

Assessment Policy



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Introduction:

This policy was drafted on foot of new developments in the area of assessment (NCCA, 2007), as well as the Revised Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (DES, 2011). The policy was initially written by Sheila Murphy following completion of a Graduate Diploma in Special Ed. It was ratified by the Board of Management on November 9th 2015. It was revised and updated in January 2020.

Policy Rationale:

The core of the policy is that all children should experience success at school. This policy endeavours to identify at the earliest possible opportunity, children who may have learning difficulties and put in place a whole school response to their needs. An effective assessment policy is central to this core objective. It also seeks to employ an array of assessment techniques in order to cater for the different learning styles of the pupils in our school.

Relationship to school Ethos:

The school adopts a holistic approach to the education and development of each child and the enhancement of teaching processes. An effective assessment policy identifies early interventions that need to be put in place to ensure that relative success, increased confidence and raised self esteem is achieved.

Vision Statement:

In St. Maelruan's S.N.S., we are committed to the holistic development of all pupils in order to assist them to contribute and play a fulfilling role in their own community. We see the ongoing and co-ordinated assessment of the pupil's progress as being of great importance in order that the teachers to the best of their ability would be able to organise a programme of work that best suits the needs of the individual child.

General aims and objectives:

Monitor the ongoing progress of each pupil.

Facilitate improved pupil learning

Track learning processes which assist the long and short term planning of teachers.

Co-ordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis involving parents and pupils in managing strengths and needs in pupils' learning.

Recognise high achievers.

Cater for different learning styles.

Principles:

1. 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 must be to facilitate progress in a pupil's learning.
2. Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process, a valuable formative tool.
3. The range of opportunities for carrying out continuous assessment is increased by good classroom organisation, which encourages children to work independently while the teacher is concentrating on a small group.
4. The outcomes of assessment modify our teaching methods, provide feedback on the Curriculum, as well as indicate pupil progress.
5. We recognise the potential for assessment in developing a positive self-image in the pupil from positive and constructive feedback and the feeling of success, which encourages further study.
6. Results of assessment are reported in a way useful for pupils, teachers, parents and other interested parties.
7. Assessment records must be easy to interpret, useful, manageable and should not be administratively burdensome.

Policy Content:

This policy is geared towards using assessment to inform planning and identify the needs of all pupils including the exceptionally gifted so that adequate strategies are in place early enough to facilitate remediation. These strategies may include pupil assessment, pupil profiling, two-way communication between parents and teachers, modification of teacher programmes, and School Support files. See also SEN policy.

Types of Assessment:

There are two principle approaches to assessment. Assessment **OF** learning which is generally formal, takes place at the end of a learning phase or unit of instruction and usually involves a test or an external evaluative assessment; e.g. a standardised test, teacher-designed test.

Assessment **FOR** learning involves the learner actively monitoring and evaluating his own learning and is an informal method.

The following are the assessment methods currently in use in the School:

- Self-assessment
- Conferencing
- Concept mapping
- Questioning
- Teacher observation
- Teacher-designed tasks and tests
- Learning logs
- Standardised testing

Informal Assessment:

Homework and class work are marked and comments are made as appropriate. Marks and especially grades are not usually given. Work is ticked to indicate that the teacher has looked at it and a written comment to indicate sources of error, good points etc. will normally be made. Teacher observation is used as an assessment tool.

Class work.

'Informal' assessment is ongoing during all lessons in response to oral work, team work, skill development, project work etc.

Learning Logs

Each child has a copy that follows them from 3rd to 6th class. Children regularly write a paragraph about what they have learnt in different subjects.

Homework.

Homework is checked both formally and informally in a routine way.

Teacher Designed Tasks and Tests.

Used to monitor progress (on a regular basis) in an area covered.

Used where the teacher sees appropriate - used as a checklist.

Teacher keeps a record of results.

General conclusion based on test results and teacher observation to be passed on at year's end.

Completion of Project Work.

The completed project or notes on a topic is collected and marked. The marking recognises excellence and indicates the areas that need improvement.

