



St. John's N.S. Kenmare

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Assessment Policy

Introduction

This policy was formulated by the teaching staff of St. John's National School in order to clarify school practice in relation to assessment and to ensure compliance with guidelines provided by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

Rationale

It is our belief that all children should experience success at school. Through the implementation of this policy, we will endeavour to identify, at the earliest possible opportunity, children who may have learning difficulties and will put in place a school response to their needs. An array of assessment techniques will be employed in order to cater for the different learning styles of pupils in the school.

Relationship to School Ethos

The school adopts a holistic approach to the education and development of each child and seeks to create an environment in which all pupils can grow and learn. An effective assessment policy identifies early interventions that need to be put in place to ensure the enhancement of pupils' learning as well as increasing levels of confidence and raised self – esteem.

Aims and Objectives

The primary aims / objectives of the policy are:

- To facilitate improved pupil learning
- To create a procedure for monitoring pupil achievement
- To involve all relevant parties in identifying and managing learning strengths and / or difficulties
- To cater for all pupils' different learning styles
- To coordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis
- To assist teachers' long and short term planning

Policy content

This policy is geared towards using assessment to inform planning and to identify the needs of all the pupils, so that adequate strategies are put in place early enough to facilitate remediation, and also to cater for pupils who are exceptionally gifted. These strategies

may include pupil self – assessment, pupil profiling, communication between parents and teachers, modifications of teaching programmes and the drawing up and implementation of individual education plans (IEP).

Definition of Assessment

The NCCA Guidelines define classroom assessment as ‘the process of gathering, recording, interpreting, using and reporting information about a child’s progress and achievement in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes’. (NCCA 2007)

Assessment includes more than testing. It is an ongoing process that encompasses many formal and informal activities designed to monitor and improve teaching and learning in all areas of the curriculum.

Purposes of Assessment

The purpose of assessment is

- To inform planning for all areas of the curriculum
- To gather and interpret data at class and whole – school level and in relation to national norms
- To identify the particular learning needs of individual pupils / groups of pupils including the exceptionally able
- To contribute to the school’s strategy for management of learning difficulties
- To monitor pupil progress and attainment
- To facilitate communication between parents and teachers about pupils’ development, progress and learning needs
- To enable teachers to monitor their own approaches and methodologies, and to modify their programmes in order to ensure that the particular learning needs for individual pupils are being addressed
- To facilitate the involvement of pupils in the evaluation of their own work

Classroom Assessment Methods

The assessment methods used by teachers in this school to make judgements about pupil achievement / progress include:

- Teacher observation
- Teacher questioning
- Teacher – designed tasks and tests
- Work samples, portfolios and tests
- Conferencing
- Concept mapping
- Self – assessment
- Peer – assessment
- Standardised testing
- Diagnostic testing

Types of Assessment

The two principal approaches to assessment undertaken in this school are:

Assessment for Learning (AfL)

This involves teachers using evidence on an ongoing basis to inform teaching and learning. AFL emphasises the child’s active role in his / her own learning.

Assessment of Learning (AoL)

This focuses on medium and long – term assessment and generally takes place at the end of a learning phase or unit of instruction. It usually involves an external evaluative instrument e.g. a teacher – designed test, a criterion referenced test or a standardised test.

Assessment for Learning

Teachers are aware of the importance of constantly monitoring their pupils' progress and of adapting their teaching methodologies and organisational strategies in order to make learning more successful for the children. This involves focussing on three key questions:

- Where are the pupils now in their learning?
- Where are the pupils going in their learning?
- How will they get to the next point in their learning?

Teachers may record informally any significant information about pupils' learning noticed during lessons. This information may be used later to evaluate lessons and to inform planning of subsequent lessons, and as an indication of which pupils may need further support.

Pupils are encouraged to become involved in the assessment of their own work and progress. Methods such as Thumbs, Traffic Lights, Two Stars and a Wish, KWL sheets, Rubrics may be used. Thumbs and other methods are described in detail in 'Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum Guidelines'. (NCCA 2007)

Assessment of Learning

1. *Assessment of Curricular Areas*

Assessment of curricular areas includes both formal methods such as teacher – designed tests / tasks and informal methods such as the keeping of work samples. Teachers use the resulting information to assess their pupils' progress in the various subjects and may keep a record of formal assessment in an assessment folder. Monitoring pupils' written work in copybooks and workbooks is another important aspect of assessment and is undertaken regularly by teachers.

