



School Development Planning Support (Primary)

Prompt questions towards drafting an Assessment Policy

December 2007

Assessment Policy

(A) Questions a school community might consider when addressing this area

- What is the purpose of this policy?
- What steps are required to draw up this policy?
- Who should be involved?
- Does this policy link with other policies – can related issues be addressed at this time?

(B) Suggested steps to follow in drawing up this (or other) policy/procedure

①	Review and Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review assessment practice or policy in your school. Assessment may be informal or formal and includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teacher observation ○ Teacher-designed tasks and tests ○ Completed assignments by pupils – projects, copybooks, activities, work samples, homework, portfolios... ○ Parental, pupil feedback or observation ○ Standardised tests ○ Diagnostic tests ○ Assessment by psychologist ▪ Identify the issues that need to be addressed ▪ Agree on aims for this new policy ▪ Check Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for Schools; Learning Support Guidelines; Curriculum – sections on Assessment; standardised and/or diagnostic tests; educational publications; procedures in other schools; legislation and websites. <i>See Reference Section.</i> ▪ Review/refer to other policies that the school has in place and which may have a bearing on this policy <i>e.g. Learning Support, Record keeping, Special Needs, SNAs, Curriculum plans, Home School Community Liaison, Homework, Enrolment, ...</i>
②	Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with teachers, parents, and Board of Management. Consult pupils as appropriate.
③	Preparation of draft policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each school's own context will influence the procedures adopted.
④	Circulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulate the draft policy, consult members of the school community and amend if necessary.
⑤	Ratification and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present the policy to the Board of Management for ratification. Communicate the ratified policy to members of the school community.

Assessment Policy For St. Mary's National School, Croom, Co. Limerick

Introductory Statement

This policy was drawn up by the ISMT, following consultation with facilitator, Ms. Suzanne Cobbe.

Rationale

We, as a team feel that assessment informs our teaching and is the basis for our classroom planning. Our assessment guidelines are integrated into our curricular policies. We, as a staff, are also concerned with the high rate of low scores being achieved in the Micra T Reading Tests, despite interventions being put in place. Following a discussion between the Department Of Education Inspector, Mr. Pat O' Neill, and the Principal Jimmy Murphy, we agreed to put the following in place.

- (a) We will purchase series of graded readers and begin an intensive reading Recovery Programme. This will be done every day and will involve the Class Teacher and the Learning support Teacher working together in the classroom to hear reading for a half hour slot.
- (b) When children have 'mastered' the lowest grade, they will progress to step 2 etc.

Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school

Assessment activities used in our school will contribute to pupil learning and development by:

- (i) Informing classroom planning.
- (ii) Providing extra supports for children who experience difficulties in literacy and numeracy
- (iii) Providing a screening tool for Learning Support.
- (iv) Supporting AoL (Assessment of Learning) and AfL (Assessment for Learning)

Aims

By introducing this policy, we hope to achieve the following

- 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, etc.

- To enable pupils to monitor their own learning and to become independent learners.
- To provide supplementary teaching and additional supports and resources for pupils in English and maths
- To promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of whole school policies.

Guidelines (content of policy)

Assessment will be used to :

1. Enable the teacher to construct a comprehensive picture of the short and long term needs of the child and plans future work accordingly.
2. Inform planning for, and coverage of, all areas of the curriculum.
3. Gather and interpret data at class/whole school level and in relation to national norms.
4. Identify the particular learning needs of pupils/groups of pupils including the exceptionally able.
5. Contribute to the school's strategy for prevention of learning difficulties
Monitor pupil progress and attainment
6. Enable teachers to modify their programmes in order to ensure that the particular learning needs of individual pupils/groups are being addressed.
7. Compile records of individual pupils' progress and attainment.
8. Facilitate communication between parents and teachers about pupils' development, progress and learning needs.
9. Facilitate the involvement of pupils in assessment of their own work.
10. Enable teachers to monitor their own approaches and methodologies.

Assessment for learning:

The following types of informal assessment methods are used in the school.

- (a) Teacher observation*
- (b) Teacher-designed tasks and tests*
- (c) Work samples, portfolios and projects*
- (d) Questioning*
- (e) Self assessment*
- (f) Conferencing*
- (g) Concept mapping*
- There are different assessment methods used depending on age level, subject and the final three outlined above would only apply to the Senior Classes.
- Questioning would apply to the whole school.
- We would use simple, teacher designed checklists, checklists from the publisher of the Mathematics programme and profiles, to record teacher observation
- Assessment is seen as an integral part of each subject area. In Gaeilge, English, Maths and SESE formal assessment is given more priority. In subjects like Music and PE the emphasis would be on enjoyment and participation levels.
- Teacher designed tests are used for Gaeilge, English, Maths and SESE and SPHE
- Pupils are involved in assessment of their own work by using self-correction, discussion(particularly in the Senior Classes), Draft re-draft, and editing.

Standardised Tests

- Sigma T, Micra T, and MIST are used in our school.
- All classes except Junior Infants are tested. The Belfield Analysis Assessment Profile may be used on certain Junior Infant pupils.
- The tests are administered during the Last Term.
- The Learning Support Teacher is responsible for the purchase, distribution and co-ordination of testing.
- The class teacher, The L.S. teacher and the Resource teacher administer the tests.
- The tests are appropriate for all pupils.

