

# **Assessment Policy**

**St. Ciaran's National School, Fuerty**

**18194p**

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## 1. Overview

While it is generally accepted that assessment has always been an integral part of primary school life in Ireland, it has been given statutory obligation in Section 22 (2) (b) of the Education Act 1998 which requires schools to “regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to the students and their parents.” Thus in formulating this policy, St Ciaran’s N.S. understands assessment to be “...the process of gathering, recording, interpreting, using and reporting information about a child’s progress and achievement in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes”. (Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for Schools NCCA). It takes account of guidelines laid down by NEPS in “A Continuum of Support” and in “Assessment in Primary School Curriculum”, the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004 and DES Circulars 02/05, 24/03

## 2. Development

This policy was developed by the teaching staff during the 2019-2020 school year in response to the directive to review assessment policies laid down in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy.

## 3. Policy Rationale

Assessment is the process of gathering, recording, interpreting, using and communicating information about all aspects of a child’s progress and achievement across the curriculum. The assessment of pupils’ development is central to the work of a school. Having an Assessment Policy in place will help to ensure uniformity and continuity of approach between classes and within the school. “It is about building a picture over time of a child’s progress and/or achievement in learning across the primary School curriculum. Information about how the child learns and what the child learns shapes that picture” (Assessment in the Primary School)-

- i. assessment of learning
- ii. assessment for learning and difficulties/strengths/progress.

This policy endeavors to identify at the earliest possible opportunity, children who may have learning difficulties and put in place a whole school response to their needs by engaging in a **staged approach to assessment**.

## 4. Relationship to School Ethos

The school adopts a holistic approach to the education and development of each child and the enhancement of teaching processes. We believe that an effective Assessment policy identifies early interventions that need to be put in place to ensure that relative success, increased confidence and raised self-esteem is achieved for all pupils.

## 5. Aims and Objectives

Aims:

- To inform planning for all areas of the curriculum.
- To gather and interpret data at class/whole school level in relation to national norms.
- To contribute to the school’s strategy for the prevention of learning/behavioural difficulties.

To Identify areas of concern

- To track learning processes which assist the short and long term planning of teachers.

Specific Objectives:

1. To monitor pupil progress and attainment so as to optimise pupil learning.
2. To identify the particular learning needs of individual pupils or groups.
3. To generate baseline data that can be used to monitor a child's progress over time.
4. To involve parents and pupils in identifying and managing their learning strengths and weaknesses
5. To co-ordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis involving parents and pupils in managing strengths and weaknesses.

## 6. Principles

- Careful thought is given to the purpose of assessment, adopting a wide range of methods to reflect the whole Curriculum and learning opportunities. The main purpose of assessment is to facilitate progress in a pupil's learning.
- Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process, a valuable formative tool.
- The outcomes of assessment modify our teaching methods, provide feedback on the Curriculum as well as indicate pupil progress.
- We recognise the potential for assessment in developing a positive self-image in the pupil from positive and constructive feedback and the feeling of success, which encourages further study.
- Results of assessment are reported in a way useful for pupils, teachers, parents and other interested parties.
- Assessment records must be easy to interpret, useful, manageable and should not be administratively burdensome.

## 7. Policy Content

This policy is aimed towards using assessment to inform planning and identify the needs of all pupils so that adequate strategies are in place early enough to facilitate remediation. This is completed with the support and guidance of the Staged approach to Assessment. These strategies may include pupil self-assessment, pupil profiling, two-way communication between parents and teachers, modification of teacher programs, and Support Plans (see also SEN Policy).

