

ASSESSMENT POLICY

Introductory Statement and Rationale

This policy was formulated by the staff of Scoil Náisiúnta Cholmcille Naofa

on May 20th 2013. The policy is based on advice and information provided in the Primary Curriculum, the NCCA Website, the NCCA booklet *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for Schools* and Circular 0138/2006.

**Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school**

Assessment activities used in this school 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 pupils achievement at a particular point in time (assessment of learning).

**Aims of our Assessment Policy**

* 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 or difficulties
* To assist teachers’ long and short term planning
* To coordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis.

**Purposes of assessment:**

* To inform planning for all areas of the curriculum
* To gather and interpret data at class/whole school level and in relation to national norms
* 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 active involvement of pupils in the assessment of their own work

**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. It involves gathering information to understand how each child is progressing at school and using that information to further a child’s learning. We concur with their definition of classroom assessment as **“the process of gathering, recording, interpreting, using and reporting information about a child’s progress and achievement in developing knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes.”** Assessment, therefore, involves much more than testing. It is an ongoing process that concerns the daily interactions between the teacher and the child that include moment-by-moment conversations, observations and actions. (NCCA, *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for Schools.* November 2007, p.7).

**Range of Assessment Methods used Throughout the School:**

Both *assessment* ***of*** *learning* and *assessment* ***for*** *learning* will be used by teachers to make professional judgements about pupil achievement/progress. Deciding what to assess will be based on the curriculum objectives in each curriculum area/subject and on what the teacher intends to help the children to learn. Each teacher will use the most appropriate assessment method to measure the extent to which children have achieved these objectives. The range of assessment methods to be used throughout the school are outlined below.

Assessment for each subject is mentioned in the relevant curriculum plans. Accordingly, the assessment policy will present a comprehensive overview of the strategies for assessment engaged throughout the school.

**ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING:**

At its heart, assessment for learning is a way of informing and involving the learners themselves in the process of assessment.

**The following methods of Assessment for Learning (AfL) are used in the school?**

*(Schools should make judgements according to their individual situation). Refer to Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum, NCCA 2007.*

* **Teacher observation** -
  + Each teacher will have an observation sheet for each child where significant observations of children’s progress will be recorded. This may be as a result of target child observation, event samples, anecdotal observation and/or shadow study. New Guidelines for Schools p.46 – 52
  + Where appropriate, teachers will use/develop rubrics or checklists to assist with teacher observation.
* **Teacher-designed tasks and tests**. Teachers will refer to the Guidelines pp.54- 59 for suggestions. Refer also to pp. 89 – 90, where an excellent range of sample test questions are outlined.
* **Portfolios** See Guidelines p. 30 - 33
  + Each child will assemble a portfolio of best/improved work. They may select five to eight pieces of work per term they are proud of or feel represents significant improvement. Children from second up will record why they are proud of the work/why they have included this in their portfolio. Portfolios will be introduced in September 2008. Each child will have an A3 manilla folder for this purpose. Children may incorporate samples of work in 3D using a digital camera.
* **Success and Improvement Strategy (also referred to as ‘two stars and a wish’).**

**This involves children reflecting on their work and identifying two ‘best bits’/parts they like and one area where their work can be improved. Children can highlight the ‘best bits’ or put a star or smiley face beside it. Children also highlight one area where they could improve/do differently the next time.** If possible, the children should have time to make the improvement. This process is particularly useful for children’s writing. Initially, teachers will model this process using exemplars. This strategy can be used orally in junior classes. This strategy may also be used when marking children’s work.

* **Sharing the learning intention/objective** **and devising success criteria** – i.e. Telling children what they are going to learn… and agreeing the criteria for judging to what extent the outcomes have been achieved (Guidelines pp9, 70 and 77)

- We are learning to……………….. We will know when we’ve achieved this because………….

the learning objective(s) and the success criteria may be displayed on a chart/whiteboard/post it’s etc).

Teacher/peer/self evaluation in terms of these by identifying successes and improvement needs against the criteria. (See Appendix 1)

