



St. Patrick's N.S.

Assessment Policy

Introductory Statement

This policy was developed in response to Circular 0056/2011 in consultation with all staff members. The policy was reviewed by all staff in November 2023.

Policy Rationale

In order to ensure that all children in our school achieve to the best of their ability we believe it is imperative that any learning difficulties are identified at the earliest opportunity and that the school must put in place an appropriate response to their needs. An effective assessment policy ensures quality in education is central to this process of teaching and learning.

Through assessment the teacher constructs a comprehensive picture of the short term and long term needs of the child and plans accordingly. Assessment assists communication to all parties involved in the child's education i.e. teacher and child, teacher and parent and teacher to teacher. It helps the child become more self-aware as a learner and develops powers of self-assessment. It is integral to all areas of the curriculum and to the child's growth in self-esteem and acquisition of a wide range of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the school:

The school adopts a holistic approach to the education and development of each child and to the enhancement of teaching processes. An effective policy of assessment will identify the early interventions required to be put in place to ensure that enhancement, increased confidence and raised self-esteem is achieved.

Aims:

The aims of assessment are as follows:

- To monitor learning processes
- To benefit pupil learning
- To generate baseline data that can be used to monitor achievement over time
- To involve parents and pupils in identifying and managing learning strengths/needs
- To assist teachers long and short term planning
- To identify children who are entitled to Support teaching hours.
- To coordinate assessment procedures on a whole-school basis
- To encourage the pupils to self-assess their work and their abilities regularly.

- To encourage children to take responsibility for their own learning and to become more independent learners.

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 with 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 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).

Purposes of Assessment

Each form of assessment will enable teachers to:

- Inform and plan for all areas of the curriculum
- Gather and interpret data at individual, class and whole-school level, and in relation to class and national norms
- Identify particular learning needs of pupils ranging across all levels of ability (including gifted and talented children)
- Contribute to the school's strategy for prevention of learning difficulties
- Contribute to the school's strategy for maintaining high standards in and/or improving Literacy and Numeracy
- Monitor pupil progress and attainment
- Modify their programmes in order to ensure that the particular learning needs of individual pupils/groups are being addressed
- Compile records of individual pupil's progress and attainment
- Facilitate communication between parents and teachers about pupil in assessment of their own work

Forms of assessment

In St. Patrick's N.S., we maintain a balanced combination of *Assessment for Learning and Assessment of Learning*.

Assessment for Learning

The concept of assessment for learning (AFL) extends the potential of formative assessment. It emphasises the child's active role in his/her own learning, in that the teacher and child agree what the outcomes of the learning should be and the criteria for judging to what extent the outcomes have been achieved. In essence, AFL, helps teachers and children to focus on three key questions;

- Where are children now in their learning?

- Where are children going in their learning?
- How will children get to the next point in their learning?

Providing feedback to children is therefore central to AFL. This feedback is based on evidence of how and what the children are learning. Feedback focused on the learning or task in hand, can help children identify and celebrate their progress and achievements, pinpoint challenges they experience, and decide what the next steps should be. This level of involvement in shaping their own learning can heighten children's awareness of themselves as learners and encourage them to take more personal responsibility for, and pride in their learning. AFL does not generally happen at the end of a particular piece of work or a period of time. It usually takes place in the day-to-day, minute-by-minute interactions between teachers and children. Everything children do, say and make - designing and making a model, working on a project, /task alone or collaboratively, playing and so on, has the potential of providing the teacher and the children themselves with information about what they do and don't understand and what they can and cannot do. Using AFL, the teacher interprets this information and uses it to support children in their work and to plan ahead. In this way, the teacher can integrate AFL into teacher-child interactions and children can come to regard it a natural part of how they learn in school. The teacher can also use information from AFL to evaluate his/her teaching. Based on information gathered from children, the teacher can make changes to his/her planning, organisational strategies, and teaching methodologies in order to make learning more successful for the children.

Assessment of learning is used to provide a summary of what the student has achieved at fixed points, such as at the end of a period of study, or when a unit of work is completed, or at the end of an academic year. Information from assessment of learning can be used to report to others, such as parents and other teachers.

Examples of AoL include:

- assessing a child's learning at the end of a given period, such as the end of a unit of work, a week, a term, or a year.
- As per our School Improvement Plan 2023/2024, Busy at Maths termly assessment tests are sent home to parents to be signed and reviewed on an agreed date.
- The emphasis in AoL is on measuring a child's cumulative progress towards curriculum objectives.
- AoL helps the teacher to plan future work, to set new targets, and to provide feedback and information for end of year assessment.
- Teachers use information from AoL for reporting, particularly to parents and other teachers.
- The NEPS psychologist may also access the information gathered through AoL in order to work with the school in meeting the learning needs of individual children

Methods of Assessment

At St. Patrick's N.S. we use a wide range of formal and informal assessment methods:

1. Teacher Observation

This involves assessing the child's progress by observing, questioning and monitoring the child's progress in all areas of the curriculum. This may include the children's responses, participation, interaction and reaction in class. Teachers may use checklists, rubric or pupil trackers to help them with their observations.

