel at the end? (Reaction)
- What is the writer saying to us about life in this story? (Theme)
- Why do you think the author wanted to write this story? (Theme)
- Is there any thing you would have changed in the story? (Personal Response)
- How did the story make you feel? (Personal Response) Why?

A second informal approach to assessing understanding of stories is to ask pupils to recall what they have read orally or in writing. Pupils' recall protocols can be analysed in the manner suggested in Appendix D (page 86), where a similar approach to assessing pupils' comprehension of stories read aloud by the teacher was suggested. Again, the distinction between unaided and probed recall should be maintained.

110

Pupils can play a role in the assessment of their own understanding of stories by maintaining reading logs — systematic records of each story or book read that include pupils' personal responses. A reading log can consist of a notebook or sheets that can be placed in a folder or portfolio. For pupils in the junior classes, the following headings may provide a useful structure for recording information about a book:

- date commenced
- title of book read
- author and illustrator
- pupil's opinion of the book (*I liked this book because. . . .*)
- self-evaluation (*This book was easy/difficult for me to read because. . . .*)
- date completed

Pupils in the senior classes can use their reading logs to respond to a book by:

- writing responses to literary components;
- identifying the plot, setting, point of view, theme, character development, links to life;
- extending one or more parts of the book;
- developing scripts for plays, story webs, charts, time lines or written reviews;
- comparing with another book with a similar theme or by the same author;
- writing an extended critical response;
- recording thoughts or feeling in response to reading;
- discussing phrases or words that interested, excited or puzzled them;
- making predictions;
- summarising main events;
- creating alternative endings.

Criteria for scoring each of these elements can be devised for the purposes of assessment. For example, the pupil's reading log could be assessed on the basis of:

(a) literal understanding, as measured by recall and description of basic facts about the story
(b) interpretative understanding, as measured through the pupil's ability to summarise, predict, conclude, compare, or infer, on the basis of information gleaned from the story;
(c) critical understanding, as measured by the pupil's evaluation of each story or book s/he has read.

6. *Reading Comprehension – Informational Texts*

As pupils progress through primary school, they read more and more informational texts — texts that are designed to describe, inform or explain. Such texts may be found in class readers, textbooks and reference materials dealing with subjects such as history, geography, science and social, personal and health education (SPHE). Figure E-13 illustrates the range of indicators of comprehension of informational text that are assessed in the *English Profiles*.

Figure E-13 Selected Indicators — Comprehension of Informational Texts

- Locates items of information in simple informational texts (First Class, Ind. 4)
- Describes simple differences between text types (e.g., stories, poems and informational texts) (First Class, Ind. 2)
- Generates appropriate expectations about the content of informational texts (Second Class, Ind. 8)
- Reads and summarises informational texts, providing several important points (Third Class, Ind. 8)
- Identifies organisational patterns in informational texts (Fourth Class, Ind. 9)
- Compares and synthesises information about a topic, drawing from two or more informational texts (Fifth Class, Ind. 7)
- Adjusts reading speed for specific purposes and for different texts (Fifth Class, Ind. 5)
- Employs several strategies when reading informational texts for research purposes (previewing, skimming, scanning, note-taking, summarising etc.) (Sixth Class, Ind. 7)

A critical factor to consider in assessing pupils' understanding of informational texts is their level of background knowledge about the text. One element of background knowledge is pupils' understanding of the vocabulary and ideas underlying an informational text. A second element is pupils' understanding of the structure underpinning the text. Figure E-14 provides a listing of the main informational text structures, along with their objectives and the terms that signal their use.

Group-administered standardised tests rarely provide specific information about pupils' comprehension of informational texts. For example, the majority of standardised tests assess comprehension using a combination of narrative and informational texts, but do not report separate scores for the two text types. Furthermore, most standardised tests do not establish links between pupils' background knowledge and their comprehension of informational texts. On the other hand, there is plenty of scope in the classroom for conducting informal assessments of pupils' understanding of informational texts.

Figure E-14   Main Informational Text Structures and Substructures

Text Structure	*Objective*	*Signal Words*
Definition/Example	To elaborate on the meaning of a term; illustrate through an example of typical or outstanding illustrations	For example, such as, that is, namely, to illustrate, for instance
Comparison and Contrast	To highlight similarities or differences among entities	Similar to, different from, in contrast, however, but, on the other hand,
Temporal Sequence	To describe a series of connected instances, each developing from the preceding one, that results in a product or outcome	First, second, next, originally, finally, before, earlier, later, meanwhile etc.
Cause/Effect (Problem/Solution)	To indicate a sequence of events related in a causal chain; includes the problem/solution pattern	Therefore, as a result of, so that, in order to, because, consequently
Argument and Persuasion	A line of argument laid out so as to present the ideas in the most convincing manner. The correctness of the argument is not necessarily a criterion.	

In the first instance, teachers will want to ascertain pupils' background knowledge about the topic of an informational text, either before reading takes place, or after it has been completed. An important reason for measuring the level of pupils' background knowledge before reading begins is to enable teachers to provide additional background knowledge to those pupils who may need it, and hence increase the likelihood that they will understand the text. Pre-reading assessment of background knowledge can be accomplished by asking pupils to engage in activities such as:

- responding to questions about the topic of a text (e.g., what do you know about elasticity?);
- rating their own understanding of topics or ideas, using an appropriate scale (e.g., 3 — I know a lot; 2 — I know something; 1 — I don't know very much);
- completing a semantic or concept map either individually or as a group.

A focus on the assessment of background knowledge as a pre-reading activity is consistent with the notion of assisting pupils to set their own purposes for reading, based on the information they wish to find out in reading a text. Pupils' ability to set appropriate purposes for reading is also an important indicator of reading development.

A second broad emphasis in the assessment of pupils' comprehension of informational texts will be to ascertain their understanding of the main idea and supporting details. Pupils can be asked to

- identify main ideas and supporting details by using topic headings and subheadings, and paragraph topics;
- infer a main idea of a paragraph or longer text when it isn't stated;
- select a suitable title for a paragraph or longer text, and give reasons for their selections;
- demonstrate links between main idea and supporting details using a visual representation (diagram)

Related to the main idea and supporting details in a text is its organisation (see Figure E-14). Pupils' sensitivity to the organisation of informational texts can be assessed by asking them to:

- identify key words in a text that signal particular text structures such as comparison and contrast or temporal sequence;
- identify structures and relationships among ideas by using text structure frames and graphic organisers that can assist pupils to organise their summaries;[13]
- develop oral and written summaries that are based on texts with familiar structures.

The evaluation of pupils' written summaries can focus on the following:[14]

- *Accuracy/clarity* — the relative absence of misleading statements, incomplete ideas, confusion of facts, grammatical errors causing confusion, incorrect interpretation and incorrect ordering of information
- *Main idea* — the degree to which the writer focused primarily on the main idea and placed less emphasis on the minor ideas.
- *Brevity* — the length of the summary, which is related to the ability to condense material.
- *Use of own words* — the ability to put the ideas in the pupil's own words, avoiding the use of excessive quotation or plagiarism.

In addition to assessing understanding of main ideas, attention will need to be given to assessing pupils' study skills. Again, assessment of study skills can proceed not only in English but in a range of other subject areas where pupils are required to extract information from texts and use that information in purposeful ways. One way to assess pupils' study skills is to use a checklist. One such checklist list divides reading-study skills into three broad categories: (1) special study-reading comprehension skills; (2) information locating skills; and (3) study and retention strategies (see Figure E-15).