## 8. Assessment Methods

### How is learning assessed?

As part of the assessment process, a selection of assessment tools, chosen at the discretion of the teacher, will be used to help gain a clearer picture of the success of the teaching and learning in our school. Apart from the specific tests named below, a variety of assessment methods is used throughout the school, depending on the age of the pupils and the specific curricular area. In general, the assessment methods used in this school are:

- Teacher observation
- Teacher-designed tasks and tests

- Pupil projects and portfolios
- Pupil profiles
- Samples of pupils' work
- Record keeping
- Annual reports
- Checklists

## **Main Areas to be Addressed in this Policy**

- 1. Assessment for Learning**
- 2. Assessment of Learning**
- 3. Self-assessment by students and teachers**
- 4. Staged approach to assessment**
- 5. Screening/Diagnostic assessment**
- 6. Standardised assessment**
- 7. Educational Psychological assessment**

## **9. Assessment for Learning (AfL)**

Assessment for Learning emphasises the child's active role in his/her own learning. This level of involvement, in shaping their own learning, can heighten children's awareness of themselves as learners and encourage them to take more personal responsibility for, and pride in, their learning. By interacting with the children in such a way, the teacher can gain invaluable information as to how best to deliver the curriculum in their classroom. Every interaction has the potential to provide the teacher and children with a better idea of what they do or don't understand or can and can't do. Many of these interactions are informal and are a continuous part of everyday classroom activities, in all classes, across the full curriculum. They are used to identify what pupils have achieved, what might be affecting their progress and what strategies will best support their future learning. The information that such assessment provides will also enable teachers to evaluate their own practice and make changes.

Assessment for Learning may consist of, among others, the following:

- Teachers observing the child in the classroom and whole school environment, through listening, observations, reflections, and reactions to classroom problems, so that a picture of the child can be built up. Various checklists can be compiled e.g. vocabulary, behaviour, skills, samples of pupils' work (e.g. writing, art) etc. An important part of recording the progress of the child is the periodic recording of strengths and weaknesses of the child.
- Class work
- Homework
- Pupil – teacher discussion
- Teacher designed assessments

## 10. Assessment of Learning (AoL)

Assessment of Learning generally involves assessing a child's learning at the end of a given period, such as the end of a unit of work, a week, a term, or a year. Assessment of Learning is more about measuring a child's cumulative progress towards objectives, often in the form of a grade or score. Assessment of Learning also helps the teacher to plan future work, to set new targets, and to provide feedback and information for end-of-year assessment.

## 11. Self-Assessment by Students and Teachers

Children are involved in self-assessment when they look at their own work in a reflective way, identify aspects of it that are good and that could be improved, and then set personal learning targets for themselves. Self-assessment skills include effective questioning, reflection, problem solving, comparative analysis, and the ability to share thoughts in a variety of ways. Self-assessment can be used by children of all ability levels and in all areas of learning. In age-appropriate ways, it can be used throughout the primary school and across all subjects. Whole class discussions, group situations or one-to-one conferencing are all platforms for self-assessment. These everyday activities place assessments at the very heart of teaching and learning. It enables the child to take greater responsibility for his/her own learning. A learning log and/or reflective report cards can be used to document the child's self assessment and reflection on his/her work samples or collections. Teachers in turn, can also use self-assessment to evaluate how they deliver the curriculum content to the children and by reflecting on how a unit of work was delivered. This reflective practise, coupled with the AfL and AoL mentioned earlier, will help to inform them as to what was successful and if any adjustments may improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom.

We will use a variety of ways of involving pupils in assessing their own learning, these may include:

1. Questioning
2. Feedback-individual and/or group feedback
3. Dialogue and Discussion
4. Focused Correction of Work
5. Visual Aids in Juniors, Seniors and First Classes
6. Traffic Light System
7. KWL grid – This can be used orally and/or written, by group and/or class and/or individual
8. Reflective report cards

## 12. Staged approach to Assessment

When the Principal, staff or a parent forms the opinion that a child is not benefitting from the educational programme provided in the school, the school will strive to ensure that measures are taken to meet the educational needs of that child. Measures taken will be in line with those recommended in **Circular Special Education. 24/03 - "Staged Approach in Assessment, Intervention and Review"**.

