



Assessment Policy Scoil Aodh Rua agus Nuala 2012

Introduction

This policy has been drafted by the Principal and teachers of the school to formalise and record assessment procedures which have been practised in the school for many years and to include any further requirements which relate to Circular 0018/2012 pertaining to Literacy and Numeracy Strategies.

Policy Rationale:

The core of the policy is that children should experience success at school. It endeavours to identify at the earliest possible opportunity children who may have Learning Difficulties and to put in place a whole school response to meet their needs. An effective Assessment Policy is central to this core objective. As a result, learning will be a more enjoyable experience for the child and a more rewarding and enriching professional experience for the teacher.

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. The policy also links with policies in curricular areas as well as our Special Needs/Learning Support policies.

Aims and Objectives:

The Primary aims/objectives of this policy are:

- To formalise assessment procedures which already exist in the school
- Inform new teachers and parents of assessment procedures.
- Identify and celebrate current learning.
- To facilitate and improve pupil learning.
- Enrich understanding of what a particular child's needs might be
- Construct a picture of the child allowing planning for the child.
- To create a procedure for monitoring achievement.
- To teach learning processes which assist the long and short term planning of teachers.
- To co-ordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis involving parents and pupils in managing strengths and weakness.

Policy Content

Purposes of Assessment

- It informs planning across all areas of the curriculum.
- Assessment helps to evaluate and modify teaching strategies enabling teachers to monitor their own approaches and methodologies.
- It identifies the particular learning needs of pupils/groups of pupils including the exceptionally able.
- Assists pupils to reflect on their own learning.

- Evaluates pupils' achievements in curricular areas in comparison to the national norms.
- It compiles records of pupils' individual progress and attainment.
- It facilitates communication between parents, teachers and other parties about pupils' development progress and learning needs.

Approach to Assessment

The school recognises the four functions of assessment as being formative, summative, evaluative and informative.

Formative

Helping the teacher to evaluate the learning opportunities provided.

We can plan activities taking into account the needs of the pupils so that their skill, knowledge and understanding are fully developed. Children will also be involved in assessing their own work.

Summative

Providing information for school reports and records. We can write a report based on what the child knows, understands and can do.

Evaluative

Helping the teacher to evaluate the learning opportunities provided. We can carefully plan activities on the needs of the children so that their skills, knowledge and understanding are developed. Children will also be involved in assessing their own work.

Informative

This provides information for parents and for the child's next teacher. We can then communicate to parents and teachers how the child is performing.

The emphasis is on assessment for learning as well as assessment of learning – this means that evidence is used on an on-going basis to inform teaching and learning in addition to keeping records of pupil's progress and achievements.

A broad range of assessment approaches tools/strategies are used in Scoil Aodh Rua agus Nuala to cater for a wide spectrum of needs among the pupils. The children may be assessed with their class or individually out of the classroom whichever is the most appropriate for the pupil. Alternative assessment tools will be designed, altered, or sourced by the SEN Teachers should the Standardised Test be deemed inappropriate to the pupils level of ability.

The schools plan for each curriculum subject addresses the issue of assessment.

INFORMAL ASSESSMENT:

The types of informal assessment methods used in the school are:

- **Teacher Observations:** Observing or talking to the child as he or she performs the activity or task. Also social interaction between pupils both inside and outside the

classroom. Most observations are mentally recorded but on occasion notes are made and kept on file.

- **Teacher Designed Tasks and Tests**: are used for the core curriculum areas in all classes. These informal tests are at the discretion of the individual teachers. They may be oral or written and would include problem solving. Records of teacher designed tests and tasks are kept by individual teachers and communicated to parents at parent/teacher meetings.
- **Work Samples**: Portfolios, scrapbooks, copybooks, projects and worksheets.
- **Mastery Records**: Assessment and grids for maths programmes. Checklists of sight vocabulary from class readers. Regular checks of initial sounds taught. Blending of CVC's in phonics.
- **Discussion/Conferencing**: Talking to the children about their work and setting targets for improvement. This involves self-assessment by the pupils, Mostly 5th and 6th Class.
- **Concept Mapping**. This may be used at the beginning of a unit of work (AFL) or at the end of a unit of work (AOL). It can be done in child's own copy or by teacher on whiteboard. It is particularly useful in SESE.
- **Questioning**. Questioning will underpin all classroom assessment methods. A variety of questions are used, closed questions, open questions- developing higher order thinking, probing questions and prompt questions.
- **Monitoring Spelling and Table Tests**. Weekly spelling test, table test, dictation etc.
- **Staged assessment** at the end of Strand Units of work especially in Mathematics.
- **Mental Maths Tests**: This is oral assessment.
- **Parental observation** homework comments and feedback at parent/teacher meetings.

