





## **The *European Language Portfolio* for learning the language of the host community in primary schools**

This version of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) was designed by Integrate Ireland Language and Training for use in English language support in primary schools throughout Ireland. The original ELP version was validated by the Council of Europe in 2001. Following a revision of the language proficiency benchmarks on which this ELP is based, and the collection of feedback from language support teachers throughout Ireland, the ELP was revised and was re-validated in 2004.

The purpose of this European Language Portfolio is to support children whose mother tongue is not English as they meet the challenge of learning English in order to participate fully in mainstream education. The ELP demonstrates and highlights individual achievement and success and, as a result, helps promote self-confident and self-directed learners.

This European Language Portfolio is intended for pupils from first class upwards as it involves the use of basic literacy skills. Using this ELP with pupils in primary education provides a positive and fun-based means of ensuring that the child learns the language that is critical for integration into the mainstream classroom. At the same time, use of the ELP promotes the growth of self-confidence and self-esteem as the child's active participation in learning provides constant confirmation of the realities of success.

**With thanks to the language support teachers around Ireland who contributed comments and ideas that are included in this guide.**



# Working with the English language proficiency benchmarks

## Content and delivery of language support

The English language proficiency benchmarks provide the basis for the content and delivery of English language support for pupils whose mother tongue is neither English nor Irish. The benchmarks specify the minimum proficiency required for full participation in mainstream primary schooling.

## Theme-based descriptors for the five skills of language

The benchmarks are based on 13 themes derived from the major strands of the primary curriculum. In addition to the theme-based descriptors, there are 'Global benchmarks' which describe language proficiency in general without assuming that the child has studied any of the curriculum themes. These global benchmarks, in particular, provide a means of assessing a child's proficiency on entry to the school or in the absence of information from another school.

The benchmarks define proficiency as positive 'can do' statements. These statements are reflected in an accessible form for pupils in the 'checklists' which appear in the European Language Portfolio (pages 10 – 22).

The benchmark statements specify five language skills at three levels. The skills are **Listening** and **Reading** (Receptive skills) and **Spoken Interaction, Spoken Production** and **Writing** (Productive skills).

## Three levels – A1, A2, B1

The levels used for the benchmarks are derived from the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF). While the CEF has six levels in all, experience demonstrates that children achieving the third level, B1, across all skills have achieved a level of English language proficiency that supports full access to mainstream learning. The benchmarks, therefore, are specified at levels A1, A2 and B1. Level A1 is the lowest level and it automatically becomes the first 'target' for children who enter school with little or no existing English language proficiency. For some children, the lowest levels of the benchmarks may not be relevant, particularly if they have previously attended another primary school.

## Rates of progress and achievement

Children do not all learn in the same way and at the same rate. The European Language Portfolio is designed to provide a means for the teacher and individual pupil together to identify an appropriate pathway for learning. In this way, the apparently less able pupil may be helped to progress along a path and in a way that meets his/her particular language learning needs. The progress through the benchmarks by any individual pupil will rarely be entirely predictable and consistent; some skills may develop more quickly than others, and at any particular level some of the tasks described in the units of work may prove to be more difficult than others.

## For the teacher

The language proficiency benchmarks provide an on-going reference point for language support teachers. By ensuring that language support is focused on both the themes and the language skills specified in the benchmarks, teachers may be assured that all pupils are getting the support necessary to bring them into full engagement with mainstream learning.



## What is the European Language Portfolio?

Every European Language Portfolio has three parts:

- A Language Passport
- A Language Biography
- A Dossier

In addition, it must contain the reference levels and descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference for languages.

### **Language Passport**

The Language Passport is where the child expresses his or her linguistic identity. This process is most important for the children using this particular ELP. While the English language will dominate in the context of their education, it is important to acknowledge the identity that language support pupils express through their mother tongues.

For sample activities leading to the Language Passport see page 8.

### **Language Biography**

The Language Biography is the focus for all the learning that takes place in language support classes. Much of this section contains themed checklists (pages 10 – 22). These checklists are simplified versions of the descriptors in the English language proficiency benchmarks. Each statement suggests a task or activity that the child should carry out so that he or she, with the support of the teacher, can then colour the relevant symbol to indicate that this has been achieved. This helps the child take responsibility for his or her learning and record progress.