### Stage 1

Use of informal assessment methods: **Teacher led assessment**

- Teacher observation of child's learning and behaviour- Completion of Learning Environment Checklists (Sen Assessment Template) and Completion of My Thoughts about school Template (SEN Assessment template)
- Periodic teachers' opinions and observations and feedback (e.g. Power Hour etc.).
- Teacher designed tasks and tests
- Work samples, portfolios and projects.
- Questioning

**Pupil led Assessment:**

- Self- assessment
- Conferencing
- Work samples, portfolios and projects.
- Concept mapping

Each teacher has discretion as to the format, administration and frequency of in-class testing. Based on the outcome of these, strategies in the relevant area of learning and or behaviour should be drawn up by the teacher. (Classroom Support Plan).

**Stage 2**

If concerns remain, the SEN team should be consulted. Further information is gathered using a range of checklists.

- a) From the pupil: the child's perception of his/her difficulties and or what might help. -
- b) From the parent: information on child's development/health or on other factors that might contribute to any difficulties. information on the child's behaviour/learning at home
- c) From other sources:
  - previous school/pre-school
  - previous class teacher and present periodic class teachers e.g. Power House, Reading Recovery and Intervention teachers
  - outcomes of vision/hearing tests
  - other agencies
- d) Having received parental permission:
  - the SEN teacher will administer an appropriate diagnostic/screening test(s)
  - results/outcomes will be recorded on the child's Support Profile and on his School Support Plan. The class teacher will be informed of the results. These tests will inform further planning for the child.

Supplementary teaching will be arranged (either in-class or on a withdrawal basis) if the assessment indicates it would be beneficial. The drawing up of the child's/group support plan is primarily the responsibility of the SEN teacher working with that child/group.

Regular review and assessment of the work completed with the child will take place. These reviews will inform learning targets for the child's learning.

Regular communication will take place between the SEN teacher and the child's class teacher with the class teacher outlining areas of progress and areas of on-going concern.

Regular communication with the class teacher is important.

Regular communication with parents is needed Information relating to the child and allows them to add information that may assist the child making the progress they need to make.

**Stage 3**

If Stages 1 and 2 fail to deliver hoped for outcomes, the SEN teacher needs to communicate with the class teacher any concerns that they have in relation to the child's progress or lack of progress. Parents will be contacted by either the class teacher, SEN teacher or the Principal. The necessity for an educational/behavioural assessment or Assessment of Needs will be discussed and parents'/guardians' permission sought. The Principal will take all necessary steps to ensure that the assessment is carried out by relevant personnel. Depending on the outcomes of an assessment an Support Plan will be drawn up by all the teachers working with the child and in consultation with the parents. Overall responsibility for ensuring that an Support Plan is in place and that it is regularly reviewed and updated lies with the class teacher.

### **Use of Standardised Testing (AFL)**

Standardised tests (Drumcondra English and Maths) are used to measure a child's literacy and numeracy skills and to determine a child's progress in those areas. and of the Sigma T for Numeracy. The NRIT (Non Reading Intelligence Test) is administered in September to pupils in second and fifth class. When used in combination with information from other assessment methods, standardised test results contribute to the accuracy of the teacher's monitoring and assist in identifying the needs of individual children.

## **13. Early Intervention and Supplementary Teaching**

There is an emphasis in our school on early intervention in Literacy and Numeracy from the Infant classes upwards. The SET teacher will provide as much time and support of the infant room as the timetable allows. We would encourage our SET teacher to provide daily inclass support with the teaching of literacy and numeracy.

If a child begins to show signs of difficulty or a discrepancy becomes apparent between the chronological age of the child and their level of attainment, the SEN teacher and the Class Teacher will meet to discuss with the parents/guardians, the possibility of further testing in order to establish the nature of any difficulty and how best to meet those needs either through withdrawal or in-class support.