- **Assessment Folders: (Class not individual Child)**

Teachers' Folders and Pupils' Folders.

Each teacher will keep an Assessment Folder for checklists, test results, (Teacher designed and standardised) sample of "best work or sample of work refined after consultation/correction. Samples of child's work which may show improvement and progression from term to term. Project work, samples in visual arts, photographs or video recordings of child/children participation in P.E. activities, or making presentations. DVD or recording of musical shows may be included.

The pupils' folders will be samples of the childrens' work chosen by themselves. (SAF).

Screening Tests (Standardised Test):

To assist in the early identification of learning strengths/difficulties, the school administers screening tests each year to all pupils from Senior Infants to Sixth Class. The Mist Test is administered to Senior Infants by the Learning Support Teacher. Tests are administered to all other classes by the class teacher. Results of these tests are interpreted by SET and class teachers. Screening may lead to specific intervention by the class teacher in the line with our Staged Approach to special needs provision. In addition the school places strong emphasis on early intervention. The screening tests used to identify strengths and weaknesses in the school are the following standardised tests

- Middle Infants Standard Tests (MIST Tests).
- Micra T (1) Senior Infants Sigma T.
- Sigma T Assessment (Senior Infants and 1st to 4th).
- Drumcondra Reading Test (1st – 6th Class).
- Drumcondra Maths (5th & 6th class).
- Drumcondra Spelling (1st -6th class).

Standardised Test are administered to all pupils from Senior Infants to 6th Class.

- The tests are scheduled for the end of May each year.
- Parents/guardians are informed in September on the exact date for testing and are requested to ensure their child/children are present.
- The Learning Support Co-ordinator (Mrs McCabe) is responsible for the purchase, distribution and co-ordination of testing.
- The class teachers are responsible for administering and correction of the tests.
- All regulations outlined in the manuals are strictly adhered to.
- The Raw Score, Standard Score, Percentile Rank and Sten Score are recorded for each pupil.
- The Principal SETs and Class teachers are involved in the analysis of Standardised Test results for an individual pupil, class and whole school level.
- First priority for Learning Support is given to children who fall in the tenth percentile and below.
- All results are inputted to create the Bell Curve.
- The Sten Scores are recorded on the pupils Report Cards. The NCCA explanatory leaflet on same is attached.
- The Sten Scores for English and Maths for 2nd, 4th and 6th class pupils are presented to the Board of Management and also will be forwarded on line to the Department of Education annually.
- Information gathered from the analysis of results will be one of the tools used for target setting. Test results will also inform long term and short term plans for teaching and learning.

Diagnostic Assessment: Formal diagnostic tests are used to determine the most appropriate learning support for individual pupils who are not progressing in a learning support situation. Diagnostics test are administered by the learning support teacher having first

informed the parent. The learning support teacher will interpret and advise the class teacher of the results. A meeting will be arranged with parents to discuss the results and to recommend further assessment if necessary. The diagnostic tests used in our school are:

- Assessment File (Kick-Start).
- NRIT (Non Reading Intelligence Tests).
- 100 word dolch checklist.
- Quest
- Reading Recovery Assessment
- British Picture Vocabulary Test.
- Phonemic Awareness Test.
- Young Reading Test.
- Graded Word Test(marino).
- RAIN Reading Test.
- Visual Discrimination Test.
- Schonell Spelling Test.
- Diagnostic Profiles.
- DST.
- WRAT.
- Assessment File (Kick-Start).
- Aston Index.
- Basic Number Diagnostic Test.
- Group Maths Test (Young).

Psychological Assessment;

If the staged approach fails to deliver adequate intervention the Principal/class teacher will contact the parent for permission to obtain a Psychological Assessment. The psychological Assessment will determine the subsequent level of intervention be it Learning Support, Resource Hours or an Individual Education Plan. Children with Psychological Assessment have a file re: same kept in the Principal's office. A list is compiled each year and relevant teachers informed to read assessments.

Storing of Test Results:

All results of standardised tests are retained in the school filing cabinet and in the Principal's office and are available to parents on request.

Teachers will also receive a copy of their classes results from the previous year in September. This will be filed in cabinet/press (locked) in their classroom.

Recording and Storing of Records:

- Each pupil has a file which is stored in a locked press/cabinet in each teacher's classroom.
- This file contains Standardised Test result, end of year reports and accounts of any particular needs that the child may have.

