



Scoil Mhuire



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Assessment Policy

Introduction

This policy was formulated collaboratively at SDP Planning Day on Tues May 6 2008.

Rationale

The Management Board and staff recognise that The Education Act (1998) requires schools to “regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to the students and their parents”.

The school recognises that assessment involves

- Gathering
- Recording
- Interpreting
- Using
- Reporting

information about the pupil’s level of attainment and the manner in which they are engaging with the teaching and learning process. Assessment enables the teachers “to construct a comprehensive picture of the learning needs of the pupil and to plan future work accordingly” in line with the curriculum objectives.

In the light of “Guidelines Re envisioning Assessment” NCCA 2007 it is an opportune time to review Assessment to take account of the 2 complementary approaches “Assessment OF Learning” and “Assessment for Learning” to ensure that both are used consistently throughout the school.

Purposes of Assessment

- To inform planning for, and coverage of, all areas of the curriculum
- To identify the particular learning needs of pupils/groups of pupils including the exceptionally able
- To contribute to the school’s strategy for prevention of learning difficulties
- To monitor pupil progress and attainment
- To enable teachers to modify their programmes 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



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- To enable teachers to monitor their own approaches and methodologies

Assessment OF Learning

Assessment OF Learning which involves assessing the pupil's learning at the end of a given period or at the end of a unit of work, is used to measure a pupil's progress within the curriculum. Spelling Tests, Maths tests which focus on specific units of work, table tests, letter recognition, testing of the assimilation of sight words are all aspects of Assessment OF Learning by which information is gathered. The Standardised tests in Reading and Maths have a central role in Assessment OF Learning. Information is gathered each year through the administration of the standardised tests in the month of May/June.

Assessment FOR Learning

Assessment FOR Learning ensures that each pupil has an active role in his/her own learning. The children are clear about what they are going to learn and the teacher gives feedback to the individual pupil on the evidence of HOW and WHAT the pupil learns. Methods 1-7 below from the Continuum of Assessment Methods NCCA 2007 are particularly used for this purpose. The analysis and interpretation of results of Standardised Tests, which measure individual pupil's attainment in reading and maths, ensures that information from the tests will be used to plan appropriate learning in those areas, especially in the case of pupils for whom further differentiation and/or additional support will be necessary.

Pupils are assessed in each class on an ongoing basis using the recommended methods (NCCA Guidelines)

1. Self Assessment

It is the aim in the school that pupils should become more involved in evaluating their own work with a view to recognising progress and bringing about improvement.

2. Conferencing

- child and his/her teacher

This is an ongoing and constant form of Assessment in Infant classes where the teacher during learning activities and structured play engages with the pupil to ascertain his/her own ideas on individual learning. The teacher talks to the child about his/her strengths and achievements and makes suggestions about where and how learning can be improved

In middle and Senior classes this takes place in all subjects but is particularly a feature of the Writing Process when the pupil is encouraged to improve and develop as part of editing and redrafting written material.



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- the teacher and parents

Formal parent /teacher meetings take place in October/November of each year. Informal contact and unscheduled meetings are a regular feature of Infant classes where information relevant to learning is shared between teachers and parents. In middle and Senior classes such meetings may be less frequent but parents are facilitated to meet teachers where the need arises.

- teacher and teacher

Formal meetings between Support teachers and classroom teachers are facilitated at the beginning of each instructional term in the case of Low and High Incidence pupils and informal consultation also occurs to ensure collaboration and coherence in pupils' learning.

- all parties together.

These meetings take place in the context of the preparation of IPLP s and IEPs.

3. Portfolio Assessment

Portfolios, as well as work samples and projects, will be used for assessing learning.

4. Concept Mapping

The purpose of the maps is to help the pupil show what and how he/she thinks about an idea and the connections being made between ideas. Concept maps will be used in middle and senior classes to indicate understanding or depth of knowledge in topics eg in Science. When done at the beginning of a lesson, this will assist Assessment FOR Learning by indicating pupils' level of understanding or knowledge of the topic. Simple concept maps in pictorial form can be used in Infant and Junior classes eg in Living Things, Plants/Animals.

