

## Assessment Policy May 2024

### RATIONALE

In Milltown Primary school, children come from a variety of backgrounds and bring with them a wide range of abilities, experiences, preferred learning styles, personalities, and interests. Through the breath and balance of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, our pupils participate in a progression of learning experiences that are carefully structured to suit their needs. Assessment is an integral part of this process. It provides information with which to evaluate pupil strengths and weakness and the effectiveness of teaching and learning. It is then used to inform curriculum planning, the setting of children's targets and the provision of resources.

### AIMS OF ASSESSMENT

Through assessment Milltown Primary School aims to:

- provide an indication of achievement.
- help to identify individual children's strengths and areas for development.
- monitor and evaluate children's learning against previous performance, personal ability and achievement by their peers.
- generate data with which to track children's progress over time.
- confirm and /or influence teachers' professional judgements.
- inform curricular planning for individual children (Afl).
- identify children with special education needs (including gifted and/or talented).
- inform future curriculum planning and resource decisions.
- fulfil statutory requirements relating to assessment.

### PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT

**Assessment should be:**

**Diagnostic**

To identify strengths and areas for improvement and to inform next steps.

**Formative**

To use assessment information to make specific improvements in learning.

**Summative**

To acknowledge, record and report pupil's overall performance and achievement at a point in time.

**Evaluative**

To inform curricular planning and provide information for monitoring and accountability.

### PRINCIPLES

**Assessment should:**

- Be complementary to and supportive of, the key aims of the NI Curriculum.
- Be fit for purpose.
- Be manageable.
- Be supported by teacher professional judgements that are consistent and reliable.

- Be appropriate for all levels of system wide accountability.

## PLANNING FOR ASSESSMENT

Teaching, learning, and assessment are inter-related, making assessment an integral aspect of the teaching and learning process. It's also an essential component of our planning. Within our curriculum policies, we prioritise ensuring continuity and progression across the school, this is reflected in our long-term plans. These plans outline the expected outcomes for children by the end of each unit of work, with established methods for assessing and recording their progress. Our school uses two distinct types of assessment: Assessment for Learning (AfL) and Assessment of Learning (AoL).

## ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

At Milltown PS, we strongly advocate for children's involvement in the assessment process and its outcomes whenever possible. This approach empowers children to recognise assessment as a tool for enhancing their standards of work and fostering their overall development.

### Purposes

Assessment for learning serves several key purposes:

- Offering insights into pupils' learning for both students and teachers.
- Fostering success for all students.
- Supporting the target-setting process.
- Facilitating continuous reflection on current knowledge and future learning needs.
- Prompting immediate intervention and aligning judgments with learning intentions.
- Elevating standards by pushing students to the boundaries of their capabilities within the classroom.

### Assessment for Learning Strategies

We use various strategies to implement Assessment for Learning:

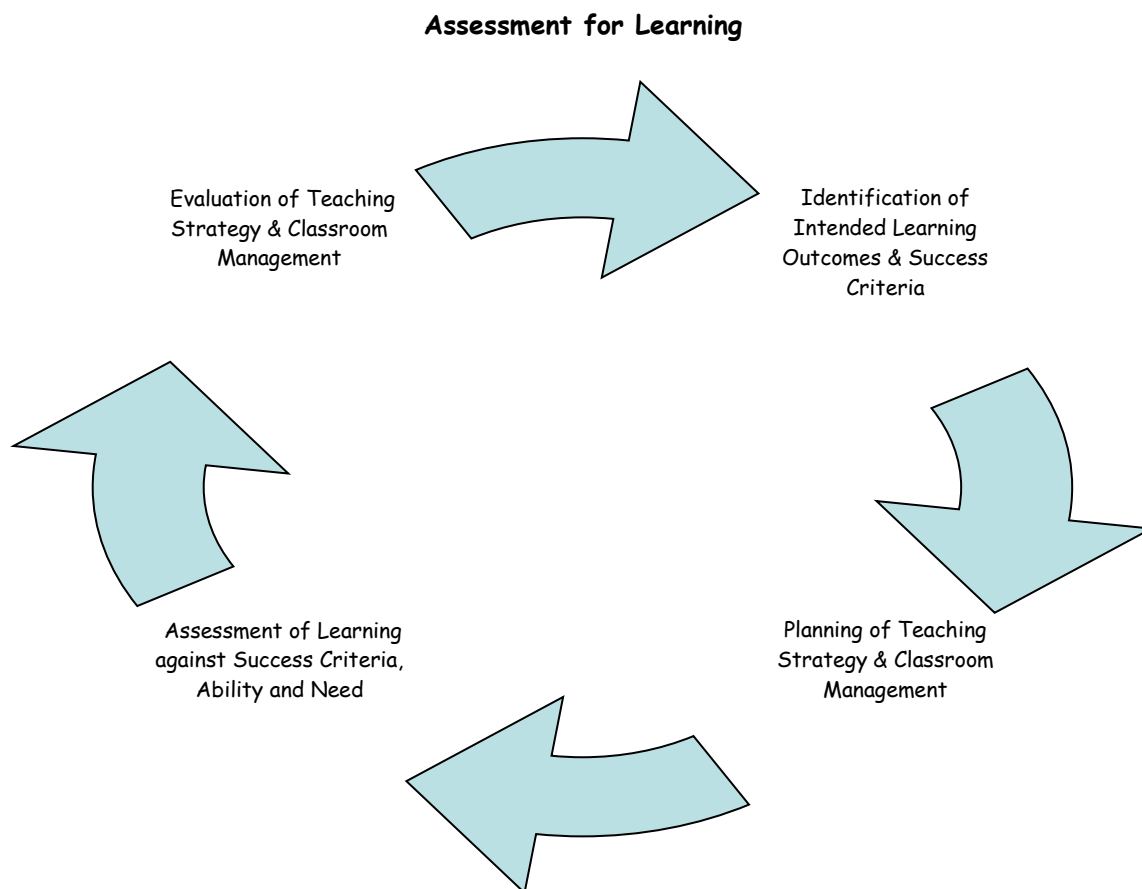
- **Focusing on Learning:** Ensuring students understand what they're meant to learn, what exemplary performance looks like, and what they are aiming for.
- **Effective Questioning:** Using clear, open questions to stimulate critical thinking, engagement, dialogue, and confidence.
- **Scaffolding Reflection:** Guiding students in reflecting on their understanding, fostering collaboration, self-awareness, and the transfer of learning.
- **Formative Feedback:** Providing students with actionable feedback, allowing time for implementation, focusing on success and improvement, and enhancing learning progression throughout tasks.