Pupil Self Assessment.

Children are involved in self-assessment when they look at their own work in a reflective way, identify aspects of it that are good, and areas that could be improved. They then set personal targets for themselves.

Examples of pupil self-assessment used in our school are:

- Two stars and a wish

- Traffic light system

- Individual behaviour monitoring sheets as appropriate.

- Rubrics

- Review work - check spelling (creative writing)- CUPS

Visual arts – talk about own work and work of peers

KWL charts

Writing process at senior level – drafting and redrafting.

Self assessment will be used in order to foster both verbal and non-verbal reflection.

Primary To Secondary.

A meeting is held each year with key staff from the local second-level schools to discuss pupils' performance in school and to discuss individual pupils' needs. This meeting is attended by the sixth class teachers and a member of the SEN team, and results of assessment tests may be discussed.

For pupils leaving the school, up-to-date records are passed on to the principal by the class teacher for forwarding to the new school, using the Passport document.

Formal Assessment.

Standardised Tests: (take place every year in May)

In order to provide an objective view of a child's achievements, and to provide information about a child's performance in relation to the performance of other pupils at the same age or class level,

- Drumcondra Reading, Drumcondra Maths and Drumcondra Spelling tests are administered in accordance with test guidelines.

Results are recorded and intervention is provided where appropriate. Class results are recorded on Aladdin and are used by the SEN team, for the purpose of highlighting children requiring additional help with English or Maths. Any child performing at or below the 10th percentile will be given additional support the following September.

The NNRIT (Non Reading Intelligence Test) is administered in February each year to 3rd classes as standard. Any child who misses their standardised tests with their class will be withdrawn and tested at a later date.

Diagnostic Tests:

Tests constructed to show the finer details of the difficulties experienced by children will be administered by members of the SEN team. Tests available to the SEN team are listed in the Appendix. Additional written permission will be sought from parents before administering diagnostic tests. Results of diagnostic tests will be kept in the pupil's file.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Mainstream, Special Education teachers and the Principal assume shared responsibility. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to set in train staged interventions at class level. At Stage 2, the responsibilities are shared with the Special Education team. The Principal assumes a primary role at stage 3 when a psychological assessment may be required. Parents have a role at all stages and lines of communication must always be kept open.

Class teacher:

- Administer tests
- Record results
- Add results to pupils file
- Communicate with other teachers and parents
- Pass on pupils file
- Incidental communication with other teachers.

Learning support teacher:

- Administer diagnostic tests
- Record results
- Communicate results to class teacher

Resource teacher:

- Monitor progress of pupils
- Communicate with class teacher

Communication with parents:

As per the revised National Strategy on Literacy and Numeracy, school reports have been designed using the drafting tool downloaded from the NCCA website. The school is also obliged to make known the results of Standardised Tests to parents. STEN scores will be communicated to parents as part of the School report, issued in June each year. In addition to this, if a pupil has a particular problem, the parent will be informed. If a parent sees a problem, they should ring and make an appointment to see the teacher.

Class tests may be sent home to be signed.

Homework should be signed by parent in journal (see Homework policy)

Parent/teacher meetings are held every November/December. .

Psychological Assessment:

In line with the NEPS Continuum of support, if neither intervention by Class teacher nor by Learning Support teacher brings about significant improvement in pupil learning, or where a teacher expresses concerns to the Principal in respect of the progress/behaviour of a pupil, the Principal will contact the parents to discuss the options available to them in order to obtain a psychological assessment for their child. An assessment will determine the subsequent level of intervention.

Record-Keeping:

The most common form of assessment used in our school is teacher observation, teacher designed tests, projects and homework (informal assessment). These informal assessments are at the discretion of individual teachers. Records of teacher-designed tests are kept by the individual teachers and communicated to parents at the parent/teacher meeting / end-of-year report. Each teacher has discretion as to the format, administration and frequency of in-class testing. The most common types of informal teacher-designed testing in our school are Maths tests, spelling tests and quizzes.