- This file is passed from teacher to teacher as the child progresses through the system.
- The Mathematic Scripts for the previous year are kept until they are analysed (Error Analysis) and any difficulties identified and recorded.
- Pupil Screening and Standardised Assessment results are kept until student reaches 21 years of age.
- At the beginning of each school year teachers will be given the opportunity during Croke Park Time to meet with the previous class teacher/learning support teacher or resource teacher who will brief him/her on the content of the curriculum covered the previous year and to identify any needs that particular pupils may have.

Reporting

Reporting to Parents/Guardians:

Assessment Results will be reported to Parents twice yearly. One of these will be Parent/Teacher Meeting usually held in November. The second will be a written Report (Report Card) and follow up meeting at the end of the school year. Outside of formal meetings Parents are welcome to meet teachers during the year. It is advised to make a prior appointment so as to maximise the benefit of such meeting for pupils, parents and teachers.

Report Card:

The school has customised their own Report Card based on the NCCA Template Report Card.

Reporting to outside Agencies:

In the event of a request by an outside agency for a pupil's assessment the Principal will be informed and will be supplied with the report before it is forwarded. A copy of the report will be kept in the Pupils file in the Principal's filing cabinet. A copy of the request will also be kept on file and the reason why the report was sought. The Principal will have the discretion to bring any sensitive reports or requests to the Board of Management for their attention, advice or direction.

Reporting to other Schools:

A Student Transfer Form, Pupil's Report Card to include Standardised Test results will be forwarded to the Principals of Primary/Post Primary School when confirmation of enrolment has been received.

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.

Responsibilities and Roles:

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 (Differentiation).

At stage 2 the responsibilities are shared with the Special Education Team (Screening Tests, Diagnostic Tests). The Principal assumes a primary role at Stage 3 when a Psychological Assessment may be required. Parents /Guardians have a role at all stages and the lines of communication are always kept open.

Implementation:

This policy supersedes the policy drawn up previously and is effective from October 2012.

Ratification and Communication:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management and communicated to parents thereafter.

Chairperson: _____ Date: _____

Review Timetable:

This policy will be reviewed in two years or as circumstances may warrant.

References:

DES Circular 02/05
24/03

DES Learning Support Guidelines 2000

www.sess.ie

Working together to make a Difference for children –NEPS

Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum Guidelines for Schools – NCCA.

Appendix One

Information for parents

1

Your child and standardised testing

Understanding the STen score:

During your child's time in primary school he/she will complete standardised tests in English reading and in maths. Children in Irish medium schools will also complete standardised tests in Irish reading. Schools must use the tests in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes 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. The standardised tests in English reading and maths measure a child's achievement compared to other children in all schools at the same class level or age level. The standardised test in Irish reading measures a child's achievement compared to other children in Irish medium schools at the same class level or age level. The English reading and Irish reading tests give information about how well your child can understand what he/she has read. The tests do not gather information on your child's written or spoken English and Irish. 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.

Will all children complete all the standardised tests?

No. Children in English medium schools will complete standardised tests in English reading and maths. Children in Irish medium schools will complete standardised tests in English reading, maths and Irish reading.

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, maths and Irish reading. 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, maths, and Irish reading, 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, maths and Irish reading
- help to find out if your child has learning difficulties in English reading, maths and Irish reading so that the school can put appropriate supports in place.
- help to find out if your child is a high achiever in English reading, maths and Irish reading 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, maths and Irish reading is important for all his/her learning.

When are standardised tests carried out?

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

- English-medium schools are required to implement standardised testing in English reading and maths during the period May/June for all children in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes with effect from 2012 onwards.
- Irish-medium schools are required to implement standardised testing in Irish reading, English reading and Mathematics during the period May/June for all children in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes with effect from 2012 onwards.

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, the maths test and Irish reading 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, maths and Irish reading. 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 at the end of 2nd, 4th and 6th classes.

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 STen (standard ten) score.

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Understanding STen scores

STen scores go from 1 to 10. The table below describes what the different STen scores tell you about your child's achievement in English reading, maths and Irish reading.

STen score	What the score means	Proportion of children who get this score
8-10	Well above average	16
7	High average	16
5-6	Average	13
4	low average	16
1-3	Well below average	16

If your child's STen score is 5 or 6, you will know that his/her performance on the test is average. About one third of children in Ireland have STen scores in this band. You can see from the table that there are also STen 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, maths and Irish reading. 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 STen score of 1, 2 or 3 suggests that your child may have difficulties in English reading or in maths or Irish reading. One test score by itself does not give a complete picture of your child's learning in English reading, maths and Irish reading. 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 or Irish reading. 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, maths and Irish reading.

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, maths and Irish reading. If the score is low and your child needs extra help with 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, maths and Irish reading 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.