

St Joseph's N.S., Leitrim Village, Roll No: 01125B

Assessment Policy

1. Introductory Statement

This policy was formulated by the staff of St Joseph's Mixed N.S. on a school development planning day on 16th November 2007. It was reviewed and amended on the 14th March 2008, November 2010, November 2012 and again between September and December 2016.

2. Rationale

The policy is based on advice and information provided in the Primary Curriculum, the NCCA website, the NCCA document *Supporting Assessment in Primary Schools*, Circular 0138/2006, *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for Schools* (NCCA, 2007) and The National 'Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life' Strategy, 2011 (also Circular 0056/2011).

3. Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school

The school policy on assessment reflects the core values and ethos of the school. Assessment activities used will contribute to pupil learning and development by gathering relevant information to guide each pupil's further learning (assessment for learning) and by providing information on each pupil's achievement at a particular time (assessment of learning).

4. Aims

This policy aims: -

- To benefit pupil learning.
- To monitor learning processes.
- To generate baseline data that can be used to monitor achievement over time.
- To involve parents and pupils in identifying and managing learning strengths and difficulties.
- To assist teachers' long and short term planning.
- To coordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis.

5. Content

This policy will be looked at under the following headings: -

1. Purposes of assessment
2. Definition of assessment
3. Range of assessment methods
4. Assessment for learning (AfL)
5. Assessment of Learning (AoL)

5.1 Purposes of Assessment

- To inform planning for, and coverage of, all areas of the curriculum.
- To provide the teacher with information to make decisions about what and how the child is learning.

- To assess different dimensions of the child's learning and development including the cognitive, the creative, the affective, the physical and the social dimensions.
- To identify the particular learning needs of pupils/ groups of pupils including the exceptionally able.
- To enable teachers to modify their programmes and their teaching methodologies in order to ensure that the particular learning needs of individual pupils/ groups are being addressed.
- To compile records of individual pupils' progress and attainment.
- To facilitate communication between parents and teachers about pupils' development, progress and learning needs.
- To facilitate the involvement of pupils in assessment of their own work.
- To monitor pupil progress and attainment.
- To gather and interpret data at class/whole school level and in relation to national norms.

5.2 Definition of Assessment

In line with the NCCA, our staff believe that assessment is integral to teaching and learning and is concerned with **children's progress and achievement. We concur with the definition of classroom assessment as "the process of gathering, recording, interpreting, using and communicating information about a child's progress and achievement during the development of knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes"**. Assessment, therefore, involves much more than testing. It is an ongoing process that encompasses many formal and informal activities designed to monitor and improve teaching and learning in all areas of the curriculum (NCCA, Supporting Assessment in Schools, April 2005 p3).

5.3 Range of Assessment Methods used Throughout the School

In the course of engaging in both assessment of learning and assessment for learning, teachers will use the following to make judgements about pupil achievement/ progress: -

- Teacher observation
- Teacher-designed tasks and tests
- Oral responses from pupils
- Conferencing
- Concept mapping
- Questioning
- Peer assessment and Pupil Self Assessment- KWL/charts, Thumbs up, across, down, Traffic Lights
- WALT and WILF charts
 - **We Are Learning To....**teacher shares learning intention with the children
 - **What I'm Looking For.....**criteria of success
- Completed assignments by pupils – projects, copybooks, activities, work samples, homework, portfolios ...
- Parental, pupil feedback or observation
- Standardised tests
- Diagnostic tests
- Assessment by psychologists

5.4 Assessment for Learning (A/L)

Judgement of children's learning and development are made over a period of time rather than sporadically and assessment information is used to provide intervention and support appropriate to the child's learning stage.

The types of informal assessment methods used in the school are:

- Teacher observation
- Teacher-designed tasks and tests
- Work samples, portfolios and projects.

Assessment methods that are at the discretion of individual teachers are:

- Teacher observation
- Teacher-designed tasks and tests
- Work samples, portfolios and projects
- Homework
- Pupil feedback.

There are guidelines to co-ordinate what is observed/ recorded where assessment is based on teacher observation in certain subject areas: -

- Checklists
- Profiles
- Staff meetings
- Teacher conferencing

Portfolios of pupil assignments, work samples and projects are kept. All subject areas will be covered (apart from PE). These portfolios will be in the possession of the individual students and will be added to in the course of the school year.

Assessment for each curricular subject will be included in the individual teacher's short –term and long – term planning. Teacher-designed tasks and tests are used for all curricular subjects.

Children are involved in assessment of their own work / progress through drafting and redrafting in written activities, personal awareness of success or lack of success in achieving targets set by the individual teacher.

5.5 Assessment of Learning (AoL)

Formal assessment methods that are used are dependent on the age level of the child, subject and difficulties the child is experiencing. These apply across the whole school and include:

(a) Standardised tests

- The tests used in the school are
 - Bury Infant Check
 - MIST
 - Drumcondra Test of Early Literacy and Numeracy
 - Drumcondra Test of Early Literacy and Numeracy- Diagnostic
 - Jolly Phonics Assessment
 - Drumcondra Primary Mathematics Levels 1 - 6
 - Drumcondra Primary English Levels 1 - 6

