Assessment Policy

Introduction & Rationale

At Scoil San Treasa, our mission is the provision of primary education of the highest quality for all our pupils in a happy, safe, Christian environment. Acknowledging that their parents are the primary educators of our children, we are inspired by a shared vision of excellence and we espouse a partnership approach in its pursuit.

Our assessment policy reflects and supports our mission statement: Our assessment practices help us to gather information about child/ren's progress and achievement and assist us in sharing relevant information with those concerned with the children's education. Information that is gleaned through our assessment practices is also used to enrich teaching and learning in Scoil San Treasa.

Aims and Objectives

The primary aims and objectives of the policy are:

   • To facilitate reflective teaching and enhance pupil learning.
   • To create a procedure for monitoring achievement.
   • To track learning processes which assist the long and short term planning of teachers.
   • To highlight difficulties in learning in order to provide intervention strategies and prevention strategies
   • To identify pupils with exceptional ability who may benefit from extension activities
   • To keep records of attainment that will inform the reporting process
   • To use validated assessment data to inform target setting

What is the Purpose of Assessment in the Primary School? What does it involve?

"Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for Schools – NCCA", p.7 states the following: *"Assessment is about building a picture over time of a child's progress and/or achievement in learning across the Primary School Curriculum. Information about how the child learns (the learning process) as well as what the child learns (the products of learning) shapes the picture. The teacher uses this information to identify and celebrate the child's current learning, and to provide him/her with appropriate support for future learning."* The Guidelines also point out the following: *"For the teacher, assessment involves gathering information to understand better how each child is progressing at school and using that information to further the child's learning."* Assessment, therefore, goes far beyond just testing. It concerns the daily interactions between the teacher and each child that include moment-by-moment conversations, observations and actions.

Definition of Assessment

The Guidelines on Assessment, as referenced above, define assessment as follows:

*"Assessment is the process of **gathering**, **recording**, **interpreting**, **using**, and **reporting** information about a child's progress and achievement in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes."*

The two principal Approaches to Assessment

The two principal approaches to assessment are:

- Assessment for Learning **(AfL)** and
- Assessment of Learning **(AoL)**

These interrelated and complementary approaches emphasise two aspects of assessment that are central to the teacher's work:

- The teacher uses evidence on an ongoing basis to inform teaching and learning (AfL).
- The teacher periodically records children's progress and achievement for the purpose of reporting to parents, teachers and other relevant persons (AoL).

Types of Assessment

The school follows the NCCA Guidelines on Assessment in the Primary Classroom (available at www.ncca.ie) Key types of assessment are summarised on p.12 and p.13 of that document. They are listed below with page reference numbers for fuller explanations:

- Self-assessment page 14

- Conferencing page 24

- Portfolio assessment page 30

- Concept mapping page 36

- Questioning page 42

- Teacher observation page 46

- Teacher-designed tasks and tests page 54

- Standardised testing page 60.

Formal / Semi-Formal Testing and Assessment– including Standardised Testing

We are constantly gathering information about how well children are doing in their learning. Some of this is on a very informal (yet nonetheless valuable) basis such as through teacher observation and interaction and dialogue with pupils and parents. At other times, this is done in a more formal and structured manner such as through standardised testing.

(Note: The Learning Support Department in Scoil San Treasa maintains a bank of appropriate tests and checklists, and seeks to augment and update those as resources allow and as needs and opportunities emerge.)

Junior Infant Level

Teacher observation is a central part of assessment in all classes. This is particularly the case in Junior Infants. This is enriched further via information gleaned from relevant reports that may be available (such as Speech and Language assessment reports, HSE reports…), information provided by parents, and interactions with the child. In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate to administer specific tests to individual children or to use profiles such as the Belfield Infant Assessment Profile. Samples of the children's work are considered on an ongoing basis. Screening at Junior Infant level includes teacher observation, work samples and basic tasks related to literacy and general learning. This is useful in communications around the transition from junior infants to senior infants, in tracking and supporting progress, in planning for differentiation and in considerations relating to early prevention and early intervention regarding learning difficulties via learning support (where appropriate and as resources allow). All of the above, together with various teacher-designed checklists and work-sampling can help to inform planning around how the child's learning and skill development can be enhanced, and can form part of a process for further support and extension activities whilst in the school.

Senior Infant Level

- The Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST) will be administered by class teacher at end of the fifth term of schooling i.e. the end of the second term of senior infants. In tandem with overall observations and findings throughout the year (similar to notes re Junior Infants, above), this helps to inform planning and considerations around teaching and learning.