At this point the parents/guardians will be asked to sign a consent form allowing their child to receive additional support. After this consultation with parents/guardians, the SEN teacher, in co-operation with the Classroom Teacher, will administer screening/diagnostic checklists and/or tests in order to identify any underlying causes of learning difficulties which are acting as obstacles to learning and convey this information to the class teacher. By eliciting more precise information, it is possible to analyse the relative strengths and weaknesses of the child. Programmes can then be devised, based on the needs of the child, in order to give him/her specific help. If there is still cause for concern the child, after SET intervention, is referred to the Principal and possibly of a psychological assessment will be decided, with the consent from the child's parents/guardians.

In the case where a child is selected for supplementary teaching taking the form of withdrawal or one-to-one teaching but the parents do not wish for the child to receive such support, a written letter from the parents will be sought outlining that while the school made them aware of the difficulty their child was experiencing and while supplementary teaching was made available, they have decided that they do not wish the child to avail of this support. The SET will provide resources,



advice and support to the class teacher in helping them meet the needs of the child in the classroom. The SET will work with the class teacher in providing in-class support. The SET will provide advice for parents in supporting their child's learning needs at home.

## **14. Screening/Diagnostic Assessment**

### **Junior Infants**

All children in Junior Infants are screened in order to identify children experiencing difficulties in learning. Some or all of the following screening measures may be used

- Input from parents
- Teacher observation
- Teacher designed tasks and tests
- Checklists
- BIAP (Belfield Infant assessment Profile) for specific pupils (third term)
- SET Teaching

### **Senior Infants**

The same assessment methods are used as in Junior infants, excluding the BIAP test, which will be replaced by the MIST (Middle infants screening test). The MIST is administered during the second term of Senior Infants to screen for literacy difficulties. The aim is to identify pupils who have not the literacy skills in place or who are showing confusion, and to allow intervention before failures are observed.

### **First and Second Class**

Assessment will continue as in the Infant classes, except that Standardised Testing begins in First Class in both English and Maths. Teacher testing, in areas such as Spelling, in both English and Irish, and Maths Tables will also commence. Standardised testing using the Drumcondra Primary Reading Test (DPRT) for literacy and the Drumcondra Primary Maths Test for numeracy will be administered during the third term, usually in the month of May for second class. Sigma-T will be administered in the first term of second class for first class children. The New Non-Reading Intelligence Test (NNRIT) will also be administered during the second term of second class to aid in the detection of language difficulties and specific learning difficulties.

### **Third and Fourth Class**

Assessment will continue as per previous classes.

### **Fifth and Sixth Class**

Assessment will continue as per previous classes. The NRIT may be administered again in Fifth Class during the second term by the SEN teacher and results will be analysed in relation to Standardised Test results.

## 15. Standardised Assessment

Standardised Assessments are organized by the SET teacher and conducted by class teachers with the support of the SET teacher during the months of May/June in accordance with circular 0056/2011. Standardised Sigma-T tests are completed by the SET teacher in September with second class.

The results of tests are scrutinised in June by the SET Teacher, class Teacher, and Principal. Where results indicate a learning difficulty i.e. where there is a marked difference between the child's chronological and reading/mathematical age and/or whose classroom performance signify some level of difficulty, the pupil is, with written parental approval, referred for diagnostic testing, this may take place in September. If there is still cause for concern, after Special Education Teacher (SET) intervention, the child, is referred to the Principal by the SET Teacher and/or by the class teacher and possibly sent for an educational psychological assessment, again after getting parental written consent.

In line with Circular 0056/2011 standardised test results are communicated to parents. These results are accompanied by a standard explanatory note from school. Under the circular, these results are also reported to the BOM. Results for Second, Fourth and Sixth Class are reported to the Department of Education and Skills in aggregated form. The percentile score is communicated to parents. The parents of all children in the school, whose results give cause for concern, are asked to come into school and discuss their child's progress and attainment with the class teacher, with the view to possibly receiving support from the Sen teacher.

The standardised test booklets are kept by the SET teacher until the following year when the new test results are collated. The booklets will be dealt with due awareness of Data Protection. Thereafter, only the results section will be stored. The records are stored in a secure filing cabinet in the Principal's office. These records are kept until the child has reached twenty-five years of age.