Research and practice show the impact of these strategies:

- They make a significant difference to pupils' capacity for learning.
- Success can be achieved by putting in effort and using good learning strategies.
- Pupils need to be actively engaged in thinking about, talking about and assessing their own learning.
- A classroom culture that promotes a positive can-do mindset builds confidence and motivation in learning.

(Assessment for learning: A practical Guided CCEA, 2009)

Assessment for Learning is often known as formative assessment.



## ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING PRACTICES

Each teacher ensures the following practices are implemented:

- Providing opportunities for pupils' input in the planning process, often through tools like KWL Planning Boards during topic-based work.
- Sharing clear learning intentions and success criteria with pupils using WALT (We are Learning To...) and WILF (What I'm Looking For...).
- Employing effective questioning techniques during lessons to stimulate critical thinking and deepen understanding.
- Encouraging pupils to ask questions to enhance their own learning, fostering a culture of inquiry.
- Implementing a diverse range of learning approaches to meet different student needs.
- Incorporating self and peer assessment as regular components of the teaching and learning process.
- Consistently marking student work, identifying successes, and areas for development in accordance with the school's marking policy.
- Prioritising inclusion by addressing the diverse learning needs of all pupils, particularly those at risk of underachievement.
- Documenting observations and learning evaluations in planning notes across all curriculum areas.
- Promoting a growth mindset, independence, and a willingness to take risks for learning.

## ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

Assessment of learning is more associated with judgements based on scores or levels for statutory or summative purposes. Assessment of learning describes and labels past learning. It is often known as summative assessment.

- It takes place after the learning.
- It focuses on pupils' achievements.
- It is used to provide feedback to parents based on performance evidence.

### Purposes

Assessment of learning serves several key purposes:

- Providing a summary judgment about what has been learned at a specific point in time.
- Establishing benchmarks regarding children's abilities and school performance.
- Demonstrating what pupils can achieve independently.
- Informing the target-setting process.
- Facilitating subsequent interventions to support learning progress.

### Implications for Teaching

Teachers undertake various responsibilities to align with Assessment of Learning objectives:

- Providing periodic summaries through teacher assessments and tests.
- Identifying gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Determining areas for development in both the taught curriculum and specific learning domains.
- Implementing strategies to accelerate progress and meet learning expectations.
- Marking and measuring against scores and levels.

## SUMMATIVE TEST ARRANGEMENTS

### Foundation Stage

**Observation in Play:** Play-Based Learning is foundational, offering children a natural means for expression and learning. Observations during play provide insights into various aspects of a child's development and inform future planning.

**Literacy and Numeracy Assessments:** Further observations occur in literacy and numeracy to assess progress. In literacy, running records in reading are conducted. Additionally, tests such as phonics and spelling assessments may be used, including standardised tests when necessary.

### Key Stages One and Two

Periodic assessments, including weekly spelling and mental maths tests, monitor progress and identify areas for development. Formal tests in core subjects are also administered when required.

**Cognitive Abilities Test 4th Edition (CAT 4):** Administered to Primary 4 and Primary 6 pupils, CAT 4 Digital Tests in October benchmark pupils' standardised scores to assess performance.

**Standardised Tests in Literacy and Numeracy:** Administered from Primary 3 to Primary 6 in May, these tests assess progress in English and Maths. Primary 3 pupils take paper tests, while P4-6 pupils complete digital versions.