First Class

- The class teacher uses various checklists and screening measures – including the QUEST Screening (Number and Reading) in September. Teacher-devised 'check-ups' and observation are helpful in terms of overall assessment.
- The QUEST Diagnostic Tests (Number and/or Reading), and other diagnostic tests (as available and as deemed appropriate) may be administered by Learning-Support teachers or class teachers.

First Class to Sixth Class

- DPRT (Drumcondra Primary Reading Test), DPMT (Drumcondra Primary Mathematics Test) and DPST (Drumcondra Primary Spelling Test) are administered to all children, other than those who are exempted. The Drumcondra Primary Scoring Software is used in the analysis of the DPMT results.
- Timed tables tests are administered to pupils from first to sixth class – currently half-termly/termly.

Special Needs Identification and Diagnosis

To assist in diagnosis of children with specific difficulties and/or Special Needs a range of tests is available for administration by L.S. teacher (Parent's permission is sought re direct intervention and testing by learning-support teacher, over and above routine class

engagement). This bank of tests is updated and augmented as needs and resources allow. Teacher observation, standardised tests and routine class work and assessment will also be utilised in this regard.

Note: Actual diagnosis of a specific learning difficulty, where appropriate, is carried out by the relevant professional.

The administration of such tests is in keeping with the approach recommended by DES Circular 02/05 where a staged / layered approach is used by the individual class teachers before recourse to diagnostic testing / psychological assessment. If a psychological assessment is warranted, and if circumstances permit it, parental permission will be sought and a consent form will be completed.

Assessment by other agencies

This includes the following :

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) is available to the school. In practice, however, the NEPS psychologist is assigned a large number of schools and as such, time allocated to an individual school is quite limited. Accordingly, referral or consultation is not immediate. While mindful of the importance of the staged approach to such assessment, cognisance is also taken of critical needs that may emerge at any time. Parents are consulted with reference to any such assessments and permission is sought. Referrals for Speech and Language assessment through the HSE can also be made through the school. Again, this is a very limited service and the waiting period tends to be long.

Outcomes of Testing

The outcomes of testing are used to monitor pupils' progress. These are then used to inform classroom planning and reporting or as part of the decision to give extra supports to children. In line with the Department of Education's Literacy and Numeracy Plan, the school must send data on DPRT and DPMT (standardised tests) to the Department of Education and Skills although no child will be identified individually in these data reports. DPRT, DPMT and DPST results are reported to parents in line with Department of Education and Skills (DES) guidelines. End-of-year reports and parent-teacher meetings are useful means of sharing information relating to pupils' progress. Homework notebooks and homework exercises, as appropriate, are also useful in this regard.

In-Class Assessment

While every curriculum subject in our school is assessed, some subjects such as English or Maths, lend themselves to be assessed in a more formalised manner than other areas of learning. Teachers include assessment sections within their own short and long term planning and overall record keeping. Teachers will also have one or more of the following in their classrooms to track assessment in the various areas of learning:

- a specific assessment folder
- a section within their own plans for recording of assessment
- portfolio of work from children and/or work samples

- records re observations
- electronic medium for recording assessment
- reference in Cúntas Míosúil to assessment approaches

Such records will vary from class to class as needs determine.

Record Keeping

At whole-school level, records of the following assessments are kept:

- End-of-year reports
- Standardised Test Results
- Professional reports relating to assessments
- Records related to Learning-Support/Special Educational Needs.

Other examples of records that teachers may keep include:

- End-of-term maths and literacy assessment
- Teacher observation notes made throughout the year

At the end of each school year, a teacher will pass on relevant assessment information to the next teacher. This can be in the form of an informal or formal meeting in which oral and/or written records may be shared. Observations may include educational needs of class and individual children.

Screening

The screening methods used to identify learning strengths and needs by class teachers and learning support/resource teachers in our school include:

- MIST & QUEST as referenced earlier in this document
- Teacher observation (throughout the year)
- Use of homework, teacher-designed tests & projects (throughout the year)
- Standardised Tests listed above
- Behaviour Checklists (as needed)

Note: As new testing materials become available, as new needs emerge and as opportunities to address the teaching and learning needs in our school present themselves, other testing materials/approaches not specifically listed above may be integrated into the school's practice.

Ratification

Ratified by Board of Management on   9th March 2015