* **Effective teacher questioning –** teachers use higher order questioning to provoke fruitful discussion. Strategies for turning recall questions into formative questions include –
  + Giving a range of answers. You need to give two definite ‘yes’ answers, two definite ‘no’ answers and one or two ‘maybe’ answers. E.g. which of these activities are in themselves aerobic? golf; swimming; darts; table-tennis, sky-diving; cycling.
  + A statement (e.g. instead of asking ‘what drugs are bad for you?’, state ‘All drugs are bad for you. Do you agree or disagree and why?)
  + Right and wrong – two examples/pictures, one ‘right’ (e.g. a healthy meal on a plate) and one ‘wrong’ (a junk food meal) and asking children to discuss.
  + Give the answer – and ask how it was arrived at.
  + An opposing standpoint – e.g. what would a mother whose children were starving think of shoplifting?
* Examples of Higher Order Questions may be found in the Guidelines for schools pp.86 – 88. Other issues relating to questioning are outlined on pages 42 – 44.
* Individual oral feedback – to include enabling children identify the next steps in their learning.
* Quality marking by teacher – occasional pieces of work marked thoroughly focusing on pointing out *success* and *improvement* rather than to mark every error in existence. On occasion ‘test’ marking will be undertaken whereby all aspects of the work will be marked e.g. a story where comments are made re. spelling, grammar, punctuation, handwriting and the overall quality of the work.
* Quality marking by children. Children gradually trained to identify their own successes and improvement needs, with control gradually handed over from the teacher to the child.
* Oral responses of pupils
* **PUPIL SELF ASSESSMENT –**

Self-assessment is the means by which pupils take responsibility for their own learning. However, we need to train pupils to self-assess. It does not just happen!

* **Teachers can refer to Guidelines for Schools pp14 – 23.**

**Teachers will select from the following strategies to aid self-assessment as appropriate –**

* + **KWL/KWHL charts** (Guidelines p. 20, 21, and 92).
    - What do you know about……..? (Assessment of current knowledge to inform teaching activities and learning goals)
    - What would you like to know about…..?
    - How could we find out about……..?
    - What have you learned about…….? How did you learn this? (Assessment of what has been learned and skills developed)
  + **Concept maps -** Guidelines pp 36 – 41
  + **Rubrics -** Guidelines pp 52 and 54.
  + **Evaluation sheets -** (Guidelines pp 19 and 93)
    - What have you been learning about in……….
    - List three things you learned about this topic….
    - Were you a good team member? Give a reason for your answer.
    - What could your team do better next time?
    - Teacher comment….
  + **Self Evaluation Questions to facilitate reflection –** 
    - Where did you get stuck? What helped you out? Have you learned anything new? Do you have any questions? What are you most pleased with? What did you need more help with? What did you find easy? What did you find difficult?
    - Am I learning in the best way for me? How will I know if my work is good? What can I remember and understand about…, What do I need to do to improve?

These questions also empower children to identify next steps in their learning. They may be presented on flashcards/chart and children pick one or more at the end of a lesson to reflect on. (In groups/pairs/as individuals/in conferencing with teacher)

* + **Graphic Organisers** – include KWL charts Rubrics and Concept maps mentioned above. Also include: PMI charts (Plus, Minus, Interesting); Ladders; Thumbs up/thumbs down, Traffic Lights and Talking partners. (See guidelines pp. 84 – 85)
  + **Reflection; Representation; Reporting**. Children think about what they have been learning. They then represent what they have learned (by – drawing, concept map, brainstorm, questions, map, paragraph etc.) Children then report on their learning – to teacher; class; group; parent; partner etc.
* **Conferencing** (Guidelines pp. 24 – 27)
* **Completed assignments by pupils** – projects, copybooks, activities, work samples, homework
* **Parental, pupil feedback or observation**
* **Standardised tests**
* **Diagnostic tests**
* **Assessment by psychologist**

**ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING**

**Standardised tests** (Guidelines pp. 60 – 69)

* The following tests are used (schools to insert the range of tests relevant to their own situation). See Circular 56/2011
  + MIST – early in the second term in senior infants
  + Drumcondra Maths – October each year from 2nd to 6th
  + Drumcondra English – May each year from 1st to 6th classes.
  + Following Circular 56/2011 mandatory testing to take place at the end of 2nd 4th and 6th in May of each year. English-medium schools will be required to implement standardised testing in English reading and Mathematics duringthe periodMay/June or all students in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes with effect from 2012 onwards.
* The purpose of the standardised tests is to allow teachers to make placement and progress decisions based on assessment results and to develop appropriate interventions for certain children.
* The Learning Support teacher in consultation with the class teacher and the principal is responsible for purchase, distribution and co-ordination of testing.
* The class teacher administers the standardised tests. In the event that a pupil is absent on the day of the test the Learning Support teacher will administer the test at a later date. Pupils may be excluded from the tests if in the view of the principal they have a learning, or physical disability which would prevent them taking test or newcomer pupils, where their level of English is such that attempting test would be inappropriate.
* Each child’s raw score, standard score, percentile rank, STEN and Reading age is recorded.
* The results will be analysed at whole school level (using a data analysis grid) and at individual class level, and the information gathered from the tests will be used to inform teaching and learning.
* The results are communicated to parents at the parent teacher meeting.
* Principal teachers in primary schools are required to report annually aggregated assessment data from standardised tests to the board of management of their schools. The report will comprise the aggregated results of standardised tests administered in accordance with this circular. A copy of the form for reporting test results is appended to this policy.
* The principal of each primary school must send a copy of the end-of-year report card (including the information from standardised tests) after the child is enrolled to the primary or second-level school to which a student transfers.
* This information should only be provided after enrolment in the primary or second-level school has been accepted
* Legislative arrangements have been made to provide for sharing information on progress, including the results of standardised tests, where students transfer from one school to another. The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 (Section 28) and the (Prescribed Bodies) Regulations 2005 allow schools to share relevant information concerning a child transferring between recognised schools without breaching data protection law.
* The results will also be communicated to parents through during parent-teacher meeting. The standard score, percentile rank and/or STEN score will be given to parents and an explanation/descriptor will be provided with each result.
* The results will help determine the allocation of learning support in the school. ) See Learning Support policy.