Figure E-15   Study Skills Checklist

Study Skill	*No Evidence*	*Some Evidence*	*Much Evidence*
1. Specific study-reading comprehension skills A. Ability to interpret graphic aids (e.g., maps, globes, graphs, charts, tables, cartoons, pictures, etc.) B. Ability to follow directions			
2 Information location skills A. Ability to vary rate of reading (e.g., can the pupil scan? skim? Read at slow rate for difficult materials? etc.) B. Ability to locate information by use of book parts (e.g., can the pupil use book parts to identify – title? author? publisher? edition? copyright date?) C. Ability to locate information in the library (e.g., can the pupil locate material by subject? by author? by title?) D. Ability to locate information in an electronic database			
3. Study and retention strategies A. Ability to study information and remember it (e.g., Can the pupil highlight important information? Underline important information? Ask and answer questions to increase retention? Employ a systematic study procedure?) B. Ability to organise information (e.g., Can the pupil take notes? Write a summary of a paragraph? Make graphic aids to summarise information? Use an outline to write a report?)			

Finally, assessment of pupils' comprehension of informational texts might focus on their metacognitive knowledge. Metacognitive knowledge involves knowledge of self as a learner, knowledge of task demands, and motivation to use comprehension/study strategies. In general, pupils with strong metagocnitive knowledge perform better on comprehension and study tasks than pupils with weak metacognitive knowledge. Assessment of metacognitive knowledge is typically informal and can easily be linked to other assessment activities, such as pupils' evaluations of their background knowledge, or their ability to apply strategies such as setting purposes for reading or identifying important information (main ideas and important details). Metacognitive knowledge can be assessed by interviewing pupils and determining whether they can:

- evaluate their own level of background knowledge about a topic, and indicate what can be done to increase background knowledge;
- explain why one strategy would be more appropriate to use than another;
- indicate whether a strategy had been effective or not;

- think aloud after reading a text segment and indicate their initial understandings;
- indicate if they have re-read/returned to a problematic segment of text;
- clarify confusions or comprehension problems by asking appropriate questions.

---

[1] The model presented here draws on the work of Chall (1983) and Ehri (1995).
[2] Ehri (1995), p. 129
[3] Ehri (1995), p. 121
[4] Chall (1983)
[5] Chall (1983)
[6] Adapted from Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998).
[7] See, for example, Yopp (1995) and Ericson and Juliebö (1998).
[8] Goodman (1973)
[9] Clay (1993), pp. 22
[10] Beck and McKeown (1991)
[11] Carey (1978)
[12] E.g., Heimlich and Pittelman (1986)
[13] See, for example, Lewis and Wray (1997).
[14] See Taylor (1986)

APPENDIX F

ASSESSING WRITING

Writing serves many pedagogical functions. It can be viewed as a means of drawing upon previous knowledge and experiences in interpreting new ideas, consolidating and reviewing new information and experiences, and reformulating and extending knowledge.[1] While often considered to be a solitary activity, many educators now view writing as a transaction between the personal, social and cultural environments; therefore, the writing process must be seen as encompassing these factors.[2]

The writing process is a series of stages through which writers move as they compose. It is cyclical in that it involves some practices that recur throughout each stage.[3] The names given to the stages may vary but generally they fall into five categories:[4] (i) prewriting, (ii) drafting, (iii) revising, (iv) editing, and (v) sharing (see Figure F-1). Although five apparently distinct stages have been identified, these stages are recursive as writers move back and forth between stages as they seek to meet the demands of a particular writing task. Since a process approach to the teaching of writing is emphasised in the revised English curriculum, various aspects of the writing process permeate the English writing indicator sets for each class level. Hence, assessment focuses on the engagement of pupils in the writing process, and on the written texts they produce. The ever increasing range of skills that pupils acquire is also reflected in the writing element of the *English Profiles* where pupils in the senior primary classes are expected to demonstrate understanding of a wide range of genres, techniques and conventions in parallel with their growing maturity and experiential knowledge, and their engagement in more complex oral language and reading activities.

In the first part of this appendix, general considerations relating to the assessment of writing are outlined. Then assessment of specific aspects of writing is addressed. These include pupils' engagement in the writing process and their proficiency in such areas as grammar, punctuation and spelling. The use of rating scales to assess the overall quality of pupils' writing is also addressed. The chapter concludes with a consideration of how the writing element of the *English Profiles* might be applied by drawing on writing samples produced by pupils at each class level from junior infants and sixth class (inclusive).

Figure F-1   Elements of the Writing Process and Associated Pupil Activities and Assessment Areas

Stage	*Pupil Activities*	*Assessment Areas*
Prewriting	• Selecting topics • Discussing experiences/opinions • Analysing and elaborating on ideas • Discussing purpose and form (genre) • Selecting content	• Ability to select topics • Knowledge of topics and genres • Awareness of audience • Ownership of writing • Ability to develop a plan for writing • Ability to gather and organise information
Drafting	• Composing a text, without undue attention to mechanics	• Ability to compose a first draft related to a plan for writing
Revising	• Participating in writing conferences • Explaining ideas • Putting forward suggestions for improving own writing • Implementing changes suggested by self and others • Taking purpose and audience into consideration	• Ability to reflect on form and content of own writing and put forward suggestions for improving it • Ability to implement revisions suggested by self and by others • Ability to consider the perspective of the audience to whom the text is directed
Editing	• Establishing criteria for proof-reading • Proofreading own and others' writing • Editing writing	• Ability to edit one's own writing, using specified criteria relating to grammar, spelling and punctuation
Publishing/Sharing	• Writing and illustrating 'final copy' of text • Sharing and reflecting on own work	• Handwriting • Overall presentation of ideas • Involvement in preparing writing for publication

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The assessment of writing is somewhat different from the assessment of reading. First, standardised tests of writing are relatively rare. Where they are available, they tend to measure discrete elements of writing — for example, 'decontextualised' knowledge of spelling, grammar or punctuation. Where the focus of assessment shifts to whole texts authored by pupils, the quality of writing is often evaluated by applying a scoring rubric — a set of criteria that can be applied to a text to arrive at a judgement about quality. Assessment of texts can focus on overall (holistic)

quality or on specific aspects of quality such as style, structure or coherence. If assessments of the quality of writing are conducted for purposes other than summarising and reporting on achievement within classes, consistency between raters becomes important, and moderation procedures should be implemented. For example, groups of raters (teachers) might examine a set of written texts produced by pupils at different class levels in a school, and reach agreement on the standards that should be achieved at each class level. The set of texts might then be used as 'anchors' against which to judge the quality of other texts. Pupils themselves can become involved in the assessment of writing by maintaining portfolios of written texts, and selecting texts that are representative of the different writing genres and different purposes for writing.

The recent emergence of process approaches to the teaching of writing has also focused attention on the assessment of pupils' engagement in different elements of the writing process. For example, pupils might be assessed on their ability to plan their writing or to revise successive drafts of a text. An important vehicle for guiding pupils through the writing process and assessing their engagement in that process is the writing conference — a short, structured discussion involving the teacher and one or more pupils at which particular aspects of a piece of writing are discussed.

