

Assessment Policy

Rationale:

The Education Act (1998) requires schools to 'regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to the students and their parents'. In fulfilling this requirement, schools develop assessment procedures, which provide an accurate account of children's progress and achievement.

Assessment is a process that involves gathering, interpreting, recording, using and communicating information about pupils' social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. Assessment serves at least two important functions: it can be used to improve teaching and learning (classroom assessment) and to fulfill official requirements such as those set out in the Education Act 1998 (official assessment).

Assessment should—

Reflect content and objectives of the curriculum;

Be used as a basis for planning students' further learning needs;

Ensure continuity between classes;

Be comprehensive, i.e. cover the full range of students' abilities;

Allow for effective communication of information to parents.

How our Policy was Developed:

This policy was developed by all staff after training days in Mayo Education Centre attended by Maria Molloy, Berniece Connolly and Padraic Mac Eoin, followed by discussion at staff meeting on 21st May 2008.

The Policy's Relationship to our School's Mission Statement and Ethos:

This policy is in line with our schools' aim of 'promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of our pupils'.

The Purpose of the Assessment Policy:

Purposes of Assessment:

- (a) To diagnose the student's present level of knowledge and skills. This diagnostic form of assessment is done at the beginning of the year/ term. It enables teacher and student to set realistic goals, and to measure learning. It is never used for giving marks/ grades.
- (b) To monitor progress towards learning goals to help form the instructional programme. This formative assessment is used during period of instruction to monitor progress, and to provide feedback to help teacher and student plan what to do next.
- (c) To provide data to judge final level of student's learning. This summative form of assessment is used at the end of instructional period to judge final quality and quantity of achievement.

Assessment depends on—

Provision of effective feedback to pupils,

Active involvement of pupils in their own learning,

Adjusting teaching to take account of the results of the assessment,

Recognition of influence the assessment has on the motivation and self-esteem of pupils,

The need for pupils to be able to assess themselves and understand how to improve.

Review and Evaluation Procedures:

Assessment provides the teacher with information to make decisions about what and how the child is learning. The teacher is informed by pupil learning needs and the recording of where a pupil is, in relation to his/ her learning. This information, which is a corner-stone of good teaching, enables the teacher to identify the next steps in progressing the child's learning and adapt his/ her teaching strategies and/or the learning activities, as appropriate. Using assessment information to inform teaching and learning in this way can make learning a more enjoyable and challenging experience for the child, and can contribute to a more enriching and rewarding professional experience for the teacher.

Assessment will also be used to identify pupils with learning difficulties so that the nature of the support and assistance they need can be ascertained, and the appropriate strategies and programmes put in place to enable them to cope with the particular difficulties they are encountering. Assessment will assist communication about pupils' progress and development between teacher and pupil, between teacher and parent, and between teacher and teacher. It helps the child to become more self-aware as a learner and to develop powers of self-assessment.

High expectations and purposeful teaching should underpin progression in pupils' learning. Assessment will evaluate our own teaching methodologies and assist in planning for the future.

Key factors to be considered:

Our understanding of children as learners and of the learning process, i.e. how children acquire and express knowledge and understanding.

Our views on what constitutes achievement, i.e. our views on areas of experience, or of forms of knowledge.

Our view of education, i.e. what its purpose is and therefore what are acceptable and valuable goals to expect of children in our school.

What should be assessed?

The school's assessment policy should address each curriculum area/ subject of the Primary School Curriculum. Assessment encompasses the diverse aspects of learning: the cognitive, the creative, the affective, the physical, and the social, in addition to the knowledge the child acquires, the products of learning, the strategies, procedures and stages of learning, the skills the child learns, the attitudes and values the child develops, and the dispositions the child shows.

Assessment includes pupils' growth in self-esteem, interpersonal and intrapersonal behavior, and the acquisition of a wide range of knowledge and skills, attitudes and values. It is important that all curriculum areas/ subjects are assessed by appropriate methods. Certain methods are more suited to certain assessment purposes and to certain subjects.

Deciding what to assess is based on the curriculum objectives in each curriculum area/ subject and on what the teacher intends to help the children to learn. What are our priorities? What methodologies, approaches, will be used to assess the different curricular areas?

The teacher uses appropriate assessment methods to measure the extent to which children have achieved these objectives (see examples in Section 2 of 'Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum—Guidelines for Schools, NCCA: self-assessment, conferencing, portfolio assessment, concept mapping, questioning, teacher observation, teacher-designed tasks and tests, standardized testing).

When should assessment happen?

Assessment in the early years is an informal and natural part of the teacher's interactions with children. Much assessment takes place through observations of the child, discussions with the child, and active listening to the child in a variety of learning situations. Because the early years provide the foundation for subsequent learning, it is important to identify children who experience learning difficulties as soon as possible. To facilitate this, the school implements a screening policy in second school year in February. Screening involves teacher observation of children and the administration of group and individual tests of early literacy, numeracy and developmental skills. The information acquired through screening tests, together with day-to-day observation by the infant class teacher, facilitates a more accurate assessment of the child's learning strengths and needs. This is particularly important in the case of younger children when learning does not follow a sequential pattern. Screening facilitates the early identification of learning difficulties and allows for effective communication with the child's parents. Early identification enables the teacher to organize appropriate supports based on the Staged Model of Intervention.

