

POLICY ON ASSESSMENT

This policy was originally drafted in May 2004 during a whole school planning day. This policy was reviewed in May 2007, June 2008, December 2008, February 2010, May 2011. The present policy was completed by the staff of Scoil Mhuire, Clondra following our PDST (Professional Development Service for Teachers) planning day in April 2012. Further reviewed in November 2012 and April 2016, April 2020. Current review, January 2024.

POLICY RATIONALE

The core of our assessment 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. This policy has been developed to keep in line with legislation.

RELATIONSHIP TO SCHOOL ETHOS

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

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary aims/objectives of the policy are –

1. To facilitate improved pupil learning.
2. To create a procedure for monitoring achievement.
3. To track learning processes which assist the long and short term planning of teachers.
4. To generate baseline data that can be used to monitor achievement over time.
5. To co-ordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis involving parents and pupils in managing strengths and weaknesses.

PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT

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. Assessment takes different forms and can be used in a variety of ways to:

- Test and certify achievement.
- To inform planning for all areas of the curriculum.
- Gather and interpret data at class/whole school level and in relation to national norms.
- To generate baseline data that can be used to monitor achievement over time.

- Identify specific areas of difficulty or strength for a given student and build on the strengths including the exceptionally able.
- Determine the appropriate route for students to take through a differentiated curriculum
- Compile records of individual pupil's progress and attainment
- Contribute to the school's strategy for prevention of learning difficulties
- Facilitate pupils' involvement in assessment of their own work.
- Enable teachers to monitor their own approaches and methodologies.
- The school aims to inform parents informally of areas of difficulty or strength for their child at the earliest opportunity

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

Strategies may include pupil self-assessment, questioning, pupil profiling, portfolios, two-way communication between parents and teachers, modification of teacher programmes, and SSP. We operate an intense early intervention system in Clondra based on early at risk indicators and teacher observation, i.e., children in Junior or Senior Infants, if experiencing any difficulty. We are using Stage Approach as per DES Guidelines (p.7 Circular SP ED 02/05), see Appendix 2.

ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

Both teacher assessment and pupil self-assessment are used in our school. Assessment methods are subject and age appropriate (please refer to Curricular Policies).??

Many types of informal assessment are used in our school on a continual basis. These include:

- Teacher observation
- Teacher-designated tasks and tests
- Work samples, portfolios and projects
- Junior infants: teacher observation of strengths and difficulty
- Senior Infants: teacher observation.

Teacher observation

Teachers record significant observations of a child's progress. This can be where a child is making exceptional strides or maybe an area of concern. Checklists are

completed for some children in Junior and Senior Infants. These include gross motor skills, fine motor skills, etc.

Teacher designed tasks

Teacher designed tasks are used in most of the curricular areas, e.g., maths, English, Irish, art, SESE (Social, Environmental and Scientific Education), etc. Teacher designed tests are mainly used in Maths English and Irish.

Portfolios/Samples of work/Samples of art

From September 2008 all teachers have assembled portfolios/samples of work for the children in their class. Approximately 10-15 sheets are picked out by child/teacher and included in their portfolios. A variety of sheets, from across the whole curriculum will be picked. Children are given this folder of work when they leave in 6th class. Each year 1-3 samples of art are placed in the children's art folders. This is given to the child when they leave Sixth class. These folders show how the child is progressing as they move through school. Children may pick some of the pieces for their portfolios. We may operate e-portfolios.

SUCCESS AND IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

(Also referred to as 'two stars and a wish')

This involves older 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 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.

Telling children what they are going to learn ... and agreeing the criteria for judging to what extent outcomes have been achieved (Guidelines, pp 9, 70 and 77).

- We are learning to _____. We will know then we have achieved this because _____.
The learning objective(s) and the success criteria may be displayed on a chart/whiteboard/post its/etc.
- Teacher/peer self-evaluation in terms of these by identifying successes and improvement needs against the criteria. (See appendix 1, *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum, Guidelines for Schools*).

Effective teacher questions

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. For example, 'Which of these activities are in themselves aerobic? Golf, swimming, darts, table-tennis, skydiving, 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 to 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 the work. 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: Older 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! (Guidelines for Schools, pp 14-23)

Teachers may select from the following strategies to aid self-assessment as appropriate.

- KWL charts (What I Know Already/What I Want to Know/What I Have Learned) (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 p. 15
- 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
 - ^ Where did you get stuck? What helped you? 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 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 the next steps in their learning. They may be present on flashcards/charts 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 (Knows, Wants to know, has Learned) charts, Rubrics and Concept Maps. Also include PMI (Plus, Minus, Interesting) charts; Ladders; Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down; Traffic Lights and Talking Partners (Guidelines, pp 84-85). Also Coloured Fans (Green = I'm fine; Yellow = I need help; Red = I'm stuck).