Finally, it should be pointed out that there has been some dissatisfaction in the past with the assessment of writing in Irish primary schools. For example, one study pointed to the relatively narrow range of criteria (mostly related to spelling, punctuation and other mechanical errors) that teachers employ in evaluating and providing feedback on pupils' writing, and expressed dissatisfaction with the extent to which pupils were able to give effective expression to their ideas in writing.[5] The stronger emphasis in the revised English curriculum on providing more support to pupils at all stages of the writing process should lead to assessment practices that focus not only on the texts that pupils produce, but also on the processes in which pupils engage as they write. Moreover, the emphasis in the writing curriculum on providing pupils with experiences of writing in various genres, analysing their ideas through writing, employing a varied writing vocabulary, and exploring the use of different sentence structures should lead to an improved balance between the assessment of primary skills such as organisation of writing and clarity of expression, and the assessment of secondary skills such as spelling and punctuation.

ASSESSMENT OF WRITING PROCESSES AND PRODUCTS

In this section, examples of assessment activities that support the implementation of the writing element of the *English Profiles* are provided.

1. Assessing Engagement in the Writing Process

Figure F-2 illustrates the range of indicators of engagement in the writing process that are included in the *Profiles* at each class level (senior infants to sixth class). These indicators relate to planning for writing, drafting, revising, proofreading, and working towards presenting a finished product.

Figure F-2   Selected Indicators — Engaging in the Writing Process

- Suggests simple changes that can be made to own text to clarify meaning (Sen. Infs., Ind. 10)
- Explains how own text was constructed with reference to selecting ideas, drafting and revising (First Class, Ind. 10)
- Plans for writing by selecting topics and ideas with minimal help (Second Class, Ind. 7)
- Proofreads for spelling and other transcription errors in final drafts (Third Class, Ind. 8)
- Makes simple global judgements about own writing which go beyond one word rejection or praise (Fourth Class, Ind. 10)
- Returns independently to a piece of work and redrafts to improve meaning (Fourth Class, Ind. 8)
- Concentrates on meaning and intention while drafting a text, often rereading what has been written so far (Fifth Class, Ind. 7)
- Modifies words, phrases, clauses and paragraphs to clarify precise meaning (Sixth Class, Ind. 5)

Central to the assessment of children's engagement in the writing process is their participation in writing conferences where a teacher and one or more pupils discuss a piece of writing. Conferences can occur at various points in the writing process including:

- the initial stage, where the pupil is selecting a topic, or developing a plan for writing;
- the drafting stage, where the pupil might seek help with specific problems encountered in writing;
- the revising stage where the pupil's original purpose for writing a text may be revisited, and ideas for implementing changes put forward;
- the editing stage, where the focus shifts to correction of errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation;

120

- the publishing/sharing stage, where the emphasis is on handwriting and effective presentation.

Where the teacher maintains a record of a conference for assessment purposes, informal notes or a writing conference record sheet can be used (see Figure F-3). The record sheet allows the teacher to record information on such aspects of the writing process as selecting topics, demonstrating awareness of purpose and audience, and reflecting on and evaluating ideas. Records of this nature can be referred to near the end of the school year when the teacher rates a pupils' achievement using the *English Profiles*.

Pupils can be taught to evaluate their own writing in the context of proofreading. Proofreading skills can be developed by devising a set of questions that pupils should ask themselves as they edit their texts. Such questions might include:

- Have I checked for spelling mistakes?
- Have I checked for capital letters?
- Are the punctuation marks correct?
- Does my writing make sense? Have I omitted any words?
- Could I improve on my writing by shortening some sentences, combining sentences or adding descriptive words?
- Have I varied the beginnings of sentences or overused any words?

Pupils may also wish to use an editing checklist when proofreading their own or others' writing (see Figure F-4). The editing checklist can be modified to reflect the pupils' level of development.

Figure F-3   Writing Conference Record Sheet

Writing Conference Record Sheet

Name: _____   **Date**: _____

Class: _____   **Teacher**: _____

Focus of the Conference (e.g., planning, revising, editing):

1. What is your writing about?

2. For whom did you write this story?

3. Why did you choose this topic?

4. What is your favourite part

5. What part are you having trouble with?

6. Are your sentences in the right order?

7. Are your paragraphs in the right order?

8. Can you combine some sentences?

9. Can you choose an alternative word for………….?

10. What do you plan to do next with your writing?

Teacher's Notes:

Figure F-4   Editing Checklist

Editing Checklist

Title of story: _____ **Date:** _____

Genre: **Fiction** _____   **Non-fiction** _____   **Poetry** _____
                Biography _____   **Autobiography** _____   **Other** _____

Author: _____ **Editor:** _____

Yes No	I have read this story to myself
Yes No	The story makes sense
Yes No	Handwriting is clear and easy to read
Yes No	Spellings have been checked
Yes No	Every sentence begins with a capital letter.
Yes No	Quotation marks are used to show speech.
Yes No	Every question ends with a question mark.
Yes No	No words have been left out.
Yes No	The beginnings of sentences are different from one another.
Yes No	The tense (past, present, future) is the same throughout the text.
Yes No	Writing could be improved by shortening some sentences?
Yes No	Writing could be improved by combining some sentences?
Yes No	Writing could be improved by adding descriptive words?
	Notes/Comments:

Adapted from: Campbell Hill and Ruptic (1994)

2. *Assessing Grammar and Punctuation*

Although the *English Profiles* emphasise assessment of the writing process, attention is also given to aspects of writing such as grammar, punctuation and spelling. The indicators of achievement in grammar and punctuation are given in Figure F-5.

Figure F-5   Selected Indicators — Grammar and Punctuation

- Uses capital letters and full stops correctly in more than one sentence (Snr. Infs., Ind. 6)
- Begins most names with capital letters (First Class, Ind. 1)
- Deliberately chooses words, including adjectives and adverbs, to refine meaning (Third Class, Ind. 10)
- Makes appropriate use of capital letters, full stops, question marks, exclamation marks and commas (Third Class, Ind. 5)
- Elaborates the meanings of sentences through use of phrases and clauses (Fourth Class, Ind. 9)
- Uses capital letters and a broad range of punctuation marks correctly in own writing (Fifth Class, Ind. 1)
- Modifies words, phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs to clarify precise meaning (Sixth Class, Ind. 5)

Writing every day in a print rich environment, for real purposes and real audiences, understanding the importance of communicating clearly, and accepting responsibility for editing and proofreading of work, create a positive climate for teaching and assessing grammar and punctuation. For instance, in a text where the pupil shifts the tense from past to present, the audience of listeners or readers may ask, 'When did this happen — a long time ago or is it happening right now?' — thus pointing to the need for a more precise link between events and a check on verb usage. Punctuation marks operate like pointers for readers, indicating where they should stop, pause, show whose turn it is or where a question is being asked. Pupils learn to use punctuation marks at all stages of the writing process but particularly when they need to ensure that their work can be easily understood by others. Learning and receiving feedback about punctuation during the course of their everyday writing can provide pupils with a deep understanding of how punctuation works.

During a teacher-pupil conference, the teacher may ask a pupil for more background information on a character or event in a text, for example, 'What did this person look like? Where did he go? Why did he go there? How did that make others feel?' Questions such as these enable the pupil to recognise the importance of descriptive writing and precise use of nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs. Pupils' responses to such questions

also provide assessment information in that they help the teacher to identify areas for future teaching, either at the individual or group levels.

Arranging and rearranging sentences as part of the revision process helps pupils to gain an insight into syntax and its potential effectiveness. Sentence combining, the process of linking two or more short sentences that are related in meaning, can also heighten awareness of syntax and ensure that pupils benefit from feedback on use of syntax.