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- Drumcondra Spelling Levels 1 - 6
 - Drumcondra Irish/ Triail Gaeilge Dhroim Conrach Levels 1 – 3
 - NRIT
 - (Micra T and Sigma T, if the need arises)
 - Quest
 - Aston Index
 - Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (NARA).
 - Dyslexia Early Screening Test (DEST)
 - Dyslexia Screening Test (DST) (All diagnostic)
 - York Assessment of Comprehension
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- All classes, except Junior Infants are formally tested.
 - Junior Infant pupils who are experiencing difficulties and are well behind their peers in learning may be assessed using the Belfield Infant Assessment Profile (B.I.A.P.) and a selection of Teacher designed tasks and tests.
 - Senior Infants complete the MIST in February and DTEL/ DTEN whenever is suitable thereafter.
 - The tests are carried out usually during the month of May.
 - The entire teaching staff, under the direction of the SET and principal is responsible for purchase, distribution and co-ordination of testing.
 - The class teacher administers the standardised screening tests with support from the SET.
 - Exemptions may be made for the following students: - (See Circular 56/ 2011)
 - International pupils
 - Pupils with language / learning difficulties
 - Members of the Travelling community
 - Pupils who are not taking a test with their classmates will be supervised in another part of the school by another member of the teaching staff.
 - All results are recorded – raw score, standard score, percentile rank, STEN, reading age and stored in a central filing cabinet. Teachers will have access to the results. There is a uniform approach across all classes and between associated schools where a child is moving to or from the school.
 - The class teacher and SET are involved in analysis of results.
 - Following this consultation, results are used for the allocation of support hours across the school. They are also used to determine the need for further, more detailed testing and to inform individual class teachers of the academic needs of the child.
 - Pupils profiles are built up for each pupil as they progress through the school.
- (b) Screening
- The screening test used to facilitate the early identification of pupils' learning strengths/ difficulties is the MIST.
 - The screening test is administered in February to the Senior Infant class.
 - The SET administers the test in conjunction with the class teacher.
 - The class teacher and the SET are involved in interpreting the results and in deciding on any follow up activities i.e. classroom activities, Forward Together programme.

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- The retest results, teacher observation and consultation with parents determine whether follow –up intervention is needed.
- At all stages the parents of the children involved are informed. Parents are also asked for written consent if any further intervention is needed.

(c) Diagnostic Assessment

- The class teachers and SET are involved in selecting children for diagnostic assessment.
- The parents are consulted through a meeting with the class teacher and the SET in advance of the testing. Parental consent is given verbally. There is a standard form to record parents' consent. The SET makes the necessary arrangements.
- The SET administers and interprets the results of the diagnostic tests.
- The SET and the class teacher use the results of the assessment to draw up an IEP. . (target strategies that can first be implemented in the classroom)
- The SET organises meetings between teachers, parents and relevant agencies (if appropriate).
- The results of the tests, teacher observations and parental are used when deciding which pupils should be referred for supplementary teaching.
- The SET decides if it is necessary to consult a psychologist (NEPS or other) about diagnostic test results, and arranges for such consultation.
- The procedures for conducting diagnostic assessments are communicated to teachers and parents.

(d) Psychological Assessment (refer to Circular 02 / 05)

- The SET liaises with parents if it is felt that a psychological assessment or other assessment is required (Stage 3, Circular 02 / 05). Standard letters and consent forms are used.
- The SET is responsible for requesting and arranging an assessment from specialist(s) – Psychologist, Speech and Language Therapist, Audiologist etc
- The recommendations from the assessment form the basis of the IEP.
- Psychological reports are stored securely in a filing cabinet and the SET controls access to them.

(e) Recording the results of assessment

- The school's current format for recording of assessment results is in a hard copy / report book. This was reviewed in 2012 in line with The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (Circular 0056/2011) which states that all schools must use one of the report card templates provided by the NCCA for reporting to parents on students' progress and achievement at school.
- There is an agreed terminology used and understood by all teachers.
- Teachers will carefully maintain the results of standardised tests in the school and will make them available on request to Department officials for inspection.
- The school will arrange for the aggregated results of standardised tests conducted in the school to be reported to the Board of Management and the Department of Education and Skills once annually.

- Teachers are made aware of the need to record comments in an objective and instructive manner, phrased in a positive manner in order to support further learning and development.
- Meetings will be mutually arranged by relevant parties in order to facilitate the transfer of appropriate information based on assessments carried out - teacher –to-teacher involving the whole class and / or individual pupils.
- The above will be reflected in all relevant school policies.

6 Success Criteria

The effectiveness and success of this policy will be measured in a number of ways: -

- Procedures run smoothly and efficiently because there is clarity about what is expected and who is responsible for the different aspects.
- Transfer of information from class teacher to class teacher happens efficiently at the beginning / end of the school year.
- The students will reach their maximum potential through the early intervention resulting from the implementation of the above policy.

7 Roles and Responsibility

The entire staff are responsible for the implementation of this policy.

8 Implementation and Review

This revised policy will be implemented once it has been formally ratified by the B.O.M .

This policy will be reviewed in two years, or sooner should the need arise. This review process will be co-ordinated by the entire school staff under the direction of the SET.

9 Ratification and Communication

This policy will be presented to the B.O.M for discussion and ratification in early 2017. Once ratified, all teachers will have a copy of this policy. This policy will be made available to parents on request.

Reference Section

- Learning Support Guidelines 2000, DES.
- Circular 02/05 Organisation of Teaching Resources for Pupils Who Need Additional Support in Mainstream Primary Schools.
- Primary School Curriculum – section on assessment for each subject area.
- NEPS – Working Together To Make A Difference For Children.
- Drumcondra English Profiles. G. Shiel and R. Murphy ERC.
- Common Sense Methods for Children with Special Needs. P. Westwood. Routledge Falmer.
- Assessment in The Primary School Curriculum. Guidelines for Schools. NCCA 2007.
- A range of assessment tests are listed on the SESS website www.sess.ie.
- Initial Steps in the Implementation of The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (Circular 0056/2011)
Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life, DES, 2011.