

# Assessment Policy

## St. Mary's N.S., Knockbridge

### **Introduction:**

In order to have a transparent and uniform approach to assessment throughout the school, this policy was formulated by the teaching staff during the school year 2015 /16 as part of the process of school self evaluation.

### **Rationale:**

An effective assessment policy ensures quality in education and is central to the process of teaching and learning. Through assessment the teacher constructs a comprehensive picture of the short term and long term needs of the child and plans accordingly. Assessment assists communication to all parties involved in the child's education i.e. teacher and child, teacher and parent and teacher to teacher. It helps the child become more self aware as a learner and develops powers of self-assessment. It is integral to all areas of the curriculum and to the child's growth in self-esteem and acquisition of a wide range of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. Furthermore, in order to ensure that all children in our school achieve to the best of their ability we believe it is imperative that any learning difficulties are identified at the earliest opportunity and that the school must put in place an appropriate response to their needs.

### **Relationship To The Characteristic Spirit of The School**

The school adopts a holistic approach to the education and development of each child and to the enhancement of teaching processes. An effective policy of assessment will identify the early interventions required to be put in place to ensure that enhancement, increased confidence and raised self-esteem is achieved in all pupils.

### **General Aims of the Policy:**

- To benefit pupil learning
- To monitor learning processes
- To involve parents and pupils in identifying and managing learning strengths/difficulties
- To assist teachers long and short term planning
- To co-ordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis and to establish a firm link between assessment and decision making with regard to future strategies, content and methodologies in the classroom
- To describe strategies for assessment of pupils over as many areas of development as possible
- To emphasise the importance of early identification of pupils with specific numeracy and literacy problems through establishing relevant baseline data which in turn can be used to monitor achievement over time.
- To ensure availability of finance to purchase texts and resources
- To outline specific strategies for monitoring the progress of all pupils with particular learning needs

### **Assessment of Learning and Assessment For Learning**

As a school we are continually developing good practice in assessing learning. Results are used in the following ways:

- to measure the progress of the children's learning
- to select children for necessary interventions if required
- to evaluate for planning targets of class teachers and SEN teachers
- as a guide for professional development

- to guide the school to select target areas of various subjects for further school development planning
- to report to parents
- to highlight good practice and school strengths
- to keep a clear focus on good teaching and learning
- to inform the BOM and DES of levels attained in Numeracy & Literacy

**Assessment of Learning** (Standardised and non-standardised)

Assessment OF learning is summative. Its main purpose is to grade children’s achievement using standardised tests, teacher-designed tasks, etc.. The teacher periodically records the achievements of the children for the purpose of reporting to parents and other relevant persons. The following are among some of the methods of informal assessment (non-standardised) that are used in the school:

- Teacher observation and feedback to students
- Teacher designed tasks and tests:
  - Weekly spelling/tables tests
  - Termly assessment in maths
  - Topic assessments in specific subject areas designed by teachers
  - Dictation
- Work samples, portfolios & projects
- Rubrics
- Anecdotal records
- Checklists

The above assessment methods are used across the whole school, at the discretion of individual teachers, depending on the requirements of individual pupils, class level or subject and parents are given feedback on a regular basis.

The school’s plan for each curriculum subject also addresses the issue of assessment.

**Standardised Testing:**

All classes from First class upwards are tested using the Drumcondra literacy and numeracy standardised tests. They are usually administered in the last week of May or first week of June by the class teacher, sometimes with the assistance of SET when dealing with multi-grade classes. Standard and percentile ranking scores are recorded on the class record template and stored by each individual teacher with a copy held in the office. Results are analysed by the special education team in June and pupils who score at or below the 16<sup>th</sup> percentile are given priority for supplementary teaching and further diagnostic assessment.

Results of standardised tests are reported to parents using the end of year report card and at parent / teacher meetings. STEN scores are communicated to parents with an explanatory note.

**Screening:**

The following class screening tools allow us to assess children’s learning as they progress through the school.

Junior Infants	YARC Early Reading Term 3
Senior Infants	Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST)
First Class	Micra T Term 1
	NRIT Term 2
	Drumcondra Reading & Maths Term 3
Second Class	Drumcondra Reading & Maths Term 3
Third Class	Drumcondra Reading & Maths Term 3

The results of the YARC and MIST combined with teacher observation and station teaching lay the foundation for a continuing process of structured observation and assessment.