## 16. Educational Psychological Assessment

When a child is prioritised for an educational psychologist assessment, a meeting will be held by the SET teacher with the parents to discuss this procedure. This meeting will outline the need to contact our educationalist psychologist for our school (Cathal Duffy). The Set teacher will outline all areas of intervention that have taken place and the outcomes that have and have not been achieved by their child. The Set teacher will meet or speak with Cathal and outline all the available information with him. He will determine the next course of action. This information will be conveyed to the parents through the SET teacher. Any advice given by Cathal will inform the drafting of a Support plan for the child. The psychological reports can only be accessed by personnel as outlined in page 95 of the NCCA Guidelines. These reports are stored securely in locked filing cabinets.

## 17. Recording and Storage of Assessment Information

- **How is assessment information recorded?**

Assessment information in this school is recorded through marks, grades, checklists and narrative comment, both oral and written. Comments are phrased in a positive manner and, if appropriate, with recommendations for improvement in specific areas of learning.

- **Where is assessment information stored?**

The records of report cards and standardised assessments are stored in a secure filing cabinet.

- **With whom is information shared?**

The Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2018 entitles the parents/guardians of all primary school children to have access to all personal data relating to their children, whether stored in electronic form or hard copy. This school complies with this legislation.

Where appropriate, the school also shares information with other teachers, other primary schools and secondary schools when children transfer, and the children themselves. Assessment information on an individual child will be provided to another school, primary or post-primary, to which the child is transferring. This will only be done upon receipt of written enrolment confirmation. If a school requests our school to forward the educational psychological assessment, this request will be conveyed to the parent.

The school also shares information with other relevant individuals and agencies such as the Inspectorate of the Dept. of Education and Skills, Special Education Needs Organisers (SENs), Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs) of Tusla and other professionals such as speech and language and occupational therapists. Where assessment information is shared, confidentiality is maintained between the school and the receiver of the information. All requests from outside agencies for assessment information on individual pupils must be made through the Principal.

- **How is assessment information shared with parents/guardians?**

Assessment information is formally shared with parents twice a year.

Parent/teacher meetings take place once a year during the first term, usually in November. Each child's parents are invited to attend a meeting. If either the teacher or the parents believe that a follow-up meeting should take place, it will be arranged for a mutually convenient time.

A comprehensive written report is given to parents at the end of the school year. This report covers both academic and social progress. This report includes the results of the Drumcondra and Sigma- T tests and a short explanation of the results.

Results of the MIST test are shared with the parents of children whose results have given cause for concern.

Results of diagnostic tests are shared with the parents and teacher of the child concerned.

Copies of the end of year reports are passed on to the child's new teacher.

## **How are assessment results used?**

Assessment results are used to communicate a child's progress to his/her parents (Assessment of Learning).

Results are also used to enable teachers to plan lessons in a specific way, both for the class in general and to differentiate the learning experience for particular pupils (Assessment for Learning).

## **18. Success Criteria**

We will know this policy has succeeded when:

1. A range of informal and formal assessment modes are used to place assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning.
2. Procedures run smoothly and efficiently because there is clarity about what is expected and who is responsible for the different aspects.
3. Transfer of information from teacher to teacher happens efficiently at the beginning and end of the school year.
4. Each child has been presented with the opportunity of assessment from the spectrum of assessment tools mentioned above.

## **19. Implementation Date**

While most of the elements of this policy have been in operation within the school for many years, this amended Assessment Policy will formally apply from date of Ratification.

## **20. Timetable for Review**

This Policy is scheduled for review in May 2021 or as the need Arises in light of new circulars/legislation

## **21. Ratification**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting

Chairperson's signature -Fr. Eugene McLoughlin

Date: November 2019

## **Bibliography**

Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for School NCCA 2007

Special educational Needs – a Continuum of Support, Guidelines for Teachers and Learning Support Guidelines (DES 2007)

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