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 Testing

Standardised testing in Maths and English takes place in our school in line with DES Circular 56/11. The Drumcondra Primary Reading Test and Sigma T Maths Test are administered to all classes from 1st-6th in May/early June each year.

The purpose of standardised tests is to allow teacher to make placement and progress decisions based on assessment results and to develop appropriate interventions for certain children.

The class teacher administers the standardised tests. In the event that a pupil is absent on the day of the test the special education 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 the test or in the case of 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. Since June 2006 a tracking table is used for each pupil to note any major deviation in scores. We are tracking and comparing pupils standardised test score to

their NRIT scores. From 2016 we track and compare pupils standard test score to their non-verbal reasoning test scores.

The results are analysed at whole school level using the Drumcondra Primary Tests Scoring System and the Sigma T Scoring System 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 on the child's summer report. The school is utilising one of the NCCA report cards. We will also discuss the results at the annual parent/teacher meetings. The standard score, percentile rank/or STEN score will be given to parents and an explanation/descriptor will be provided with each result. The results determine the allocation of learning support in the school (see our Special Education policy)

Tests are ordered by school secretary in consultation with principal and class teachers. The following tests are used.

- (i) Senior Infants – Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST), early in 2nd term.
- (ii) 1st Class – teacher observation, Drumcondra Primary Reading, Drumcondra Primary Spellings Tests, Sigma T.
- (iii) 2nd Class – 6th Class – teachers observations, Drumcondra Primary Reading, Sigma T, and possibly Drumcondra Primary Spelling Tests.

Screening

Administration and interpretation of screening measure(s) by the class teacher. The screening measures which may be used in this school are:

- Junior Infants: Belfield Infant Assessment Programme (BIAP); Junior Infants Early Indicators Sheet (Appendix 2) may be used on children we have concerns about.
- Senior Infants: MIST (2nd term); Drumcondra Test of Early Literacy; Drumcondra Test of Early Numeracy; Early Indicators (Appendix 2).
- Phonological Assessment Battery (PhAB). (Can be used in Jnr/Snr Infants.)
- First Class: Quest Maths and English (2nd/3rd term).
- First – sixth: Drumcondra Primary Reading Test (DPRT) and Sigma T Maths Test.
- Ability Testing: Non-Reading Intelligence Test (NRIT) – 1st Class and 5th Class; OTIS LENON (may be used) 2nd/3rd class.
- Nfer Nelson Non-Verbal Reasoning Test to 1st and 4th classes. The test will be administered as follows: End of 1st class: both Nfer Nelson Non-Verbal Reasoning Test and NRIT Level 1. 4th class: Nfer Nelson Non-Verbal Reasoning Test. End of 5th Class: NRIT Level 2 or 3 as appropriate.

Under this system children with low incidence disabilities are granted low incidence teaching hours. These may be provided individually or as part of a group at the discretion of the school. These hours are granted by the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) upon receipt of all the relevant reports and documentation.

Diagnostic Assessment

Diagnostic tests are administered by the special education or learning support teacher if a child scores below the 'cut off' point on the screening tests or if concerns are raised following consultation with parents/ guardians. Parents are provided with test results and if a NEPS or other psychological assessment is warranted, parental permission is sought and consent form is completed. The principal will liaise with NEPS in such an assessment.

The diagnostic tests used in the school include:-

1. Belfield Infant Assessment Programme (children up to age 7)
2. Dyslexia Screening Test (age 5-16)
3. Middle Infant Screening test (MIST) (all senior infants)
4. Quest (first class)
5. Non-Reading Intelligence Test (NRIT) (first and fifth class)
6. Drumcondra Test of Early Literacy (end of senior infants/beginning of first class)
7. Drumcondra Test of Early Numeracy (end of senior infants/beginning of first class)
8. Otis-Lennon Mental Ability Test (2nd/3rd classes).
9. Diagnostic Reading Analysis
10. Aston Index.
11. Diagnostic Reading Analysis (7-16), Crumpler & McCarthy.

Most of these tests are administered in groups on a whole class basis. Screening is used by the school to initiate the staged approach to intervention as per circulars 24/03 and 02/05.

IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTING PUPILS FOR SUPPLEMENTARY TEACHING

We use the staged approach and identification of pupils involves:-

- (a) administration, scoring and interpretation of an appropriate standardised screening measure by the class teacher (or, in the case of very young pupils, appropriate checklists or profiles)
- (b) selection of pupils for diagnostic assessment by the learning support teacher, in consultation with the class teacher
- (c) administration of diagnostic tests by the learning support teacher to each selected pupil (subject to approval by the pupil's parents) to identify the pupil's learning strengths and needs
- (d) Determination of the nature of the intervention to be provided to the pupil, such as additional support from the class teacher and/or supplementary teaching from the learning support teacher – staged approach.