For examples of relevant classroom activities see pages 8 – 14.

### **Dossier**

The Dossier is an unrestricted part of the ELP in which children can file and keep their work. Some activity pages are provided, but the main contents of the Dossier are developed throughout language support so that each child has a substantial file of his or her work.

For more information about possible dossier content see page 14.

### **Validation**

When a European Language Portfolio contains all the above elements and complies with the principles set down by the Council of Europe, it may be validated. The validation number for this ELP is 11.2001 (rev. 2004).

## Using the ELP in general ...

- \* Every statement in the ELP suggests a **learning activity**. It is not a book of forms and should not be used in this way.
- \* For the teacher, the topics or activities suggested in the ELP checklists can be used to help **plan lessons**.



- \* All of the themes in the ELP are strands of the **primary curriculum**. There is a wealth of good and appropriate published material available for primary curriculum learning.
- \* When pupils can carry out the activities suggested at B1 level, they are capable of integrating into mainstream learning. The time necessary for a child to achieve this level will differ considerably. The ELP is designed to support learning over a two-year period of language support, so there is **no need to hurry**.

## The order of use ...

- \* The ELP is typically used at the **end of a cycle of learning**. Cycles will usually be theme-based and may take one class session or several weeks to complete. In general, teachers recommend that the ELP should be revisited every two to four weeks.
- \* The ELP will never be used page by page. The teacher has complete **freedom** to move backwards and forwards through the pages to use the themes, statements and activities that fit in best with the rhythm and focus of teaching.
- \* Language learning is **cyclical**. Pupils will revisit the same theme several times as language proficiency develops and learning tasks become more challenging.

## The content ...

- \* The ELP does not restrict the **scope** of teaching. Teachers are free to add new activities, worksheets or other learning or published resources to the Dossier as appropriate.
- \* The ELP can be integrated with **any classroom activities**, topics or teaching objectives
- \* There are many interconnections between units of work so that pupils may be able to **colour several icons** at the same time. For example, following an activity which explores the functions of different places in the locality – bank, garda station, library, clinic etc. it may be appropriate to colour the following icons:

<b>A1 (People who help us p.14)</b>	
I can understand the words for people who help us	
<b>A1 (The local and wider community p.18)</b>	
I can understand the names for people who work and live in my town or area	
<b>A1 (The local and wider community p.18)</b>	
I can point out on a map where different people work	

## Focusing on the individual pupil ...







- \* Because each pupil individually owns his/her ELP, it is possible to include a child's **home culture** in activities – for example by drawing pictures, writing descriptions etc.
- \* 'Portfolio Day', or an ELP session, is a good opportunity to **give praise** individually.

### Sample procedure:

1. Pupil is directed to relevant page for theme that has been covered in recent classroom activities
  2. Pupil reads the statement indicated by the teacher
  3. Pupil and teacher discuss the statement and confirm that the pupil 'can do' it – pupil may demonstrate or answer questions to provide evidence of ability
  4. Pupil colours icon and is given praise for this achievement
- \* The **particular needs** of an individual child may be the focus of his/her portfolio.

### For example:

If a child has already developed proficiency to B1 level in the skills of speaking and listening, but needs to develop more proficiency in reading and writing, then the focus in the portfolio should be on all the statements that suggest reading or writing activities.

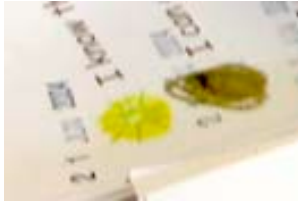
<b>A1 (Time)</b>	
I can read the day and month and the timetable for school	
I can copy the days of the week and the months of the year from the board	
<b>A2 (Time)</b>	
I can read a notice about something that will happen at a particular time and on a particular day	
I can write about my favourite time	
<b>B1 (Time)</b>	
I can read about the past in my reader or textbook	
I can write about something that happened in history or might happen in the future	

## Developing the learning skills of pupils ...

- \* Pupils, particularly those in senior primary classes can take part, with their teacher, in **making decisions** about what needs to be learnt or reviewed. This is done by looking through the themed checklists and identifying new learning targets.
- \* Pages and statements in the ELP support teachers in exploring with their pupils **how language learning happens** and how it can be improved (see pages 8&9)
- \* The checklists (pages 10 – 22) contribute to a process of combined teacher/pupil assessment in which the pupil 'proves' his/her achievement. This process develops pupils' awareness of their own abilities and teaches them how to **assess themselves**.