- The pupils who are not taking the test with their classmates are given the test in the room of the Learning Support/ resource teacher.
- All the scores are recorded on the sheet provided by the publishing company in descending order of Standard Score. This helps with the analysis of the scores, in determining what % are in each band.
- Class Teacher, L.S. Teacher, Resource Teacher and the Principal are involved in the analysis of the scores at whole school level.
- The results are placed in the Class Files for the new class teacher, so that he/she will be able to plan effectively. Individual files are held for all children attending L.S. or Resource. See example attached.
- Results are communicated to parents at the Parent- Teacher Meetings in October, or, if necessary, parents are requested to come to the school.
- Results are also given in the Annual School Report in the form of Standard Score, with an explanation that the average is 100.
- The results determine the groupings for L. S. and may lead to the child being referred to other agencies e.g. NEPS

Screening

- BIAP and Mist are used to facilitate the early identification of learning strengths / difficulties
- Screening tests are administered at the request of Teacher or Parent.
- L.S. Teacher/Resource Teacher administers the screening tests.
- L.S. Teacher/ Resource Teacher are the people who interpret the results.
- A lot of emphasis is placed on early intervention as it identifies the children who are in need of extra support and time can then be allocated to these vulnerable pupils.
- Teacher observation (if the pupil is in the Infant Class) or low score in the Micra T or Sigma T test indicate that diagnostic testing is needed.
- The results are communicated verbally to parents.
- The class teacher will write a letter and ask the parent to come to the school for a meeting if a diagnostic test is considered necessary.

Diagnostic Assessment:

- The Neale Analysis test is used to determine the appropriate learning support for individual pupils who present with learning difficulties.
- The Class Teacher is involved in selecting pupils for diagnostic assessment.
- The parents are contacted by the Class Teacher when he/she has consulted with the Principal.
- The Learning Support Teacher or the Resource Teacher administer the diagnostic tests and interpret the results.
- We hold Teacher/ Teacher meetings where we plan a programme of work every 2 weeks, and we hold Parent Teacher meetings in October. We would also invite parents to come to the school at any time deemed necessary. We would have meetings with the Personnel from NEPS.
- The criteria are used when deciding which pupils should be referred for supplementary teaching would be those who score below the 10% - 12% in Maths and/or English.
- The Principal arranges for consultations with a psychologist (NEPS or other) about diagnostic test results.
- The procedures for conducting diagnostic assessments are communicated to teachers, parents.

Psychological Assessment:

- If it is deemed necessary by the Class Teacher, L.S. Teacher, or Resource Teacher or requested by a parent, that a psychological assessment is required, the Class Teacher will communicate with the parents by letter and invite them to the school to discuss the Child's progress.
- The Principal is responsible for requesting and arranging an assessment from specialist(s) e.g., (Psychologist, Speech & Language Therapist, Audiologist, other...)
- The results are analysed and an I.E.P. is compiled for the pupil.
- Psychological reports are stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Principals office. The Principal controls access to them.
- At the beginning of September each year we analyse the list of those awaiting assessment. Priority is assigned as follows:
 - (a) Those in 6th Class transferring to Secondary School
 - (b) Those consistently attaining low scores in the Micra T and Sigma T, despite Interventions by the class teacher and attending Learning Support.
 - (c) Behavioural /Emotional difficulties.
 - (d) Requests from Parents /Teachers.
- A certain quota of assessments is granted each year by NEPS .
- In certain cases (Urgent Need) the B.O.M. has agreed to privately fund assessments. The psychologist must be fully accredited.

Recording the results of assessment

- The school's format for recording results is written.
- There an agreed terminology used and understood by all teachers.
- Are teachers made aware of the need to record comments in an objective and instructive manner?
- Sensitive data is kept in a locked filing cabinet.
- We transfer appropriate information based on assessments by teacher to teacher/ teacher to parent/ and we give oral information to second level schools.
- What are the implications for other policies and procedures the school may have *e.g.* Special needs, Record keeping, Data protection, Reports to parents ...

Success Criteria

- **A range of informal and formal assessment modes are used to place assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning. Formal – Micra T, Sigma T, Mist,**
- **Informal – Teacher designed tests, word lists, questioning, children designed tests (Senior Classes), self assessment, teacher observation, use of other texts.**

- Procedures run smoothly and efficiently because there is clarity about what is expected and who is responsible for different aspects. The L.S Teacher is responsible for the ordering of the Tests and the class teachers are responsible for administering them.
- The class teacher, the L.S. and Resource teachers are responsible for interpreting them, and the Principal is responsible for contact with outside agencies.
- Transfer of information from class teacher to class teacher happens efficiently at the beginning of the school year. Every September, the first half of our Staff meeting is given over to the transfer of Class Information. Teachers talk to the teacher they receive a class from, and to those to which they forward a class.
- Class files are available to the class teacher, in which are stored all the information of previous school reports on each individual child.

Roles and Responsibility

The ISMT have responsibility, under the leadership of the Principal for implementing this policy.

Implementation Date

The implementation date is September 1st 2009.

Timetable for Review

- This policy will be reviewed in the school year 2014 – 2015.
- The Principal and the ISMT will initiate and co-ordinate the review.

Ratification & Communication

The BOM will officially ratify the policy at their end of term meeting in June 2009. The policy will then be circulated and communicated to members of the school community.

Signed_____

Date_____

Chairperson of the B.O.M.

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
- Draft Report Cards Templates. www.ncca.ie
- info@ncca, September 2005. Issue 1, p. 8. Assessment for Learning