While several of the activities that are suggested for assessing punctuation and grammar also include some teaching, teachers will, from time to time, examine these elements of writing as they occur in texts written independently by pupils. In some cases, single texts may be used; in other instances, portfolios of texts that have been completed over time can be examined for evidence of development in punctuation and grammar over time.

3. Assessing Spelling in Written Texts

Spelling continues to be a focus of assessment in writing. Figure F-6 illustrates the range of indicators of spelling that feature in the *English Profiles*.

Figure F-6   Selected Indicators — Spelling

- Approximates the spellings of unknown words, using the most obvious consonant sounds (Junior Infants, Ind. 8)
- Makes a systematic attempt to match sounds and letters by including obvious consonant and vowel sounds in spellings (Senior Infants, Ind. 5)
- Approximates spellings of difficult words using strategies such as syllabification, analogy with known spellings, and spelling rules (Second Class, Ind. 6)
- Uses knowledge of spelling patterns, word roots, and spelling rules in attempts to spell unknown words (Fourth Class, Ind. 4)
- Recognises uncertainties in own spelling and uses a dictionary to check spellings (Fifth Class, Ind. 4)

In addition to engaging memory processes, spelling acquisition involves conceptual learning — the gradual understanding of increasingly abstract relationships that begin at a level of individual letters and sounds, and progressively advance through pattern and meaning. The principal levels of knowledge are:[6]

- *phonemic awareness* — the awareness that oral words can be segmented into their constituent sounds (see pages 98-99 in Appendix E).

125

- *alphabetic knowledge* — an understanding that, for many words in English, spelling is primarily left-to-right, a linear matching of letters and sounds (e.g., *mat*, *scrap*, *stop*)
- *knowledge about letter patterns* — an understanding that letter patterns provide information about: (a) the sounds within a syllable (for example, a long vowel sound is signalled by a silent *e* as in *scrape* or *ice*); and (b) patterns between syllables such as the open (c)v/cv pattern (e.g., *ho/tel*, *pi·lot*), and the closed vc/cv pattern (e.g., *kit/ten*, *scrap/ped*)
- *knowledge about the visual representation of meaning* — an understanding that meaning is preserved among words that are members of a spelling-meaning family. The spelling-meaning layer provides information through the consistent spelling of *meaning elements* within words despite sound changes (e.g., *solemn/solemnity*; *please/pleasure*)

In assessing spelling, it is useful to refer to stages of spelling development so that the level of the learner and the corresponding implications for teaching spelling can be determined. Several models of spelling development have been devised. According to one such model[7], there are six stages of spelling development (see Figure F-7). These stages can be compared with those outlined for reading development in Appendix E.

Figure F-7   Stages of Development in Spelling

	Stage	*Characteristics*
1.	Prephonetic (Ages 1-7)	Corresponds to the emergent/pre-alphabetic stage of reading development (Appendix E). What is written is usually not linked to sound. 'Spelling' is a blend of pictures, squiggles, and known letters. Pupils have not yet learned the connection. Signs of development include playing with writing instruments, scribbling and drawing, and pretend linear writing.
2.	Semi-phonetic/ Early letter name (Ages 4-7)	Corresponds to the partial alphabetic stage of reading development. Pupils can use the alphabetic principle — they can represent sounds with particular letters in a left-to-right match up. Pupils concentrate primarily on spelling consonants; vowels are usually omitted, and are incorporated into consonants. Examples: *B* or *BK* for *book*; *T* or *TP* for *top*.
3.	Letter-name spelling (Ages 5-9)	Corresponds to the full alphabetic stage of reading development. Pupils extend and elaborate the alphabetic principle and the use of sound and articulation to spell. Each letter represents one sound. Pupils' use of letter names to spell sounds begins with the spelling of consonants but extends to vowels. Examples: *NAT* for net; *SEK* for sick; *BAK* for back.
4.	Within-word patterns (Ages 6-12)	Incorporates elements of the consolidated alphabetic phase of reading development. Pupils analyse the spelling of single-syllable words more accurately. They have moved away from a strict one letter/one sound expectation, and can now manipulate more complex letter patterns. They can spell long vowel patterns. Examples: *SEET* or *SETE* for *seat*; *NALE* for *nail*; *ROAP* for *rope*.

5.	Syllable-juncture spelling (Ages 8 and up)	Also incorporates elements of the consolidated alphabetic phase in reading development. Pupils explore what happens when syllables come together in multi-syllabic words. When pupils grasp this aspect, when to double a consonant, when to drop an e, and when to leave the word as it stands, they have the potential to apply this knowledge to a range of multi-syllabic words. Examples: *HOPING* for *hopping*; *ATEND* for *attend*; *CONFUSSION* for *confusion*.
6.	Derivational constancy (Ages 10 and up)	Derivational constancy reflects the fact that words that are derived from a common base word or word root usually keep the spelling of that base or root constant. Pupils can fully appreciate how the spelling/meaning connection operates in the language; words that are related in meaning are often related in spelling as well, despite changes in sound. When pupils are spelling most of their words correctly, which is the hallmark of this stage, there are occasional invented spellings such as: *OPPISITION* for *opposition*; *BENAFIT* for *benefit*; *AMMUSEMENT* for *amusement*.

As children advance through the various stages of spelling development, they frequently produce invented or approximate spellings of words they are not yet able to spell independently. Pupils try to compensate for their incomplete understanding of certain sounds (e.g., vowels or digraphs) by using other features of words (e.g., visual features). For example, children may spell *BOOK* as *BK* or *BUK*. At a later stage in the developmental sequence, spellings which were formerly invented become part of the pupil's repertoire of known spellings, while new and more difficult words may be approximated. In the context of assessment, it is useful for teachers to observe and monitor the approximate spellings produced by pupils as these can point to strengths and elements of spelling that would benefit from teaching.

4. Assessing Writing Samples (1) – Applying Rating Scales

In addition to assessing pupils' involvement in various stages of the writing process, and their proficiency in using specific writing conventions, teachers may wish to assess the general quality of a piece of writing. Figure F-8 shows some indicators of writing quality that are included in the *English Profiles*.

The use of writing scales is a practical technique for assessing the quality of pupils' writing. A reader-based writing scale enables the reader/rater to evaluate a piece of writing as a whole entity, and to assign a score to indicate the degree to which the piece reflects a construct of interest (for example, writing quality). An alternative approach is to apply a text-based writing scale in which the rater identifies and quantifies specific elements in the text (for example, story grammar elements) to arrive at a score. Reader-based methods subscribe to a constructivist view of composing, whereby meaning is constructed through the interaction of the reader and the text. Text-based measures, on the other hand, support the view that writing contains meaning independent of reader interpretation.

