**Assessment Policy**

**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. Joseph’s National School 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).

**Development**

This policy was developed by the teaching staff in St. Joseph’s National School during the 2022 school year in response to the directive to review assessment policies laid down in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. This is a first draft policy, formulated in March 2022. In May 2022, feedback forms were sent to staff members using the NCCA Assessment Practices checklist (Appendix A). This feedback was discussed and used to inform this policy. The school policy on assessment reflects the core values and ethos of this school. Therefore, the Assessment policy will link with all other school policies.

**Purpose of Assessment:**

* To inform planning for, and coverage of, all areas of the Curriculum
* To gather and interpret data at class/whole school level and with national norms
* To identify the particular learning needs of pupils/groups of pupils
* To contribute to the school’s strategy for the prevention of learning difficulties
* To monitor pupil progress and attainment
* To enable teachers to modify their programmes 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 the assessment of their work
* To enable teachers to monitor their approaches and methodologies

**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 and a valuable formative tool.

The range of opportunities for carrying out a continuous assessment is increased by good classroom organisation, which encourages children to work independently while the teacher is concentrating on a small group.

The outcomes of the assessment modify our teaching methods, provide feedback 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. Results of the assessment are reported in a way useful for pupils, teachers, parents and other interested parties.

**Main Areas to be addressed in this Policy**

Assessment for Learning

Assessment of Learning

Self-assessment by students and teachers

Screening/Diagnostic assessment

Standardised assessment.

EAL assessment.

**Assessment for Learning (AfL)**

Assessment for Learning emphasizes the child’s active role in their learning. This level of involvement, in shaping their 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 and the progress that they have made.

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 practice and make changes.

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

Teachers observe the child in the classroom and the 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 the strengths and weaknesses of the child.

**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 toward objectives, often in the form of a grade or score. Assessment of Learning also helps the teacher to plan future work, set new targets, and provide feedback and information for end-of-year assessment.

**Self-Assessment by Students and Teachers.**

Children are involved in self-assessment when they look at their work reflectively, 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 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 children to take greater responsibility for their learning. A learning log and/or reflective report cards can be used to document the child’s self-assessment and reflection on their 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 practice, 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 learning, these may include: Questioning, individual and/or group feedback, dialogue and discussion-focused correction of work, rubrics, visual aids in Junior and Senior Infants, Traffic Light System, two stars and a wish, KWL grids and reflective report cards in older classes.

**Screening/Diagnostic Assessment.**

All children in Junior Infants are screened 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

BIAP (Belfield Infant Assessment Profile) for specific pupils (third term)

Other screening methods to identify learning strengths and weaknesses in the school are:

Drumcondra Test of Early Literacy Screening-DTEL-S- Senior Infants

Drumcondra Test of Early Numeracy Screening-DTEN-S- Senior Infants

Drumcondra Primary Reading Test-DPRT

Drumcondra Primary Spelling Test

WIAT

YARC

Sight Word tests- PM high-frequency words

Schonell Spelling Test

Jackson phonics tests

Free Writing samples

Running records using the PM Benchmark Kit

Marino Reading

NEPs Checklists

NEPs “My Thoughts About School” assessment

Gross and Fine Motor Checklists

As a school we have agreed to introduce assessments for the Senior end of the school to inform learning.(Appendix B)

MALT (Mathematics Assessment for Learning and Teaching)

Dyscalculia Assessment by Jane Emerson and Patricia Babtie

These tests are administered individually or on a class basis. Screening is used by the school to initiate the staged approach to intervention as per Circular 0013/2017.

**Standardised Assessment.**

The school administers standardised tests in English, Mathematics and Spelling in May/June each year (Circular 0056/2011). The Drumcondra Primary Reading and Drumcondra Primary Maths tests are administered to all class groups. It may, on occasion, be deemed appropriate by the school to administer alternative standardised tests at the beginning of the school year, to help gain a clearer picture of any learning needs of a particular child/class. However, it should be noted that this is not required and if carried out will be in addition to the May/June testing.