5. Questioning

We recognise that questioning underpins all classroom assessment methods. As well as open and closed questions Probing questions will be asked by the teacher to assess how pupils arrive at solutions and so gain information on the level of pupils' understanding as well as the knowledge they have gained. Questions from individual pupils will sometimes be used to promote a discussion among the pupils or groups to help clarify an idea or explain a concept eg a problem in Maths or Science. Teachers will be conscious of using a variety of questions to elicit information at varying levels of thought as in Pages 86, 87, 88 of NCCA Guidelines in order to encourage higher order thinking, analysis and creativity.



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6. Teacher Observation

Teacher Observation is an ongoing method of Assessment at all class levels and we recognise that it is fundamental to Assessment FOR Learning. The teacher observes the child or group as they carry out planned tasks or assignments.

The teacher

- will identify the child's learning needs and preferences
- gauge how effectively those needs are being met in class
- gain insight into how the child interacts and works with others
- form an opinion about his/her ability to use learning materials and resources.
- assess the varying degrees of success with which a child acquires and masters different skills and knowledge

7. In the light of information gained from those observations the teacher will

- assess the level of development of fine and gross motor skills eg Infant classes P. E.
- adapt methodologies, resources, grouping, supports accordingly to facilitate differentiation
- consult with parents, LS/RT or Principal as the observations dictate

Where necessary, as in the case of screening at Infant level and where ability to stay on task, interaction with peers or in-class behaviour may need to be monitored the specific observations will be recorded to enable the teacher to create a more comprehensive picture of pupil's learning needs and strengths.

8. Teacher designed Tests and Tasks

Tests and tasks serve both Assessment OF Learning and Assessment FOR Learning at the same time. They include

- written tests eg to find out the level of knowledge in SESE subjects, skills and concept development in Maths:
- oral assessments to test word recognition, music
- practical assignments in Science
- **REGULAR TESTS AND TASKS**
 - Tables
 - Spelling
- Maths test at the end of unit work.



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- Quiz in History, Geography

9. Standardised Testing (see below)

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Standardised Tests

Administering Tests and recording results

Class teachers administer Drumcondra reading test and Sigma T Tests to all pupils from 1st to 6th Classes in May/June each year. Exceptions may be made for pupils whom the Principal, in consultation with class teacher and LS Teacher and parents excludes on the grounds that they have a learning or physical disability which would prevent them taking the test, or in the case of newcomer pupils, where their level of English is such that attempting a test would be inappropriate as per **Circular 0138/2006**

Class teachers mark and score the tests as set out in the test manual. Class based scores and age based scores are recorded. Results for pupils in each class are set out in table form and in graph form to aid analysis and interpretation at individual, class and whole school level.

Analysis of Individual Test Results

Individual scores are examined for evidence of progress and compared with scores in former years. Individual results are considered in conjunction with teachers' ongoing assessment of the pupil's classroom performance and participation as well as other records of the pupil's learning. Differentiated approaches to pupil learning will result from this analysis of the results thus using the results as Assessment **For** Learning. They are also used as a screening instrument to identify pupils with learning difficulties so that appropriate supports can be put in place e.g. learning



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support provision. These results are also used to identify the pupils who have exceptionally high scores so that more challenging learning opportunities will be provided for them.

Analysis of Class Results

Analysis of Results at class level

Results are used to monitor the success of particular teaching approaches or methodologies e.g. approach to the teaching of Reading, phonological awareness, recall of number facts, approaches to problem solving. In addition they are an indication of the extent to which the breadth and balance envisaged in the Curriculum, e.g. in the case of the Strands of the Maths Curriculum, is being achieved and areas where difficulties are identified will be the subject of greater focus in the future. (Assessment **For** Learning)

Whole school

Results are analysed and interpreted to ascertain overall achievement in the school. All results are included in a Table showing the percentile ranking of pupils across all class levels. These results are compared to national norms and the trends from year to year are observed.

Screening Tests

Infant Classes

Pupils' progress is monitored through close observation of their progress in acquiring knowledge, developing skills while noting their attitudes and approaches to the process of learning.

Teachers use checklists to monitor

- language development
- newstelling
- phonological skills
- letter and word recognition
- letter and sound correspondence
- counting and number conservation
- letter formation



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In this way pupils whose progress is a cause for concern are identified. Where class teachers or parents have such concerns further screening is carried out and /or profiles such as BIAP are completed. Arising from this a classroom plan is put in place with appropriate parental involvement (Stage 1 Circ Spec Ed 02/05).