Figure F-8   Selected Indicators — Quality of Writing

- Writes two or more sentences that are readable and related in meaning (Junior Infants, Ind. 10)
- Writes an extended description using ideas from familiar stories or personal experiences (Sen. Infs., Ind. 9)
- Incorporates basic characteristics of selected genres in own writing (First Class, Ind. 8)
- Organises written texts in relation to the purpose of writing (Second Class, Ind. 8)
- Deliberately chooses words, including adjectives and adverbs, to refine meaning (Third Class, Ind. 10)
- Writes an imaginative story in which character, setting and plot are briefly described and in which events are clearly related to the resolution of the problem (Third Class, Ind. 7)
- Writes stories with a clear beginning, middle and end which include at least one related episode and details of setting, character, plot and resolution (Fourth Class, Ind. 5)
- Writes texts that are persuasive, argumentative or explanatory, and are appropriate for their intended audiences (Fifth Class, Ind. 10)
- Writes a range of narrative genres, for different purposes and audiences, taking objective and personal perspectives as appropriate (Sixth Class, Ind. 9)

One set of reader-based writing scales that have been used to assess the narrative writing of pupils in senior classes in primary schools is presented here[8] (see Figure F-9). The scales look at three related elements of writing: (i) structure; (ii) conventions; and (iii) quality. Within the measure of structure, a number of characteristics are identified which are considered to be indicative of a writer's understanding of the planning and organisation of a story, including the development of a context in the opening section, the use of cohesive ties to link logical relationships, and an absence of digressions and gaps. The scale for structure consists of five points: (1) undeveloped story; (2) basic story; (3) developed story; (4) extended story; and (5) elaborated story.

In measuring writing conventions, a number of errors are identified that range from major to minor, in the areas of grammar, spelling and punctuation (see Figure F-10). Major errors are defined as those likely to disrupt meaning such as lack of subject/verb agreement and commonly-used words that are misspelled. Minor errors include incorrect pronoun usage and unnecessary repetition of words or phrases in a sentence. The scale for assessing conventions ranges from 1 point (numerous major and minor errors) to 5 points (no major errors, few if any minor errors). Finally, in assessing overall quality, eleven dimensions of writing that contribute to the overall quality of a story are considered. These overlap to some degree with the structure and conventions scales and include the

relevance of the story to the writing task, the organisation of the story, the quality of word choice, the extent to which details are interesting, and the use of conventions of punctuation, capitalisation and spelling. The points on the writing quality scale range from 1 (emerging/insufficient story) to 5 (exceptional story).

Figure F-9   Scales for Assessing Structure, Conventions and Overall Quality in Children's Writing

Measure	Characteristics Considered	Score Range
1. Structure	(a) Narrative plan of development present (beginning, middle, end) (b) Context developed in opening/introduction (c) Logical relationships cued by cohesive ties and transitions (d) Elements/events causally and logically (sequentially) related (e) Absence of digressions and gaps	1. *Undeveloped story (list of unrelated events* 2. *Basic story (series of events, lacks cohesion)* 3. *Developed story (sequence of episodes developed but incomplete)* 4. *Extended story (clearly defined sequence of episodes)* 5. *Elaborated story (well developed sequence of episodes, cohesive, elaborated)*
2. Conventions*	(a) Degree to which errors interfere with communication (b) Proportion of major to minor errors (c) Coherence of sentence structure (d) Accuracy of spelling, grammar, punctuation and language usage	1. *Numerous major and minor errors* 2. *Several major and minor errors* 3. *Some major and minor errors* 4. *Few major or minor errors* 5. *No major errors, few if any minor errors*
3. Quality	(a) Clear sequence of events present (b) Story development with little or no irrelevant description or exposition (c) Reactions and feelings related to events (d) Good organisation (e) Originality (f) Fresh vigorous word choice (g) Variety of interesting details (h) Use of dialogue to vary style (i) Coherent sentence structure (j) Correct punctuation, capitalisation and spelling (k) Legible handwriting	1. *Emerging/Insufficient story* 2. *Developing story* 3. *Competent story* 4. *Commendable story* 5. *Exceptional story*

* See Figure F-10 for a list of major and minor errors

129

Figure F-10   Writing Conventions — Major and Minor Errors

Convention	*Major*	*Minor*
1. Sentence Structure	- Subject-verb agreement lacking - Run-on sentences - Fragmented sentences - Omitted words that interfere with meaning	- Overuse of connectors to link clauses/sentences - Omitted words that don't interfere with meaning - Unnecessary repetition of words/phrases in a sentence
2. Usage	- Incorrect use of common words - Incorrect pronoun reference - Confusing tense shifts - Incorrect verb usage (wented)	- Awkward or odd use of words/ phrases but meaning still clear - Homonyms – its/it's, their/there, to/two/too, of/off - Incorrect pronoun usage
3. Spelling	- Misspelled common words (repeated errors counted only once)	- Less-frequent words misspelled
4. Punctuation/ Capitalisation	- Initial capital letters (not to include run-ons) missing - Proper nouns not capitalised - Apostrophes missing - Full stops, question marks missing	- Full stops for abbreviations - Commas in a series missing - Quotation marks missing - Exclamation marks missing

Where writing scales are being applied, it is useful to assemble a set of 5 or 6 texts that are roughly representative of the range of work that is generated by a class or set of classes, and to use these texts as anchors when assessing other texts. Where teachers wish to achieve a degree of consistency in applying writing scales, it is recommended that at least two teachers score a subset of writing samples, and that differences are resolved in conference. Three writing samples generated by pupils in third class and the scores that were assigned to them are offered as examples. The samples indicate the range of achievement in a group of approximately 100 pupils in three different schools on a once-off writing task:

Sample A – My First Visit to the Circus
     (Quality: 5; Conventions: 4; Structure: 4)
One day my sister Anne and I went to the circus. I was six years old. We bought our tickets and went in. Anne bought me some sweets and crisps. The lions began to roar and do tricks. I was afraid. They started to leap through loops. After that the dogs came out. The began to jump over each other. Everybody began to laugh. Then it was the acrobats turn. They began

130

to swing from one platform to another. One of the acrobats suddenly fell off the platform. After a while it was the interval. There was a raffle and I had bought tickets. I won first prize. The clowns came out in their mini. The got out and spread everybody with water. Then they started to tell jokes. Everyone began to laugh. Then the monkeys ran into action. They started with a trick. The horses came on after. It was 50p for a ride on it. I went to go on it and I fell off. I took such a fall I started to cry. When I went home I felt very happy.

Sample B – My First Day at School
(Quality: 2; Conventions: 2; Structure: 3)

One Monday morning mammy bringed me to school. I was afraid. Mammy said your teacher is nice. I said to mammy will you be buting me an a bus. Mammy said yes I might. Then we were there. Mammy brought me in. The name of the school was Playschool. Mrs Gorman was my teacher. I liked her very much. I was sick the next day. The theacher was sad. Next day I wear my uneform. Teacher and I had a fight. Then it was luch time. I got a drink and something to eat. Then I came in and teacher and I were friends. agin. Teacher said, we cought play a game. We were happy. Teacher said it was time to go home. I went out the car. Mammy said how did yu get on. I said fin. We played games. That was the first time in school.

Sample C – My First Time at the Circus
(Quality: 2; Conventions: 1; Structure: 1)

It had a big tent. They were two cowns in it They were on bikes with one wheel They rode all in a ring There were two ack-ro bats They were on the ruf doing arkrobats with a bar me and Mark were siting on the big sit Looking at the cowns and akrobats

5. Assessing Writing Samples (2) – Assessing Portfolios of Writing

A portfolio is an individual collection of samples of a pupil's work assembled over time.[9] It represents a range of efforts and achievements in ongoing classroom activities. Portfolios are particularly relevant to the *English Profiles* in that a completed (and annotated) portfolio of writing at the end of the school year can provide the teacher with an overview of a pupil's development throughout the school year. Such a portfolio provides data on which to base a profile rating in writing that reflects performance on a number of different texts in a range of writing genres. Writing portfolios can also be used for other assessment purposes such as monitoring pupils' development on a regular basis, communicating assessment information to parents, or involving pupils in assessment of their own work.