- (e) Identification of learning targets and the development of an Individual Profile and Learning Programme for each pupil to whom supplementary teaching is to be provided, in consultation with the pupil's class teacher

Selection of Pupils

General Allocation Model (GAM/EAL)

In 2012 the Department of Education and Skills introduced a new system to cater for children with special educational needs in mainstream primary schools. Each school was given a General Allocation Model (GAM/EAL) based on the number of mainstream teachers. This model took into account the status of each school as well as gender. The benefit of this model is that each school now has a specific allocation of learning support employed in a permanent capacity to support children who fall into the categories below.

Prioritisation

Resources and provision will be directed towards pupils in the greatest need of support. This prioritisation is based on Circular 02/05 and the Learning Support Guidelines (2000) and will include.

1. Pupils identified as having low-incidence disabilities;
2. Pupils identified as having high-incidence disabilities;
3. Pupils on the learning support caseload. For example, priority will be given to:
 - Pupils scoring at or below the 10th/12th percentile on a standardised test in English reading. When these children have been catered for then pupil scoring at or below 12th.
 - Early literacy intervention – senior infants to 2nd class;
 - Pupils scoring at or below the 10th/12th percentile on a standardised test in maths; and
 - Early numeracy intervention – senior infants to 2nd class.
 - In most instances, children who need English as an Additional Language (EAL) are now under GAM/EAL allocation.

Psychological Assessment

If stages 1 and 2 fail to deliver adequate intervention the class teacher/Principal will contact the parents for permission to secure a Educational Assessment for their child (see attached form, appendix 1). The psychologist will speak with the child's parents/guardians following the assessment. The class teacher/principal may also speak with parents if appropriate. An assessment will determine the subsequent level of intervention, be it Learning Support or Resource hours.

If after an educational assessment the psychologist feels a speech and language assessment/occupational therapy assessment is needed, this will be applied for by either principal or class teachers and with the permission of parents. If a clinical assessment is recommended the parent must seek this in conjunction with their GP.

Legislation also requires the school to report assessment information when requested to other teachers within the school and the children themselves, where appropriate. A parent must give permission for their child's assessment to be forwarded to another primary school or secondary school. The school is also obliged to share assessment information with other individuals who are involved in the child's education. These include DES inspectors, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) psychologists, Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), and Education Welfare Officers. Parents' permission will be sought to share this information with other professionals such as speech and language therapists and occupational therapists, etc. This sharing of information between professionals enriches the child's educational experiences.

If the teacher feels a child has a hearing or sight problem they may speak with child's parents/guardians.

The school's nurse is often instrumental in diagnosing a sight or hearing problem in a child. She may refer them to the appropriate parties/services.

Recording

Each class teacher has an assessment file which is stored in the classroom. It contains standardised test results, tracking forms and end of year reports. This file is passed from teacher to teacher as the child progresses through the system. A copy of the results and tracking sheets are also held in a folder in the Principal's office. A copy of end of year reports are also held in children's individual files. When children leave in 6th class/or leave our school, their Individual Tracking Sheet with all results is also put into their file. Procedures are in place to manage sensitive data (see Data Protection Policy). Tests are stored until pupils are at least 21 years old.

Our school operates a class tracking record of English and Maths results since June 2007.

There is a facility on the Aladdin school management software system to record most standardised tests. This allows us to view and compare pupil/class tests over a child's school history.

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 responsibility are defined
- The Special Education team have clearly defined roles and objectives
- There is efficient transfer of information between teachers and parents.

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 the lines of communication must always be kept open.

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed as necessary, but at the latest 2027.

RATIFICATION

This policy was ratified on _____

Signed: _____

Ms Mary Duignan, Chairperson of Board of Management, Scoil Mhuire, Clondra.

Appendix 1

Diagnostic Screening Test Permission Form
(If permission not already given on Enrolment Form)

Dear Parent/s

Based on a screening test that _____ completed recently, we recommend a diagnostic assessment for your child. This test will be administered by the Learning Support teacher. It is necessary that you sign the form below in order for us to administer the test. Please return to the school by _____.

I/we agree to our child _____ undergoing a diagnostic assessment.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Diagnostic Screening Test Refusal Form

Dear Parent/s

Based on a screening test that _____ completed recently, we have recommended a diagnostic assessment for your child. As you have indicated that you do not wish to avail of this test it is necessary that you sign the form below and return to the school by _____.

I/we do not agree to our child _____ undergoing a diagnostic assessment.

Signed: _____

Date: _____