## USING ASSESSMENT

Assessment outcomes are meticulously analysed by coordinators and teaching staff to inform planning and interventions:

- **Classroom Level:** Assessing pupils' current levels and determining appropriate challenges and strategies for progression.

- Coordinator Level: Comparing performance trends and identifying priorities for improvement within specific curriculum areas.
- Whole School Level: Evaluating overall school performance and setting priorities for enhancing pupil outcomes, particularly in Literacy and Numeracy

## **TARGET SETTING AND BENCHMARKING**

Targets are set based on comprehensive assessments, including analysis of children's work, discussions, and test performance. Assessment data guides the identification of individual, group, class, and whole school priorities for improvement.

## **NEW ADMISSIONS**

In addition to using information forwarded by a previous school, teachers employ appropriate assessment procedures to ensure that children entering classes after September work at their own level and in suitable groups.

## **RECORD KEEPING**

Files on individual children are held centrally in the school office. These contain a record sheet for test results as the children progress through the school, information pertaining to individual / special needs, copies of Annual Reports and children's Record of Achievement sheets.

To promote self-esteem, to develop objectivity and to encourage pride in their work, pupils are involved in a process of self-assessment in which they are asked to comment on their work and select evidence of academic achievement along with other evidence of personal achievement to contribute towards their Record of Achievement at the end of each school year to add to the folder completed prior to leaving the school at the end of Key Stage 2.

Individual files are kept by teachers for the children in their care. These contain samples of work, completed tests and any other information relevant to the child's school experience. These folders accompany the class as it progresses through the school.

Data relating to standardised scores is stored on Assessment Manager, a component of the SIMS computer management system. This software enables the Principal and teachers to track progress and compare performance with previous attainment, innate ability and the achievements of peers.

The information held is used by teachers when considering differentiation and other aspects of planning.

## **REPORTING**

Reporting to parents on children's attainment is by means of:

- parent/teacher interviews in November;
- parent/teacher meetings in February and June for pupils on the Code of Practice to discuss targets and reviews
- Annual Review meeting in March for pupils on Stage 3 of Code of Practice
- comments on written work, including homework;
- annual written report;
- transfer meetings
- informal meetings.
- achievements are shared in school newsletter, website and Facebook page.
- discussion with parents is facilitated by an effective home / school liaison link (homework sheets/diaries etc)

Reporting to the Principal and teachers on children's attainment is by means of:

- class files containing test scores, etc;
- pupil files;
- staff meetings;
- informal meetings; and

Reporting to pupils on children's attainment is by means of:

- teacher comment on class work, both oral and written;
- individual class reward schemes as necessary;
- consultation in drawing up Personal Education Plans; and
- Record of Achievement in Year 7.

Reporting to secondary schools on children's attainment is by means of:

- Primary 7 report;
- information relating to special educational needs; and
- any necessary communication between teachers/principals from both sectors.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

For this policy to effectively guide our practices, it is imperative that all teaching staff demonstrate collective ownership. This will be evident through the following actions:

- Class teachers are entrusted with the responsibility of pupil assessment.
- The assessment coordinator, SENCo, Specific Curriculum Coordinators, and the Principal will offer support to each teacher.
- Teachers must ensure appropriate provision for recording and monitoring each pupil's progress.
- Familiarity with the school's Feedback and Marking policy is essential, with consistent application expected from every teacher.
- Each teacher should familiarise themselves with this policy, alongside specific procedures outlined in subject policies.
- The Principal (Assessment Coordinator) holds responsibility for assessment across the school.

### **Role of the Assessment Co-ordinator**

- Formulate the school's assessment policy.
- Regularly review the policy to align with statutory requirements and school needs.
- Provide guidance on assessment, staying up-to-date with current developments as per CCEA guidelines, and disseminate this information to staff.
- Organise benchmarking and target setting initiatives.
- Report to Governors on policy matters, whole school, and cohort targets.
- Ensure the school is equipped with relevant assessments and update the assessment cycle accordingly.
- Coordinate parent interviews scheduling and format of the reporting system used within the school.
- Oversee the recording of relevant data into class assessment grids and Assessment Manager systems.
- Analyse results to assess pupil attainment and progress.
- Collaborate with subject coordinators to monitor and evaluate outcomes.
- Identify pupils who have shown no progress or are performing below expectations for further intervention.

## **LINKS WITH OTHER SCHOOL POLICIES**

Milltown Primary School's Assessment Policy has links with the following school policies:

- Homework Policy
- Marking and Feedback Policy
- SEN Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- ALL Curricular Policies.

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS**

It is policy in Milltown Primary School and the responsibility of all staff to ensure that all pupils, irrespective of gender, ability (including gifted pupils), ethnicity and social circumstances have access to the curriculum and achieve the best progress possible.

Procedures which are specifically designed to access and identify special needs as well as teaching arrangements are outlined in the Special Educational Needs Policy.

## **MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE POLICY**

The Assessment Policy will be monitored and evaluated in light of DE Circulars and information from CCEA. Governors will work alongside the Assessment Co-ordinator to ensure the policy is being followed to successfully deliver the planned outcomes.