Standard and percentile ranking scores are recorded on the class record template and stored by each individual teacher with a copy held in the

administration office and also with the Special Ed team. Support teachers analyse the results in September to determine the allocation of hours to pupils.

Each pupil attending LS/Resource has a file which is stored in the administration office. A file is also kept in the LS room of the relevant teacher. This file records standardized as well as any diagnostic test results and end of year reports.

Success Criteria:

This policy is considered successful if

- Early identification and intervention is achieved
- Clarity is achieved regarding procedures involved in staged approach
- Procedures are clear and roles and responsibilities are defined
- The Special Education team have clearly defined roles and objectives
- There is efficient transfer of information between teachers.

Implementation

This policy will be fully implemented in December 2015.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on November 9th 2015, and communicated to the parents thereafter.

Review Timetable

The policy will be reviewed in 4 years time, and amended as necessary by means of a whole school collaborative process.

This policy was reviewed in January 2020.

References:

DES Circular 02/05 – 24/03

DES Circular 56/2011

DES Learning Support Guidelines 2000

www.sess.ie

Working together to make a difference for children – NEPS.

NEPS Continuum of Support document.

Revised Literacy and Numeracy Strategy: DES 2011

Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools: NCCA 2007.

Appendices:

Appendix A:

Your child and standardised testing

Information leaflet for parents from the NCCA:

During your child's time in primary school he/she will complete standardised tests in English reading and in maths. Most primary schools in the Republic of Ireland have been using these tests for many years. From 2007 schools must use the tests at certain times and share the results with you. This leaflet explains what standardised tests are and how they can help your child's learning.

What is a standardised test?

We are all familiar with the idea of tests in school. Your child probably tells you how he/she did in a spelling or tables test prepared by the teacher. A standardised test is another kind of test. It is used to measure a child's achievement in English reading and maths compared to other children throughout the country at the same class level or age level. The English reading test gives information about how well your child can understand what he/she has read. This test does not gather information on your child's written or spoken English. The maths test finds out how well your child can use numbers for different purposes and solve maths problems.

Schools can choose from a number of standardised tests which have been developed for use in primary schools in Ireland. These tests are based on the curriculum. There are different levels of the tests so, for example, the test your child does in first/second class will relate to your child's age and the curriculum for that class level.

Are standardised tests the same as intelligence tests?

No. Standardised tests are not intelligence tests. The main purposes of using standardised tests are to help the teacher plan your child's learning, and to inform you about how well your child is doing in English reading and maths. When the test scores are used alongside other information gathered by the teacher through observing your child at work, talking with him/her and looking at his/her work, they show how your

child is getting on in English reading and maths, and help the teacher to identify your child's strengths and needs.

What are standardised tests used for?

Standardised tests are used to

- ☞ report to you as a parent on your child's achievement in English reading and maths
- ☞ help to find out if your child has learning difficulties in English reading and maths so that the school can put appropriate supports in place
- ☞ help to find out if your child is a high achiever in English reading and maths so that appropriate learning experiences can be provided for him/her
- ☞ help your child's teacher plan for further learning across the curriculum because your child's achievement in English reading and maths is important for all his/her learning.

When are standardised tests carried out?

Schools are required to use standardised tests twice during your child's time at primary school:

- ☞ at the end of first class OR at the beginning of second class
- ☞ AND at the end of fourth class OR at the beginning of fifth class.

Some schools use the tests in other classes too.

Do all children take standardised tests?

A small number of children might not take the tests. For example, if your child's first language is not English, the teacher may decide that he/she should not take the English reading test. Your child may, however, take the maths test. If your child has a learning or physical disability, the teacher may decide not to give the test but to use a different way to check on your child's progress. In all cases, the teacher will use the information he/she has about your child to decide whether or not your child should take the English reading test and the maths test.

Should I help my child prepare for standardised tests?

No. Standardised tests are one source of information about your child's achievement in English reading and maths. The teacher gathers information about your child's learning all the time. Your child will take the standardised tests on a regular school day as part of his/her daily work in the classroom. Indeed, your child may not even realise he/she has taken the tests!