At the end of the second or start of the third term of Senior Infants the Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST) is administered and the Forward Together is implemented with pupils as indicated by the test results in co-operation with parents. Following this intervention the pupil may be referred to the LS/RT for diagnostic testing with the permission of parents.

In Classes 1-6 Standardised tests will be used as Screening, in conjunction with the teacher's overall assessment conclusions arrived at following information derived from the Continuum of Assessment modes described above. Where concerns arise the class teacher will draw up a short, simple plan for extra help to be implemented within the normal classroom setting, in the relevant areas of learning and/or behavioural management. If concern remains the learning support/resource teacher in the school will be consulted and the pupil will be referred to the LS/RT with parents' permission, for further diagnostic testing. **(See attached Classroom Support Plan)**

Diagnostic Testing

Diagnostic assessment is carried out by the LS/RT to ascertain the areas and nature of the pupil's difficulties in consultation with the class teacher and parents. Where, in the opinion of the class teacher, taking into account the Standardised test results, or as a result of diagnostic testing by LS/RT, a pupil is considered exceptionally able, differentiated learning opportunities for the pupil will be put in place.

Diagnostic testing, following screening, also identifies the pupils whose needs indicate that supplementary teaching is required. The results of those combined tests and the input of class, supplementary teacher and Principal will decide the time allocation for supplementary teaching and the nature of that supplementary support whether it is withdrawal, in-class support or a combination of both.. In the light of this information the class teacher, parents and the learning-support will have input in drawing up the learning programme. This will include appropriate interventions for implementation in the home, in the classroom, and during supplementary teaching.

Psychological Assessment

In the case of pupils who continue to present with significant learning needs, despite focussed classroom attention and supplementary teaching, the school will formally request a consultation and, where appropriate, an assessment



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of need from a specialist outside the school. This will also be the case in respect of pupils with serious emotional disturbance and/or behavioural problems. On receiving this information from the teachers involved with the pupils' learning, the Principal takes the initiative and makes contact with the NEPS Office in the first instance to request consultation with the NEPS psychologist.

Recording the Assessment information

The class teacher keeps the records of screening tests which he/she administers as well as observation checklists, mastery records which she/he may use and have completed.

Each teacher also keeps results of teacher designed tests and tasks.

The LS/RT maintains in a secure place the results of diagnostic tests which they administer and record in the Pupils File.

The combined results of Standardised Tests which are administered in May/June of each year, and recorded on the class results grid, are kept in a secure place.

Where LS/RT administers Standardised Tests, other than those mentioned above, these will be filed in the Pupil File and will be kept in a secure place by the teacher who has administered them.

Sharing Assessment Information.

We acknowledge that The Data Protection (Amendment) Act (2003) establishes parents' rights to regular information on the progress and achievement of their children under the Education Act and that the Act entitles the parents of students to access all personal data relating to these pupils. We value the input of parents into their children's education and recognise that assessment information from the school enhances this process. In line with Circular **0138/2006** the results of Standardised Tests will be maintained carefully by the school and will be available for inspection by Department officials. With effect from 2007/8, the results of testing will be reported to parents in respect of their own children using STEN scores and descriptors as below.

Formal parent/teacher meetings take place in October/November of each year. The results of Standardised tests will be discussed with parents and given to them in written form, as part of the overall Assessment information which will be shared with the parents by the teacher.

A written report, giving the individual pupil' progress/application level in all Curriculum areas, is issued to parents in June. A copy of each years reported results is maintained in the school.



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Sten score	What the score means
8-10	Well above average
7	Above average
5-6	Average
4	Below average
1-3	Well below average

The school will report assessment information when requested to other teachers, other schools and the children themselves, where appropriate. The school will share assessment information with other individuals who are involved in the child's education including DES inspectors, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) psychologists, Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), and Education Welfare Officers, as well as other professionals such as speech and language therapists and occupational therapists.

Success Criteria

- Clarity of Roles for Staff and clear structures for involvement of parents, and agreed structures for reporting to parents.
- Successful monitoring of Pupil progress from Junior Infants to 6th Class.
- Smooth transfer of information from class teacher to class teacher and between class teachers and LS Teacher

Roles and Responsibility

- As outlined above.

Implementation Date

- Beginning School Year 2008/9.

Timetable for Review

- Formal Review in 2010/11. Ongoing monitoring will take place to take account of changing needs among pupils.