## Communicating with colleagues and parents

- \* The ELP provides an excellent means of communicating information about a child's progress to his or her **parents**. The coloured icons



become a visual record of a child's progress and achievement. When the icon is also date stamped by the teacher, the rate of progress and currency of the information is immediately obvious.

- \* Regular liaison between class teachers and language support teachers is critical to the success of language support. The ELP can be used as a focus for **discussion between teachers**.
- \* The ELP also supports the mobility of pupils **between schools**. If a child changes school, the ELP should be sent to the new school. This will ensure that the child's English language learning will continue from where it had previously ended.

With the distribution of this European Language Portfolio to pupils in primary schools, IILT gives permission for pages to be **photocopied** for use within a school. For example, at the end of a term or assessment period, it may be helpful to provide a copy of some ELP pages to show the class teacher what a pupil has achieved.

The activity pages in the Dossier section may be photocopied as necessary.





## Ideas for classroom activities based on the use of the ELP

### Page 3 At the beginning

#### Resources

One copy of the ELP per child. Soft ball

#### Method

At the first language support class, arrange children in a small circle and throw ball to each child in turn. When the child gets the ball, he/she must say 'My name is ...' Teacher may have to model this.

Distribute ELPs to all children from 1<sup>st</sup> class up.

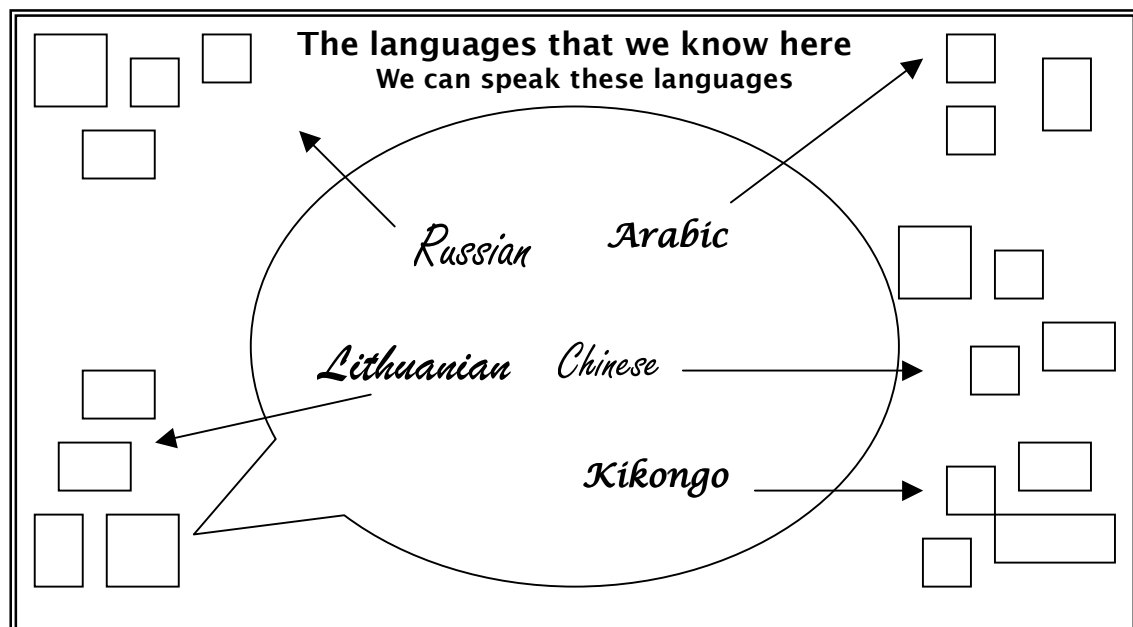
Open at page 3 and get children to write in their names (with help as necessary) and the name of the school.

The other details will come later as pupils learn colours, where they live etc.

### Page 4 Languages I know

#### Making a class poster to supplement individual work in ELP

On Page 4 the pupil records the languages known to him or her. As a means of including these in the classroom display, a class poster could be made to illustrate the range of languages represented by all language support pupils, with photos or names of the children. New photos and languages could be added if children join language support during the school year.