The specific indicators that can be assessed in the context of reviewing a pupil's portfolio are as broad as the *Profiles* themselves. If planned and organised in an appropriate manner, portfolios can provide evidence of pupil achievement of most of the indicators in the writing indicator sets.

Where teachers decide to introduce portfolios to assess pupils' development in writing, a decision may be made regarding what content should be included in the portfolio. Three portfolio models are outlined here:[10]

(i)   *Working portfolios* — collections of ongoing and completed work such as notes, sketches, half-finished drafts, and final copies.
(ii) *Documentary portfolios* — collections of pupils' work assembled specifically for assessment. They contain both the products of pupils' work, and evidence of the processes that pupils used to develop those products.
(iii) *Showcase* or *best portfolios* — collections of the best of pupils' work, containing only finished products.

A documentary portfolio would appear to be a useful model if a teacher plans to use portfolios in rating a pupil's achievements on the *English Profiles* as it contains information on both processes and products. It may, for example, contain not only a broad range of finished pieces of writing, but also initial drafts of those pieces and an accompanying student commentary on the development process for one or two samples. The drafts and commentary provide evidence that a teacher may use to assess how well a pupil planned, drafted, revised and reflected on their writing.

The range of materials that can be included in a writing portfolio is as broad as the writing curriculum itself. The specific content will be related to the grade level of the pupils and the aspects of the writing curriculum that are emphasised in a given year. They may include:

•   finished samples that illustrate writing in a variety of genres — stories, informational texts, persuasive writing, letters, poetry etc.;
•   examples of writing across the curriculum — reports, journals, surveys, projects, literature/reading logs;
•   texts which reflect the process of writing — outlines of initial ideas, unedited first drafts, revised first drafts, evidence of editing/proofreading, final drafts;
•   writing that shows development in usage of traits — growing ability in self-correction, punctuation, grammar, appropriate form and legibility;
•   items that show evidence of style — organisation, voice, sense of audience, choice of words, clarity;
•   literature extensions — scripts for plays, story webs, story charts, time lines, written reviews;
•   written response to literary components — plot, setting, point of view, theme, character development, links to life, literary links and criticism;
•   writing that illustrates literacy criticism;
•   notes from individual reading and writing conferences;
•   pupils' self evaluations.

The process of applying the writing indicators in the *English Profiles* to a writing portfolio involves examining the writing samples in the portfolio for evidence of achievement of the specific indicators. Where there is clear evidence that an indicator has been achieved on more than one occasion, the teacher can record this information and take it into account in assigning a rating on the *Profiles*. This process is illustrated in the next section.

APPLYING THE ENGLISH PROFILES — ANNOTATED WRITING SAMPLES

In this section, the application of the *English Profiles* to specific writing samples is addressed. For each class level (junior infants to sixth class inclusive), a representative writing sample is provided, and evidence of the achievement of particular indicators is commented upon. In practice, it would be necessary to examine several writing samples authored by each pupil in order to reach reliable conclusions regarding whether or not specific indicators had been achieved by a pupil more than once without help. It is for this reason that a portfolio of writing samples would be more useful than single writing samples. Furthermore, evidence of attainment of some indicators would depend on observation of pupils during instruction, or on discussions with them during writing conferences. Hence, no attempt is made here to assign overall profile levels to pupils.

The writing samples presented here were drawn from among those submitted by pupils whose classes participated in a study of the implementation of the *English Profiles* during the 1996-97 school year. In many cases, several drafts of a text were submitted by pupils and one draft was selected to illustrate attainment of indicators. Each sample presented here represents achievement at the upper end of the scale where many of the indicators are achieved.

Annotated Writing Sample 1 – 'Spring' by John (Junior Infants)

spring

Spring is good it is not cold. We like spring We like the lam

Comments

John's text *'Spring'*, was completed in mid-year but already he appears to have achieved the highest indicator in the writing set for Junior Infants as he writes two sentences that are readable and are related in meaning (Indicator 10). He writes: '*Spring is good. it is not cold. We like spring We like the lam.*'

John has little difficulty with left-to-right orientation (Ind. 4) or with spelling common words (Ind. 6). According to his teacher, the story was constructed using words and captions in the classroom (Ind. 7). Further samples of John's writing would illustrate his mastery of indicators which relate to different forms of writing and approximate spelling.

Annotated Writing Sample 2 – 'My Baby Chloe' by Natasha (Senior Infants)

Comments
Natasha's story reads:

My Baby Chloe
My baby sister cries sometimes. Then I give her a toy and she is happy but she is sick and I am very sad. I love her a lot. She is very cute. She is the nicest baby. I like kissing her. She is gorgeous.

Natasha uses ideas from personal experience to write an extended description (Indicator 9). In this first draft she uses capital letters (Ind. 6) but omits full stops. She makes a systematic attempt to match sounds and letters by including obvious consonant and vowel sounds in spellings (Ind. 5), for example, 'sistr', 'crise' 'giv' and 'nisist', while she also spells some common words correctly (Ind. 4). Natasha has little difficulty with left-to-right orientation and correct spacing of words (Ind. 3). Her ability to explain the key ideas in her own writing (Ind. 8) and to suggest simple changes that could be made to clarify meaning (Ind. 10) would be easily established through a teacher-pupil conference.

Annotated Writing Sample 3 – 'Helping' by Rojwan (First Class)

Helping.

I mind my baby sister while my Mum or Daddy do the cooking I put my clothes on by myself and by the time my mam twakes up, I shout I'm ready! and I tidy my bedroom. Sometimes I take the clothes of the washing-line.

Comments

Rojwan shows evidence of achievement of Indicator 8 — 'Incorporates basic characteristics of selected genres in own writing', in his writing of a simple informational text, *'Helping'*. He writes sentences which include statements (Ind. 7) and common linking words (Ind. 5). Looking at indicators which deal with the mechanics of writing — spelling (Ind. 4), punctuation (Ind. 3), and handwriting (Ind. 2) — Rojwan appears to be quite proficient for his class level. A writing conference between Rojwan and his teacher would reveal how Rojwan's text was constructed (Ind. 10) and his awareness of what changes might be made (Ind. 9).

Annotated Writing Sample 4 – 'Boxing' by Lucy (Second Class)

Comments

Several writing indicators from the set for second class are evident in Lucy's informational text on *'Boxing'*. In this final draft, she 'spaces the letters and words correctly and writes neatly' (Ind. 1) and uses 'many common spellings correctly' (Ind. 3). The length of the text demonstrates her fluency in writing (Ind. 4), while we see that she approximates the spellings of a number of difficult words (Ind. 6), for example 'important' and 'refferee'. Lucy also attempts to use a structure which relates to the purpose of the writing (Ind. 8) although some sentences could be rearranged to add greater coherence to the text.

Annotated Writing Sample 5 – 'Accident' by Nicola (Third Class)

"Come on Joe, hurry up, it will grow dark before we know it and we won't be able to play football. COME ON!"

"Coming, Coming" said Joe, "I hope you that I am bringing my best ball. I had it all my life."

While crossing the bridge that leads to "Footy Field" Ben was kicking Joe's ball and catching it. When suddenly he kicked the ball but did not catch it. SPLASH into the river went the ball.

"NO-OO" shouted Joe and dived in the river, but then he remembered he couldn't swim!

"HELP" he screamed "I'm going to drown."

"What will we do" cried Betty.

"I know" said Lucy.