The results of tests are scrutinised by SET and the Principal. Where results indicate a learning difficulty i.e. where there is a marked difference between the children’s chronological and reading/mathematical age and/or whose classroom performance signifies some level of difficulty, the pupil is, with parental approval, referred for diagnostic testing. A tracking form is used and uploaded on Aladdin to inform of any testing undertaken throughout Primary School (Appendix C)

In line with Circular 0056/2011 results are communicated to parents. These results are accompanied by a standard explanatory note from the school. Under the circular, these results are also reported to the BOM. Results for Second, Fourth and Sixth Classes are reported to the Department of Education and Skills in aggregated form. The STEN and/or Standard Score are communicated to parents. The parents of all children in the school, whose results give cause for concern, are asked to come into the school and discuss their child’s progress and attainment with the class teacher.

The standardised test booklets are kept until the following year when the new test results are collated. Thereafter, only the results section will be stored. The records are stored in a secure filing cabinet. The results are also stored in electronic copy form on the Aladdin Student Management System. These records are kept until the child has reached twenty-five years of age.

**Ordering, Purchasing and Distribution of Tests**

The SEN team will decide on the testing requirements each year and inform the principal who will advise on the purchasing budget and process.

**Educational Psychological Assessment.**

When a child is prioritised for a school Educational Psychologist Assessment, a meeting will be held with the parents to discuss this procedure. The SEN team in conjunction with the Principal will organise the assessment. Parents are advised if an assessment is warranted, parental permission is sought and a consent form is completed. If a parent refuses to have their child referred on for further assessment a letter recording this decision is signed and kept by the school. The psychological reports can only be accessed by personnel as outlined on page 95 of the NCCA Guidelines. These reports are stored securely in locked filing cabinets and on Aladdin.

In line with new developments, assessment forms can be filled out through the Primary Care Needs system and referred to a specific disability network team.

**Results, Record Keeping and Storage**

Class based assessments / tests: e.g. Class tests, portfolios, concept maps, check lists etc. are usually sent home with pupils at the end of the week / month / school year. Aladdin can be used to record any class tests. A selection of samples will be provided to the incoming teacher to inform their knowledge and understanding of the incoming class. Results of tests may be stored securely in a folder by the class teacher for reference.

All standardised test materials – teachers’ manuals, correcting stencils, unused test booklets, etc. should be returned to the SENCO as soon as possible after testing. The results and test booklets will be stored in a secure filing cabinet under Data Protection Policy. Results are recorded on Aladdin software with access restricted to the Principal, Deputy Principal and relevant class/SEN teachers.

Teachers will have access to relevant results at the beginning of the school year and on request results may also be shared with other relevant agencies e.g. NEPS, DES, SENOs, DES Inspectors and Child Education Welfare Officers – under the Data Protection Policy. Test booklets will be retained in a secure location in the school for one year after testing and the results will be kept under Data Protection Retention Schedule. The results of all assessments will be used to help inform SEN teachers regarding Early Intervention/Learning Support for the following year.

All external assessments should be kept in the locked filing cabinet in the SENCO'S room. Copies of the reports are kept on Aladdin and are accessible only by class teacher and the SET teacher involved with the student. No copy should be made of the assessment. No assessment is allowed to be taken off school property.

**Communication with Parents/Guardians**

Teachers will report information about their class programme and the children’s progress at various times during the year. Parent-Teacher meetings: take place for all classes once a year in November. The results of any tests will be communicated orally to parents during the Parent/Teacher meetings. If parents have any concerns about their child at other times of the year they are encouraged to make an appointment to discuss these concerns with the class teacher.