#### Resources

Poster paper, markers, photos of pupils/names

#### Method

- 1 Add the child's name or photo to the wall chart
- 2 Get the child to turn to Page 4 of the ELP
  - Ask 'What language do you speak at home?'



- 'What language do you speak at school?'
- 3 If appropriate, stop at this point and return to the other questions at a later stage when the subject is revisited
  - 4 Help the child to fill in the answers

## Page 8 WHERE I use and learn languages

The purpose of the activities on this page is to develop children's awareness of languages in general and where and how they can use and learn different languages.

Completion of this page could take the entire two years of language support.

Different statements on the page can be connected to other themes and should be revisited in context.

Examples:

**When I get up in the morning I speak** 

### Method

This statement is intended to prompt pupils to talk about the language of their homes. It can be extended into the pupil giving a little 'lesson' in his/her mother tongue, for example teaching a greeting.

It is most important that the home languages of pupils are respected and acknowledged whenever appropriate. These languages constitute a major part of the personal identity of language support pupils. This activity is part of the theme 'Myself'.

**On my way to school I hear** 

### Method

This statement can be connected to the themes 'People who help us' and/or 'Transport and travel'.

1. Brainstorm the different people that we see as we travel from home to school (examples: garda, lollipop lady/man, bus driver, shopkeeper etc.)
2. Pupils suggest what those people might typically say
3. Role play the different roles
4. Expand to other people such as doctor, fireman, nurse, dentist etc.

**At home I hear these things** 

### Method

This statement is connected to 'Myself' but can be expanded into a range of different themes. For example, children may hear stories read by their parents.

1. They draw a picture which illustrates the story that they have heard
2. Tell the story of the picture to the teacher
3. Teacher writes the story, correcting as appropriate, beside the picture

## Page 9 HOW I learn

This page is particularly important for children in senior primary classes, particularly as they approach the transition to post-primary education.

The statements provide a focus for the exploration by pupils of how they learn best. It is likely that the completion of this page will take at least one school year and possibly longer.

### **Method**

When pupils have carried out a learning activity, teacher prompts them to think about their own learning.

For example, when a new topic has been introduced and key vocabulary has been elicited and taught, teacher uses questions of this sort to prompt reflection:

- How are you going to remember those new words?
- Do you think it would be a good idea to write them down?
- Would it be a good idea to have a little quiz tomorrow to see if you have remembered them?
- What about the spelling – how will you remember that?
- Do you do that each time we have new vocabulary in class?

Individual pupils note their learning strategies in the box **When I want to learn and remember new words I ...**

## **Page 10 Myself**

### **1 Draw a picture**

#### **Resources**

Sheet for each pupil with blank outline of a child.

#### **Method**

1. Pupils colour in the eyes and hair and draw ears, nose, hands and feet.
2. They learn the colours of hair and eyes and the numbers one and two.

#### **Song**

A good activity song for learning about the body is '*Head and shoulders knees and toes, knees and toes.*'

### **2 Booklet about myself**

#### **Resources**

Photograph of the child (a digital camera is an excellent resource)

Blank outline of a child to label

#### **Method**

- 1 Pupil sticks photograph into folded 'booklet'
- 2 Writes, or copies, name, age, school, address or area etc.
- 3 Labels blank outline of child
- 4 Writes sentences about colour of hair and eyes
- 5 Writes simple sentences e.g. likes or dislikes, family, how he/she came to school today etc.
- 6 Booklet can be put into Dossier of ELP by punching the pages or inserting in a plastic sleeve

## Page 11 Our school

### 1 Learning about the school

#### Resources

Photographs of different areas, particular rooms and important places in the school.

#### Method

1. Bring the pupils on a walking tour of the school
2. Point out the particular areas, rooms etc. for which you have photographs (e.g. computer room, library, toilets, teachers' room etc.)
3. Practise the vocabulary and explain the use of different rooms.
4. Back in the classroom, label each photograph
5. Review the vocabulary and make a vocabulary chart for the wall
6. Pupils select one photograph each and write some sentences about that part of the school (the length and complexity of the text will depend on the age and English language proficiency of the pupil).

### 2 Becoming familiar with P.E.

#### Resources

Some of the P.E. games suggested in the curriculum (suitable for classroom).