Assessment in middle and senior classes: We meet the requirements of administering standardized tests in literacy and numeracy at the beginning of second class and the beginning of fifth class. In addition, every class is tested using standardized testing in October/November.

We ensure that assessments of children's learning and development are made over a period of time rather than sporadically, and that assessment information is used to provide intervention and support appropriate to the child's stage of learning. We ensure that the educational needs of all children are identified and provided for. (See Special Education Policy)

Tools for Assessment:

Teacher Observation

Teacher-designed tests;

Standardised tests;

End of Year Reports (recording progress of pupils from year to year, short descriptive statements/ indicators arranged in levels of achievement);

Samples of children's work e.g. copies, folders, senior class projects, homework.

Self-Assessment e.g. teacher-pupil dialogue.

Samples of free writing are collected and filed each year during the month of May.

Teacher – Teacher dialogue.

Formal Assessment to be carried out with each Class Grouping:**Infants:**

Draw a man from the Aston Index to be completed by Junior Infant in September. B.I.A.P. may be administered to individual Junior Infants by Class Teacher in consultation with SET and DEIS Co-Ordinator. M.I.S.T. to be administered by SET, during February in Senior Infant Class.

First to Sixth Class:

Standardised Tests: Sigma-T (Mathematics test) and Micra-T (Literacy test) will be administered in October/November.

Quest may be administered by SET with children scoring under SS 90 in Standardised Reading Tests (Micra-T).

Non-Reading Intelligence Test during First Class to aid in the detection of language difficulties and specific learning difficulties.

ESRI tests to be carried out in Third Class and Sixth Class in three year cycles.

Validity of Assessment:

We will try to ensure that our assessment methods are valid representations of pupils' achievements, i.e. that they measure what they are supposed to measure.

Reliability of Assessments:

The reliability of assessments relates to the stability of the scores achieved by the pupil. On a reliable test, the scores that a pupil achieves one day would be the same the next day.

We will try to reduce the main variables that can affect judgement:

Context—to ensure that the circumstances of assessment are managed, i.e. comfortable seating, minimum distraction, stress levels reduced;

Time—the number of times and over what period of time we will have to see an assessment criterion achieved;

Person doing the assessment—i.e. agree with colleagues to reduce the variables.

Where should assessment information be recorded?

Three kinds of records are maintained by the school:

The teacher's day-to-day records,

The Pupil's File,

The Report Card.

Teacher's Records: The teacher may keep his/her own record of tasks and activities completed. This kind of record provides the teacher with additional information about the child, which helps him/ her to meet the needs of individual children more effectively. It also informs the teacher's classroom organization.

The Pupil File is used by teachers to record information on aspects of the child's learning and development. The file provides an educational history of the child's progress and achievement during the course of each school year. One file per child is maintained and stored.

The Pupil File includes:

The Original Enrolment Form

Extra Medical Information

Report Booklets

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Standardised Tests/ Screening Tests

Samples of Writing for each year

Correspondence between teacher and parent/guardian

IEP and End of Year Report from SET

Scoring Sheet for Standardised Tests

The place of the pupil in assessment:

Learning is a partnership between individual pupils, whole class and teacher. This partnership is extended into assessment. To achieve our aims for assessment we will assess the interaction between learner, the teacher and the task. Consequently the pupil is a key figure in our assessment practice. We will take the attributes of pupils into consideration in our assessment—i.e. confidence, self-esteem, etc.

The Involvement of External Assessment:

If the results of school-based assessment indicate that there is a need for specialist intervention, every effort will be made to access the following services:

Speech/ Language Therapist

Educational Psychologist/ NEPS support

Clinical Psychologist

Intervention for social/ behavioural reasons

Western Care

Occupational Therapist.

With whom should assessment information be shared?

The Data Protection (Amendment) Act (2003) establishes parents' rights to regular information on the progress and achievement of their children under the Education Act. The Act entitles the parents of students under the age of eighteen (and students themselves when aged eighteen or older) to access all personal data relating to these students. Legislation also requires the school to report assessment information when requested to other teachers, other schools, and the children themselves where appropriate. The school is also obliged to share assessment information with other individuals who are involved in the child's education.

How should assessment information be shared with others?

Assessment results are reported to parents twice during each school year. Parent-Teacher Meetings are held in November and a written report is sent at the end of the school year. At the Parent-Teacher Meeting parents will be informed of the S-Ten Result from the standardized testing. Outside these formal meetings, teachers may also meet parents informally.

For how long should assessment information be stored?

We store information safely in a locked cabinet. This information is accessible until the child's twenty-first birthday. Computer information is backed-up, clearly labelled and stored safely to the best of our ability.