### **Diagnostic Tests:**

Diagnostic tests are used to assess underlying difficulties that pupils may have in literacy and maths and motor development. The particular set of diagnostic tests to be administered depends on the pupil's stage of development. Diagnostic assessment generates a more complete picture of a pupil's needs. St. Mary's N.S uses assessments which contain elements recommended in Learning Support guidelines 4.4.2. These include:

- Belfield Infant Assessment Profile
- YARC Reading for Comprehension
- Superspell 2
- Quest diagnostic reading test
- Quest diagnostic number test
- Diagnostic Interviews in Number Sense
- Jump Ahead

Newer and more up to date tests are regularly reviewed by the SEN team.

The staff, in conjunction with the principal, analyse the results of these tests. The process of selection for learning support is fully outlined in the school's learning support policy.

### **Assessment For Learning**

Assessment **FOR** learning is formative, aiming to support and advance children in their learning. It may involve self-assessment where pupils come to recognise what they must do to close gaps in their knowledge or understanding. Teaching may also be adjusted to take account of this form of assessment.

Following professional reflection the staff feels that our major emphasis to date has been on Assessment of Learning and that it is important to take the time to use assessment as a tool to help in setting goals and direct teaching. Children also have a central role in this process and St. Mary's NS ultimately plan to teach children how to self-assess by:

- introduction of Self Assessment Learning Folders (S.A.L.F) in all classes
- development of critical thinking skills and reflection by students
- improved self esteem and motivation of pupils - best efforts are kept and justified
- feedback to pupils and parents

Pupils are encouraged to become involved in the assessment of their own work / progress. Examples of self assessment include the use of:

- SALF
- KWL Grids(What I Know/Wonder/ Learn)
- WALT/WILF Grids (We are Learning To/What I am looking for)
- 2 stars and a wish
- Peer Assessment
- Traffic Lights
- Self-editing / drafting / redrafting

### **Assessment by Outside Agencies**

The school uses recommendations from the following assessments to set targets for progression of skills on an individual basis.

- Educational assessments by NEPS or other
- Speech and Language Assessments
- OT Assessments
- Physiotherapy Assessments
- Play Therapy Assessments

### **Recording Results of Assessment:**

Each teacher maintains a *Teacher Assessment Folder* which may include:

#### General class records:

- standardised tests results
- class checklists
- class test results, etc.

#### Pupil profiles: one per child.

- child's name
- class level
- interests, strengths
- learning needs/differentiation
- IEP
- observations regarding subject areas (dated)
- Parent teacher meetings
- issues such as behavioural, medical, familial etc...
- actions taken (dated)
- selected samples of child's work (dated)
- assessment rubrics

The assessment folder is a key element in supporting effective teaching and learning rather than an end in itself. Gathering information about a child's learning is important, but of central importance is **how** this information is used to improve learning.

Standard and percentile ranking scores are recorded on the class record template and stored by each individual teacher with a copy held in the office. In line with the National Strategy to improve Literacy & Numeracy, specific class test results are transferred to the DES annually via the OLCS. Test results and relevant data may also be transferred to second level schools, or other primary schools when requested.

Standardised test results will be relayed to the BOM annually to review overall school standards in Literacy / Numeracy. (No individual results will be identifiable)

### **Success Criteria:**

This policy is considered successful if:

- Early identification and intervention is achieved
- Procedures are clear, with roles and responsibilities defined
- The Special Education team have clearly defined roles and objectives
- Teachers employing a wide variety of assessment techniques.
- Positive feedback from the pupil regarding his/her learning.
- A culture of reflection on learning by all pupils is evident.
- There is efficient transfer of information between the partners in education

**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 classroom level. At Stage 2 (School Support Level), the responsibilities are shared with the Special Education Team. The Principal assumes a primary role at Stage 3 (School Support Plus) when the advice and support of NEPS may be requested and a psychological assessment may be required. Parents have a role at all stages and the lines of communication must be always kept open.

**Review Timetable:**

This policy will be reviewed in 2 years time and amended as necessary by means of a whole school collaborative process.

**References:**

DES Learning Support Guidelines 2000

DES Circular 02/05 & 24/03

NCCA Assessment in the Primary School - Curriculum Guidelines for Schools 2007

NEPS Special Education Needs: A Continuum of Support 2007

**Ratification and Communication**

This curriculum policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 26-4-2016.

It was then circulated to all staff members for implementation. A copy of the document will be incorporated into the Whole School Plan.

*Fr. Gerard McGinnity*  
***Chairperson BOM***

*Brian McDonnell*  
***Principal***

26-4-2016  
***Date***