#### Method

1. Pre-teach the key vocabulary
2. Check pupils' comprehension
3. Get a pupil to 'be teacher' and give the instructions, circulate this responsibility
4. Play the game

## Page 12 Food and clothes

### Using concrete examples to learn vocabulary for food or clothes

#### 1 Playing shop

##### Resources

Clothes bag, real food packets collected from home, play foods etc.

##### Method

Set up a play shop. Children take different roles, selling and buying. The 'customer' has to enquire about the price, use language of requests 'may I have', and use 'please' and 'thank you'. The 'shopkeeper' replies by saying 'he/she doesn't have the item', 'there is only one left', 'it costs \_\_\_' etc. 'Money' may be added as appropriate to the level of language proficiency and age of pupils. Then shopkeepers have to add up how much is owed and ask for the correct amount.

#### 2 Categorising food

##### Resources

Real food packets collected from home, play foods, pictures of different foods etc.

## Method

Children must categorise foods according to groups indicated by the teacher. This is a good opportunity to make wall charts of 'Foods that are good for us', and 'Foods that we must not eat too often'. Other categories are fruits and vegetables, foods that we must put in the fridge.

The responsibility can be circulated among pupils of writing names of food on the board in the appropriate list.

End with a writing activity on 'My favourite food'.

## Page 13 Colours, shapes and opposites

**This theme is automatically included in many other themes in the curriculum. As a result, pupils will often be able to prove ability and mark off statements in the checklist in addition to the checklist for the main theme being studied.**

### Examples:

Myself

Food and clothes

Transport and travel

Seasons, holidays and festivals

Time

Animals and plants



I can answer questions about the colours I am wearing (A1)

I can give the names for colours and shapes that I know (A1)

I can ask questions about colours, shapes, size and opposites (A2)

I can describe things by colour, size and shape (A2)  
etc.

## Page 15 Weather + Page 19 Time

**Using a classroom chart to learn the days and months and how to describe weather**

### Resources

Blank chart, on card or laminated, with place to put the day and the month. Two sets of laminated cards 1) with days of the week and 2) months. Collection of weather symbols (available as clipart on internet) on laminated card.

### Method

Each language support group (1<sup>st</sup> class up) must find the cards with the correct day and month. Put these on chart then look outside, talk about the weather and find a symbol that describes it. Put this symbol on the chart.

Alternatively, a single language support group is responsible for building the chart up over a week. Other groups must look at the chart and 'read' the information. Then another group takes the responsibility in the following week.

Example:

day	month	weather
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

## Page 17 Seasons, holidays and festivals + Page 19 Time

### Making a class poster to supplement individual work in ELP

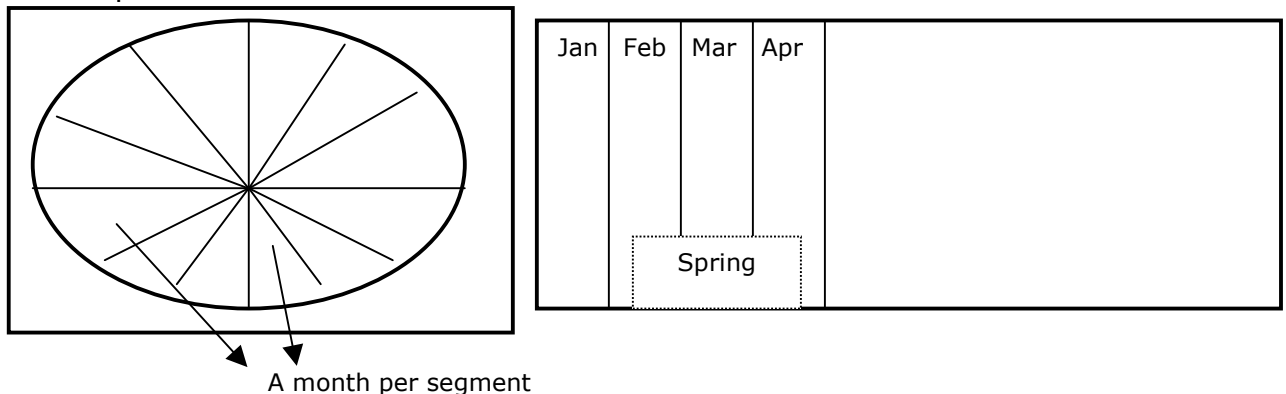
#### Resources

Poster paper, markers, photos or other images if available

#### Method

Make a large blank poster divided into months and seasons.