How will I know how my child has done on the standardised tests?

Your child's class teacher will share the test results with you, typically at a parent/teacher meeting or in a school report. You will see the results of the tests on your child's school report in first or second class and again in fourth or fifth class depending on when your child takes the tests.

How will I know what the test scores mean?

You will be familiar with hearing your child say he/she got 62% in a maths test or 9 out of 15 in a spelling test. Standardised tests generally use other types of scores. Your child's teacher may tell you how your child did in the test using a standard score. Standard scores usually go from 55 to 145 with 100 being an average score on a standardised test. The table below describes what the different standard scores tell you about your child's achievement in English reading and maths.

Understanding standard scores:

Standard score	What the score means	Approx. % of children who get this score
130 and above	Very high	2.00%
120-129	High	7.00%
110-119	High average	16.00%
90-109	Average	50.00%
80-89	Low average	16.00%
70-79	Low	7.00%
Below 70	Very low	2.00%

If your child's standard score is between 90 and 109, you will know that his/her performance on the test is average. About half of children in Ireland have standard scores in this range. You can see from the table that there are also standard scores above and below the average.

As with other tests your child does in school, his/her result on a standardised test can be affected by how he/she feels on the test day or by worry or excitement about a home or school event. This means that each test result is an indication of your child's achievement in English reading and maths. You play an important role in encouraging and supporting your child, no matter what he/she scores on the test.

If my child's score is low, what does this tell me?

A low standard score (for example, 80) suggests that your child may have difficulties in English reading or maths. One test score by itself does not give a complete picture of your child's learning in English reading or maths. The teacher might decide to gather more information about your child from other tests, as well as his/her observations in class. You too will have additional information from helping your child with homework, and hearing him/her talking about school work. The teacher may ask a colleague called the learning support teacher to look at your child's test scores and other assessment information. They may decide that your child would benefit from extra support with reading or maths. This extra support may be given by the learning support teacher. Your child's teacher will talk to you about this.

You may find the DVD for parents, *The What, Why and How of children's learning in primary school* helpful in talking to your child about working with the learning support teacher. Courtney, a girl in second class, and her mum talk on the DVD about their experience in getting extra help with Courtney's English reading.

If you don't have a copy of the DVD, you can view an internet video of it from the NCCA website homepage at: www.ncca.ie. (Click on the button for Primary School Curriculum: Information for parents.)

If my child's score is high, what does this tell me?

A high score on the test may suggest that your child is a high achiever in English reading or maths. As with low scores, one high score is not enough to confirm this. Your child's teacher will use information from other classroom assessments to understand more clearly how well your child is doing in English reading and maths.

Should I share the score with my child?

You know your child best. No matter what the score is, you play an important role in encouraging your child to do his/her best, and in helping your child with English reading and maths. If the score is low and your child needs extra help with English reading or maths, it may be helpful to talk to him/her about this and to see the help in a positive way.

Helping my child to enjoy school and to succeed in learning Using standardised tests at least twice during primary school to gather information on your child's achievement in English reading and maths can play a vital part in supporting your child's learning. Ultimately, this support can help your child enjoy school and make the most of the many opportunities to learn created by you and by your child's teachers.

Appendix B:

List of Assessments available in the school

Standardised Tests:

NNRIT-in 3rd class all pupils are tested

Drumcondra Reading - All students are tested in May every year

Drumcondra Maths -All students are tested in May every year

Drumcondra Primary spelling test-All students are tested in May every year

Literacy:

Reading

WRAT 5

The Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (NARA)

Assessment of Comprehension and Expression (ACE)

Diagnostic Reading Analysis (DRA)

RAIN Sentence reading test

Get Reading Right (Jackson)

Dolch List

Spelling

Schonell Spelling test (in Aston Index)

Brendan Culligan's Corewords

Numeracy:

Florence Gavin checklist

Basic number diagnostic test by Bill Gillham

Aston Index which contains many subtests including

-Visual/Perceptual Processing

-Auditory Processing

-Working Memory