"You and Ben hold on to my legs and I'll pull Joe up. It will be like "Rescue" on telly. Are you ready?" "ready."

Lucy reached out and grabbed Joe.

10 minutes later Joe was safely at home all snuggled up in blankets on the coach drinking hot coco and watching telly.

Then his mum came in and gave him the surprize of his-life.

He was going to take up swimming lessons!

"Wow, really? Swimming lessons, now I'm glad I fell into the river."

Comments

As a pupil in third class, Nicola has little difficulty generating a text of more than a page (Indicator 1). Her writing is uniform and legible, and she uses the script recommended in her school (Ind. 2). Her use of punctuation and spelling (Inds. 5 and 6) is consistent and accurate and she structures her imaginative story well (Ind. 7). From this sample we cannot draw conclusions about her dictionary or proof-reading skills (Inds. 4 and 8) — this would require observation during class time — but there is clear evidence that she can consistently use direct and indirect forms of speech in narrative writing (Ind. 9).

Annotated Writing Sample 6 – 'The Mummy from Down Below' by Emma (Fourth Class)

The Mummy From Down Below

Hello, my name is Emma _____ and I am a scientist. I work for a Company called Discovery. I am one of four scientists and our job is to find and learn about tombs. I think it is a gross job but it's the only job I could get.

One day the four of us were told to go to Egypt. I said "I'm not going." but the boss said, I had to go. So the next day the four of us boarded a plane and left. I was scared stiff but it was my job.

The next night we arrived in Egypt. We took our bags and left the airport to go to the hotel. The next day we collected and checked our gear to go to the Valley of the Kings. We found the tomb of Tutankamen and set to work on it.

Suddenly a board fell from the floor and I fainted. When I woke up I discovered that where the floorboard had fallen there was a chamber leading down below. I said I wasn't scared

As I was going down there I seemed to hear moans and groans. I was very nervous and the air seemed stale. At the end of the chamber there was a room and in the room there was a tomb!

Suddenly the tomb started to open. I screamed. We saw a mummy. So we started running as fast as lightening. There were booby traps all over the place which we didn't see, but we missed them all because we were running so fast.

The booby traps were axes swinging from side to side and floorboards caved in where you could see lava at the bottom and there were rolling boulders which we jumped over.

As soon as we were out of the pyraimd a huge stone door slammed shut. We made it! Here is a tip for choosing a job don't choose my job!

Comments

Emma, a pupil in fourth class, shows achievement of several writing indicators in her story, 'The Mummy from Down Below', which was presented as a final draft. Her accurate use of a range of punctuation marks (Indicator 1) and uniform, fluent handwriting (Ind. 3) are appropriate for her class level. She also has little difficulty with spelling (Inds. 2 and 4), although we cannot draw inferences about her dictionary skills from this sample alone. The structure of Emma's story has 'a clear beginning, middle and end which includes at least one related episode and details of setting, character, plot and resolution' (Ind. 5). She 'elaborates the meanings of sentences through use of phrases and clauses' (Ind. 9) and, based on a comparison with her first draft (which was also available), it can be inferred that she has redrafted her work to improve meaning (Ind. 8). A writing conference or discussion with Emma would reveal her ability to evaluate her own writing (Ind. 10).

Annotated Writing Sample 7 – 'Physical Education' by Laura (Fifth Class)

<u>P.E in Schools</u>   <u>first draft</u>

don't
I think we get enough P.E. Phisical
Education is a very important thing in
a child's education. We are alowed
just one hour of P.E per week. I think we
should get P.E on three days a week. I
also think we should get sixty minutes
and not thirty. When we're playing football
it's like we're out for ten minutes, bec-
ause because by the time we've
picked teams about 8 minutes or ten are
gone, and we don't have much time
left. If we had an hour it would be
better. Unfortunatly there is absoloutly
nothing I/we can do about it.

final draft

We don't get enough P.E in school.
Physical education is a very important
thing in a child's education. We are
allowed one hour of P.E per week
which means we get half an hour
each P.E day. I think we should
get three P.E days and we should
get an hour. When we're playing
football half an hour is nothing
because it takes time picking teams
and then there's only about 20
minutes left. If we had an hour
it would be much better. Unfort-
uneatly there is absolutely nothing
I can do about it.

Comments

This persuasive text by Laura, a pupil in fifth class, on *'Physical Education'*
shows some evidence of achievement of Indicator 10 ('Writes texts that are
persuasive, argumentative or explanatory and are appropriate for their
intended audiences'.) While Laura makes the point that 'physical
education is a very important thing in a child's education', the statement is
not supported with facts. Further practice and support in this form of
writing would be necessary before this indicator would be fully achieved.

Laura shows evidence of redrafting (Ind. 7), in changing a sentence in her
first draft from: 'When we're playing football it's like we're out for ten
minutes, because by the time we've picked teams about 8 minutes or ten
are gone, and we don't have much time left' to a shorter, improved
version: 'When we're playing football half an hour is nothing because it
takes time picking teams and then there's only about 20 minutes left.'

For her final draft, Laura checks the spelling of some difficult words
(Ind. 4) such as 'physical' and 'absolutely' although the word 'unfortunately'
needs to be checked in a dictionary. Regular punctuation is accurate (Ind. 1).
The incorrect use of full stops in the abbreviation 'P.E' may be overlooked at
this class level.

Annotated Writing Sample 8 – 'School Vandalism' by John (Sixth Class)

It is a terrible thing to damage someone else's property on purpose. This is called vandalism. School vandalism can be anything from putting a mark on someone' s rubber to smashing all the windows in the school and putting a match in.

There are loads of different types of vandalism like stuffing a few toilet rolls down the toilet or bring a pen or marker into the toilet and starting to write all over the backs of the toilet doors.

A few of the main ways of vandalising and the serious ways are smashing all the school windows, setting the school on fire, slashing the teachers car tyres, smashing their car windows or throwing a banger, petrol bomb, eggs, etc. through the window.

After the vandalising has been done and everybody knows who did it the teachers and the parents have to decide on a punishment to give. Sometimes it could be helping the cleaning ladies with the toilets or sometimes if its serious it could be a number of hours in community service in the school area depending on how serious it was. After they have been punished, most people will probably never vandalise again because they know the consequences they suffered form the first they vandalised. You should never become a vandal because you cost the owner of the property which you ruined a lot of money and you suffer yourself from punishment.

Comments
John's writing in sixth class on the topic of '*School Vandalism'* reflects some achievement of Indicator 7 – 'Writes in a persuasive, argumentative or explanatory style for a variety of purposes and audiences'. It is also apparent that he has used an extensive body of common and unusual spellings (Ind. 6), although conclusions about his use of a dictionary cannot be drawn on the basis of this sample. In comparing this almost final draft with an earlier draft, it can be seen that John has modified 'words, phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs to clarify and achieve precise meaning' (Ind. 5). His punctuation is adequate (Ind. 1). Additional samples of John's work would help to clarify his achievement of argumentative or explanatory writing (Ind. 7), exemplify his control of language in poetry (Ind. 8), and show a range of writing in narrative genres (Ind. 9).