1. *Standardised Testing*

- The school administers the Drumcondra English, Spellings and Maths every year in classes 1st – 6th.
- Drumcondra Irish Test is administered every second year to all classes 2nd – 6th.
- N.R.I.T. is administered to pupils in 1st and 4th class annually.
- M.I.S.T. is administered to pupils in Senior Infants every February.
- Testing is coordinated by the Special Educational Needs (SEN) team.
- The S.E.N. team assist with the administration of tests to pupils who are absent on the day the test is given to their class.
- E.S.L. pupils and students with learning difficulties may be exempted from taking one or all standardised tests.
- The tests are administered by a class teacher (not necessarily the class teacher) May / June every year.
- The teacher who administers the tests corrects the tests for that group.
- All test results are entered on the Aladdin system and a hard copy is kept in the testing folder.
- The results from each class are analysed by the principal and S.E.N. team to assist in the determination of the allocation of supplementary teaching in the next school year.

- The relevant Sten scores in Literacy and Maths are reported to parents of children in 1st – 6th in the end of year report.
- The relevant Sten scores of pupils in 6th class, in both Literacy and Maths are reported to the pupils chosen Secondary schools as required by Circular 0045/2014.
- Aggregated results are submitted to the B.O.M. and to the D.E.S. as required by Circular 0018/2012.

1. *Screening Tests*

The screening tests used in this school are

- Sigma – T / Drumcondra Maths Test
- Drumcondra Primary Reading Test
- Middle Infant Screening Test
- Non-Reading Intelligence Test
- Schonell Word Reading Test
- Schonell Word Spelling Test

These tests are administered individually or on a class basis. The results of these tests are used to help identify pupils who may have learning difficulties and who need to progress to the 2nd stage of the staged approach as outlined in Circular 0022 / 2005.

1. *Diagnostic Assessment*

Diagnostic tests are administered by members of the SEN team following referral by class teachers and with the permission of parents / guardians. The results of these tests are used in designing subsequent learning plans for the pupil. If necessary, supplementary teaching will be arranged following consultation with the parents / guardians. Diagnostic assessments may be administered again following a period of supplementary teaching in order to monitor the pupil's progress.

The diagnostic tests used in the school include:

- Schonell Word Reading Test
- Schonell Word Spelling Test
- Jackson Phonics Test
- Quest
- Neale Analysis

1. *Psychological Assessment*

If stages 1 and 2 fail to deliver adequate intervention for a pupil, his / her parents will be contacted to discuss the possibility of having the child assessed by a psychologist, either a member of the National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS) or a private psychologist. An assessment will determine the level of intervention required. Psychological reports are stored securely in the pupil's file in a locked filing cabinet.

Record Keeping

Each pupil has a file which is stored in a filing cabinet in the locked office. Members of the SEN team keep files on individual pupils or groups of pupil, containing relevant information, in locked cabinets in their rooms. These records are kept until the pupil is 21 years of age.

Assessment information in each child, child in receipt of Special Education Support file in the office includes:

- A copy of the pupil's annual report card

- Standardised Test scores for each child from 1st class up.
- Psychological assessments.
- Pupils I.E.P's
- Test Results (standardised and diagnostic test results).

Success Criteria

This policy is considered successful if:

- Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning throughout the school.
- A range of informal and formal assessment methods is being used.
- Early identification of learning difficulties is achieved and appropriate intervention is put in place.
- Procedures run smoothly and efficiently because there is clarity about what is expected and who is responsible for different aspects.
- There is efficient transfer of information between teachers.

Roles and Responsibilities

Mainstream teachers, the SEN team and the Principal assume shared responsibility for assessment. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to set in train staged interventions at class level (Stage 1). At Stage 2 the responsibilities are shared with the SEN teacher assigned to the class. The principal assumes a primary role at Stage 3 when an assessment may be required and when liaising with other outside agencies. Open communications with parents / guardians will help them to fulfil their obligations and responsibilities at all stages.

Implementation

The procedures outlined in this policy are implemented.

Review

This policy will be reviewed again if there are any significant changes to assessment procedures introduced by outside agencies.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management.

All teachers have a copy of this policy; it is published on the school website, and is available to parents / guardians on request.