There is a written end-of-year report summarising a child’s progress in subject areas as well as in social areas, indicating areas that need improvement. These reports go home in June. Standardised test results in the form of standardised scores will be recorded on these report cards. Parents will be given an explanatory letter to explain the meaning of the scores. Copies of these reports are attached to the child’s profile on Aladdin.

**Sharing of Information at the end or start of the year**

To ensure continuity and progression class teachers meet to discuss English and Maths groups in the class, allocated levels of readers, unfinished curriculum objectives in subjects, and educational, behavioural, social and other specific needs.

**Support and assessment where English is an additional language:**

The Language support teacher and class teacher in collaboration identify the children requiring additional support in English.

Assessment is based on the outline in the NCCA June 2006 document “English as an additional language in Irish primary schools – Guidelines for teachers” and the Dept. of Education publication 2007 “Primary School Assessment Kit” The procedure for a pupil where English is an additional language follows the following format:

Initial Assessment

Initial interview assessment for new pupils (IILT) in NCCA document June 2006

Placement Assessment (Primary School Assessment Kit 2007)

On-going Assessment

Monitoring language and social development during a silent period (where relevant)

Teacher observation.

The EAL teacher consults on an ongoing basis with the class teacher regarding the progress of each EAL pupil in oral English and Maths.

Teacher designed tasks and tests – spelling and oral Maths

Standardised English tests.

Sharing information on a child’s progress with parents or guardians

Final or year-end Assessment

Speaking and listening, reading and writing tests (Primary School Assessment Kit 2007) to assess pupil level on English Language Proficiency Benchmarks to assess progress in each area and when/if language support may be terminated.

**Assessment in ASD class**

The purpose of the Policy is that there is an inclusive and legislative requirement for schools to have an assessment policy and the guidelines set out the relevant implications for recording and reporting about children’s progress and achievement. We acknowledge there will be modifications for the assessment of children in the new ASD class. in St. Josephs National School. Similar assessment requirements apply in the Special Classes for ASD as in mainstream classes. Teachers are required to keep an Assessment Folder with information relating to the learning progress of the students in the curriculum subjects that they are accessing. There should be an additional focus, however, on children’s language and communication, behaviour, social and emotional development, play, leisure skills, sensory differences and independence. The assessment process should constructively link with the individualised planning process. Assessment strategies used may be similar to those that are employed in mainstream classes, where appropriate:

Checklists

Observation profiles

Teacher-designed tasks and tests

Portfolio of work, work samples

Autism-specific assessment and profiling tools are available for use in the Special Classes for ASD as required. These tools are useful for setting specific individualised targets for students’ IEPs. Autism-specific assessment tools include Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (ABLLS) Verbal Behaviour Milestones Assessment and Placement Programme (VB-MAPP) Psychoeducational Profile-Third Edition (PEP-3)

Progression Framework Note: Children in 2nd, 4th and 6th class are not exempt from Standardised Testing without prior approval from the principal.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

Special Education teachers and the Principal assume shared responsibility.

Stage 1: Informal: It is the responsibility of the class teacher to set in action staged interventions in class level which includes a classroom support plan.

Stage 2: Formal: The responsibilities are shared between the class teacher and the Special Education team.

Stage 3: The Principal assumes a primary role when a Psychological Assessment may be required.

Parents have a role at all stages and the lines of communication must always be kept open.

This policy will be fully implemented by January 2023.

**Ratification & Communication**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on March 2023 and communicated to parents thereafter.

**Success Criteria**

This policy is considered successful if

• Early identification and intervention are achieved.

• Clarity is achieved regarding procedures involved in the staged approach.

• Procedures are clear and roles and responsibilities are defined.

• There is an efficient transfer of information between teachers.

**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)

DES Circular 0056/2011 Numeracy and Literacy Strategy

DES Circular 0138/2006 Supporting Assessment in Primary Schools

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

Drumcondra English Profiles, G Shiel & R.Murphy ERC 2000

Commonsense Methods for Children with Special Needs, Peter Westwood, Routledge

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