---

[1] Hildyard (1994)
[2] Rosenblatt (1989)
[3] Hayes and Flower (1980)
[4] See, for example, Emig (1971), Britton (1978), Graves (1983, 1994), and Calkins (1994).
[5] Department of Education (1982); See also Hall (1995) and Healy-Eames (1999)
[6] Templeton and Morris (1999)
[7] Bear and Templeton (1998)
[8] See Hartnett, Shiel and Murphy (1998). A scale for assessing younger children's writing has been developed by Brooks and Gorman (1996)
[9] Valencia, Hiebert and Afflerbach (1994)
[10] Forster and Masters (1996)

REFERENCES

Bear, D.R., & Templeton, S. (1998). Exploration in developmental spelling: Foundations for learning and teaching phonics, spelling and vocabulary. *Reading Teacher, 52*, 222-242.

Beck, I., & McKeown, M. (1991). Conditions of vocabulary acquisition. In R. Barr, M.L. Kamil, P. Mosenthal, & P.D. Pearson (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research*. Vol. 2 (pp. 789-814). White Plains, NY: Longman.

Brimer, A., & Raban, B (1979). *Infant Reading Tests*. Newham, Gloucestershire: Educational Evaluation Enterprises.

Britton, J. (1978). The composing process and the functions of writing. In C. R. Cooper & L. Odell. (Eds.), *Research on composing: Points of departure.* Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.

Brooks, G. (1994). The assessment of oral language. In D. Wray & J. Medwell (Eds.), *Teaching primary English: The state of the art* (pp.37-47). London: Routledge.

Calkins, L. (1994). *The art of teaching writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Campbell Hill, B., & Ruptic, C. (1994). *Practical aspects of authentic assessment: Putting the pieces together.* Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon.

Carey, S. (1978). The child as a word learner. In M. Halle, J. Bresman, & G. Miller (Eds.), *Linguistic theory and psychological reality* (pp. 266-293). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Chall, J. S. (1983). *Stages of reading development*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Collins-Block, C. (1997). *Teaching the language arts: Expanding thinking through student-centred instruction* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bawn.

Cregan, A. (1998). Oral language development: An eye on the revised curriculum. In G. Shiel & U. Ní Dhálaigh (Eds.), *Developing language and literacy: The role of the teacher* (pp. 3-18). Dublin: Reading Association of Ireland.

Department of Education. Curriculum Development Unit. (1982). *English in the primary school — survey report*. Dublin: Author.

Educational Research Centre. (1994). *Drumcondra Primary Reading Test. Levels 3-6. Manual*. Dublin: Author.

Educational Research Centre. (1997). *Drumcondra Primary Reading Test. Levels 1-2. Technical manual*. Dublin: Author.

Ehri, L.C. (1995). Phases of development in learning to read words. *Journal of Research in Reading*, *18*, 116-125.

Emig, J. (1971). The composing processes of twelfth graders. *NCTE Research Report No. 13*. National Council of Teachers of English.

Ericson, L., & Juliebo, M.F. (1998). *The phonological awareness handbook for kindergarten and primary teachers.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Forster, M., & Masters, G. (1996). *Portfolios: Assessment resource kit.* Camberwell, Victoria, Australia: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Goodman, Y.M. (1996). Revaluing readers while readers revalue themselves: Retrospective miscue analysis. *The Reading Teacher*, *49*, 600-609.

Gorman, T., & Brooks, G. (1996). *Assessing young children's writing.* London: Basic Skills Agency.

Graves, D. (1983). *Writing: Teachers and children at work.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Graves, D. (1994). *A fresh look at writing.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Guillford, J.P., & Fruchter, B. (1978). *Fundamental statistics in psychology and education* (6th ed.). Tokyo: McGraw-Hill/Kogakusha.

Hall, K. (1995). Discovery learning and writing development. *Oideas*, *43*, 5-21.

Hartnett, M., Shiel, G., & Murphy, R. (1998). Reading and writing in the primary school: How are they related. In G. Shiel & U. Ní Dhálaigh (Eds.), *Developing language and literacy: The role of the teacher* (pp. 111-126). Dublin: Reading Association of Ireland.

Hayes, J. R., & Flower, L. S. (1980). Identifying the organization of writing processes. In L.W. Gregg & E. R. Steinberg, (Eds.). 1980. *Cognitive processes in writing.* Hillsdale, New Jersey: Erlbaum

Healy-Eames, F. (1999). *The teaching of writing in Irish primary schools: Instruction, curriculum and assessment.* Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, National University of Ireland — Galway.

Heimlich, J.E., & Pittelman, S.D. (1986). *Semantic mapping: Classroom applications*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Hildyard, A. (1994). Learning and instruction of writing. In T. Husén, & T.N. Postlethwaite (Eds.). *International encyclopaedia of education, (Vol. 7)* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Pergamon.

Ireland. (1999a). *English curriculum.* Dublin: Stationery Office.

Ireland. (1999b). *English language: Teacher guidelines.* Dublin: Stationery Office.

Kaufman, A. S., & Kaufman, N.L. (1993). *Kaufman Survey of Early Academic and Language Skill (K-SEALS)*. Manual. Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service.

Kendall, M.D. (1952). *The advanced theory of statistics (Vol. 1)* (6th ed.). London: Charles Griffin.

Lewis, M., & Wray, D. (1997). *Writing frames: Scaffolding children's non-fiction writing in a range of genres.* Exeter: Exeter Literacy Project.

Linn, R.L., Baker, E.L., & Dunbar, S.B. (1991). Complex performance-based assessment: Expectations and validation criteria. *Educational Researcher, 20*, 15-21.

Messick, S. (1989). Validity. In R. Linn (Ed.), *Educational measurement* (3rd ed.) (pp. 13-103). New York: American Council on Education and Macmillan.

Moss, P. (1994). Can there be validity without reliability? *Educational Researcher, 23(2)*, 5-12.

Murphy, R., & Shiel, G. (1996). *The validation of a system for profiling pupil achievement in writing.* Paper presented at the writing conference of the European Association for Research and Learning, Barcelona, October.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. [NCCA]. (1993). *A programme for reform: Curriculum and assessment policy towards the new century.* Dublin: Author.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. [NCCA]. (1997a). *Curriculum for primary schools. English.* Dublin: Author.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. [NCCA]. (1997b). *Curriculum for primary schools. Teacher guidelines for English.* Dublin: Author.

O'Leary, M., Shiel, G., & Forde, P. (1995). *Towards a system of pupil profiling for Irish primary schools.* Unpublished report. Dublin: Educational Research Centre.

O'Leary, M., & Shiel, G. (1997). Curriculum profiles in Australia and the United Kingdom: Some implications for performance-based assessment. *Educational Assessment, 4*, 203-236.

Review Body on the Primary Curriculum. (1990). *Report.* Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment/Department of Education.

Rosenblatt, (1989). Writing and reading: The transactional theory. In J. Mason (Ed.). *Reading and writing connections*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Rowe, K.J., & Hill, P.W. (1996). Assessing, recording and reporting students' progress: The case for 'subject profiles'. *Assessment in Education, 3*, 309-351.

Shiel, G., & Murphy, R. (1999). Curriculum profiles in English: An implementation study. *Oideas, 46*, 50-67.

Snow, C.E., Burns, S.M., & Griffin, P. (Eds.) (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Taylor, B. (1986). Summary writing by young children. *Reading Research Quarterly, 21*, 193-208.

Templeton, S., & Morris, D. (1999). Theory and research into practice: Questions teachers ask about spelling. *Reading Research Quarterly, 34*, 102-112.

Valencia, S, Hiebert, E., & Afflerbach (Eds.) (1994). *Authentic reading assessment: Practices and possibilities,* Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association.

Yopp, H. K. (1995). A test for assessing phonemic awareness. *Reading Teacher, 49*, 20-29.