**Screening**: *(Refer to Learning Support Guidelines and Circular 02/05)*

* What screening tests are used to facilitate the early identification of pupils’ learning strengths / difficulties?
* When are screening tests administered?
* Who administers them?
* Who is involved in interpreting results?
* What emphasis is place on early intervention programmes? Does screening lead to specific intervention by the class teacher *(Stage 1 Circular 02/05)*
* What criteria indicate that diagnostic testing is needed?
* How are results communicated to parents?
* How are parents consulted if diagnostic testing is considered necessary?

**Diagnostic Assessment**: *(Refer to Learning Support Guidelines, Chapter 4)*

* What formal diagnostic tests are used to determine the appropriate learning support for individual pupils who present with learning difficulties?
* Who is involved in selecting children for diagnostic assessment?
* How are parents consulted in advance? Is there a standard form to record parents’ consent? Who makes the necessary arrangements?
* Who administers the diagnostic tests?
* Who interprets the results?
* How does the school ensure that the results of the assessments inform subsequent learning plans?
* Following testing, what procedures are used for sharing information between teachers, parents and relevant agencies (if appropriate)?
* What criteria are used when deciding which pupils should be referred for supplementary teaching (Stage 2, Circular 02/05)?
* If it is felt necessary to consult a psychologist (NEPS or other) about diagnostic test results, who arranges for such consultation?
* Are the procedures for conducting diagnostic assessments communicated to teachers, parents?

**Psychological Assessment**: *(Refer to Circular 02/05)*

* Who liaises with parents if it is felt that a psychological assessment or other assessment is required (Stage 3, Circular 02/05)? Are standard letters and consent forms used?
* Who is responsible for requesting and arranging an assessment from specialist(s)? (Psychologist, Speech & Language Therapist, Audiologist, other…)
* What part does the assessment play in drafting an educational plan for a pupil?
* Where are psychological reports stored and who controls access to them?

**Recording the results of assessment** (See guidelines p70, 71 and 79)

* Test results are recorded on class record sheets and these are stored according to school practices and the Data Protection Act.
* Access to records will be determined by school policy on record keeping and the Data Protection Act. See page 95, Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum, NCCA (2007)
* From, children’s standardised test results will be recorded on an individual record card or as per school practice.
* Teachers have agreed terminology for reporting on children’s progress and achievement. Comments and observations will be recorded in an objective and instructive manner.
* What arrangements are in place for the transfer of appropriate information based on assessments? *E.g. teacher to pupil; teacher to teacher; teacher to parent, primary to second level school? (* Guidelines p.80)
* Assessment information will be safely stored to facilitate access to it by former pupils at any stage until their 21st birthday (Guidelines p.80).

###### Success Criteria

* A range of informal and formal assessment modes are used to place assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning.
* Procedures run smoothly and efficiently because there is clarity about what is expected and who is responsible for different aspects.
* Transfer of information from class teacher to class teacher happens efficiently at the beginning/end of school year.

###### Roles and Responsibility – All are responsible

**Implementation Date** – September 2008

**Timetable for Review**

The policy will be reviewed yearly - at the June Staff meeting. As we have decided to take on board a number of new procedures these will be reviewed and, if necessary, amended in xxx. The principal will initiate and co-ordinate this review.

**Ratification & Communication**

This assessment policy was officially ratified by the BoM on September 16th 2013

Reference Section

* Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for Schools, NCCA, 2007
* Special Educational Needs – a Continuum of Support, Guidelines for Teachers and Resource Pack for Teachers, NEPS, 2007
* Learning Support Guidelines, DES, 2000
* Circular 0138/2006 Supporting Assessment in Primary Schools
* 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
* Working together to Make a Difference for Children, NEPS
* Drumcondra English Profiles. G. Shiel & R. Murphy, ERC, 2000
* Commonsense Methods for Children with Special Needs, Peter Westwood, Routledge Falmer, 1997
* A range of assessment tests are listed on the SESS website [www.sess.ie](http://www.sess.ie)
* Draft Report Cards Templates. [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie)
* info@ncca, September 2005. Issue 1, p. 8. Assessment for Learning