Examples:



1. Write in the months and seasons
2. Colour or mark the times of the year when children attend school
3. Put in pictures and/or key words to represent the main festivals (e.g. pumpkin for Hallowe'en)
4. Write the children's names in the months of their birthdays
5. Get children to talk about particular events that they celebrate and write/stick pictures into the relevant months

## Page 18 The local and wider community

This theme may also include 'People who help us' (page 14) and 'Caring for my locality' (page 22)

#### Resources

Map of the locality, with numbers to indicate a particular building or place. Photographs of buildings or places in the area (shops, doctor's clinic, library, gym, park, playground etc.) Flash card with key words.

#### Method

1. Introduce the pictures, one at a time, working on the key vocabulary.
2. Mix up the pictures and get pupils to match each picture with the relevant flash card containing the key word(s).
3. Pupils talk about what happens in the different places and the people who work/play/visit there
4. Take a short walking tour to see the places nearest the school
5. Stop and let children look at the photographs as they look at the places in reality
6. Back in the classroom, pupils look at the map and decide which building or place relates to each number.

Note: flash cards can be made into sets of 'Snap' cards. A 'snap' game is good for consolidating word recognition.

## **Page 20 People and places in other countries**

**This theme offers many possibilities for bringing the pupils' cultural backgrounds into classroom activities**

### **General Resources**

Map of world; national flags; pictures, photographs etc. of the countries that the pupils' families represent; coins or notes; other objects from home.

### **1 What is it?**

#### **Method**

1. Each child brings an object from home that is not typically seen in Ireland.
2. Children find the vocabulary to describe the object – what it is made of, size, shape, texture etc.
3. Children guess what its use may be by
  - a. Suggesting where it is used (kitchen, car, garden etc.)
  - b. Describing how they think it is used
4. Finally, the child who brought in the object tells the class all about it

### **2 Learn about me**

Child teaches some language, a song or a dance to others. It may be possible to involve some mothers of pupils' in this type of activity.

## **Page 21 Animals and plants**

**This theme is closely connected to 'seasons', 'local and wider community' (beach, park, bog etc.), 'time', 'colours, shapes and opposites'.**

### **General Resources**

Pictures, nature posters, stories, rhymes, songs

### **Examples of methods**

Draw a picture of a story that has a focus on spring and retell the story to the teacher

Use pictures of animals and birds as prompts for descriptions – colour, size, where they live, sound made by the animals etc.

Draw pictures to show how a flower grows from a seed in the spring (if possible, grow something in the classroom).

A nature walk/trip looking at objects that have been studied in the classroom.

## **Page 23 Dossier**

The Dossier already contains a small number of activity sheets to help begin the process of building a personal collection of work.

As learning proceeds, the dossier will typically contain: **drawings with labels, word lists, poems and stories written by the pupil, news, projects, information charts for particular subjects** (history, geography etc.), and any other work generated in language support class.



## Some classroom approaches that can be used for a wide range of themes

### To develop listening skills

Use **storytelling** for:

- Listen and draw what you hear
- Listen and find keywords on flashcards
- Listen and mime
- Listen and provide repetitive words, phrases or rhymes that occur in the story
- Listen and guess/predict what will happen next
- Simon Says

### To develop reading skills

- Flashcards with key vocabulary or phrases
- Match pictures to words
- Sequencing activities using cut up sentences
- Build a 'vocabulary wall' and get pupils to find relevant vocabulary there when they need it
- Use labels and match these to objects, pieces of text, posters, pictures etc.
- Picture dictionary
- Make and do word searches

### To develop speaking skills

- Puppets, masks
- Themed role play
- Rhymes and songs for rhythm and pronunciation
- Chain games – adding a word, sound etc. each time
- Pupils dictate news, story or poem to teacher who writes it down
- Picture dictionary to help with unknown words
- Regular 'tell us about ...' sessions

### To develop writing skills

- Write the day and date every day
- Make word searches and simple crosswords
- Class 'Big Book' and themed scrapbooks
- Draw a picture and write 'news'
- Write and reply to notes from other pupils
- Class newspaper made by children