2. Teacher designed tasks and tests

Teachers use a range of activities to assess the progress of individuals or groups across the full range of curriculum subjects. These may be oral, pictorial, written or practical and may be embedded in the everyday teaching and learning activities in the class or may be used by the teacher in key areas at the end of the topics/ activities to provide a fuller picture of the child's performance and progress for example spelling tests, table tests, and SESE tests. Teachers will refer to Assessment in the Primary School Guidelines Pgs. 54-59 for suggestions.

3. Concept Mapping

These are used to gather information as a visual representation about the children's ideas and understanding in subject areas for example English SESE. As an assessment tool it provides evidence of changes in children's thinking over time e.g. before and after assessment of a topic.

4. Self –Assessment

Self-assessment is the means by which pupils take responsibility for their own learning.

- **Teachers can refer to Guidelines for Schools pp14 – 23.**

Teachers can select from the following strategies to aid self-assessment as appropriate –

- KWL/KWHL charts (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
- 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....

5. Work samples, Portfolios and Projects

Some examples of children's work are retained where possible to monitor the child's progress in knowledge and skills e.g. portfolio work, projects, samples of work done on computer, digital images of artwork. Each class teacher keeps an Individual Pupil File containing teacher observations, checklists, writing samples from the different genres and samples of children's work. The results pages from standardised tests are also stored in the individual pupil file.

6. Effective teacher questioning.

Teachers use higher order questioning to provoke fruitful discussion. Examples of higher order questions may be found in the Guidelines for schools Pgs. 86-88. Examples include;

- Giving a range of answers. You need to give two definite 'yes' answers, two definite 'no' answers and one or two 'maybe' answers. E.g. which of these activities are in themselves aerobic? Golf; swimming; darts; table-tennis, sky-diving; 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?
- Individual oral feedback – to include enabling children identify the next steps in their learning.
- The document linked [here](#) gives some great information on using questioning in the classroom.

7. Success and Improvement Strategy (also referred to as 'two stars and a wish').

8. Sharing the learning intention/objective and devising success criteria - i.e., Telling children what they are going to learn and agreeing the criteria for judging to what extent the outcomes have been achieved (Guidelines pp9, 70 and 77).

- We are learning to (WALT)
- We will know when we've achieved this because.
- What I'm looking to (WILF)

The learning objective(s) and the success criteria may be displayed on a chart/whiteboard/post it notes etc.).

9. Use of ICT.

ICT is used in certain classes to help with formative assessment. The school utilises the Google Workspace suite of apps in the middle and senior class. Apps such as Google Forms may be used to help with assessment and incorporating pupil voice. Pupils are also given the opportunity to produce presentations and projects using Google Docs and Google Slides in some classes. The use of these apps for assessment also encourages pupils to work in pairs and in small groups. The following apps are used regularly for assessment in our classrooms:

- Kahoot
- Blooket
- Google Slides
- Book Creator

In some classes Class Dojo and Seesaw are used to display pupils' work in a digital portfolio.

Pupils are also given the opportunity to type their writing in English and Irish for display and for their assessment folders using the school laptops/chromebooks and iPads.

Screening

The **ALPACA** (Assessing Letter and Phonemic Awareness Class Assistant) screening tool is being used by the Junior and Senior Infant classes. In Junior Infants, the children are screened three times a year - September/ January and June. The screener checks for understanding of rhyming, initial sounds, blending, letter name knowledge and deleting. The screener picks out children that may be at risk for having difficulties in these areas and may need further diagnostic assessment and intervention.

Reading Groups in Junior and Senior Infants Pre/Post testing

The Junior Infants take part in a block of reading groups with the SET team in February each year. The children are tested before and after the 6 - 8 week block. The Junior Infant teacher will use the results of the ALPACA screener as well as classroom assessments that check for letter name and sound knowledge, nonsense words, heart words, decoding fluency etc. The assessments are repeated after the block. The teacher may also record the children reading before and after the block and count mistakes, omissions, fluency errors etc.

Drumcondra Test of Early Literacy(Screening) is administered in the spring term of senior infants by the Infant teacher. The DTEL-S is designed to identify pupils who may be at risk of reading difficulties so that, if needed, further diagnostic assessment and targeted instruction can be implemented. It is divided into four parts and assesses two aspects of reading: word recognition and comprehension. The test can be administered to small groups of children (10 or fewer) and takes approximately 40 minutes to administer

The DTEL-D(Diagnostic) is recommended for use with children who have attained low scores on the DTEL-S. The purpose of the DTEL-D is to identify specific reading and reading-related skills with which children may be experiencing difficulties. It is individually administered, takes approximately 45 minutes, and is divided into three parts: Phonological Awareness, Phonological Working Memory, and Knowledge of Letters and Letter Sounds.

The **CAT** test is administered in third class by the class teacher, SETs and the principal to aid with assessment of students' abilities.

Literacy Power Hour/ Literacy Lift Off Pre and Post Test- Prior to commencing a block of literacy intervention through the LLO initiative the children will be pre-tested using the PM benchmark kit to ascertain the correct level for them to begin with. Children will also be tested after their block of Literacy Power Hour to check on their progress with the initiative.

In some cases, support teachers may decide to use the **GL Dyslexia and Dyscalculia** screening tests with individual pupils when appropriate.

Standardised Tests

Standardised testing is used as an assessment tool in St. Patrick's N.S. These tests are instrumental in maintaining the high standards of Literacy and Numeracy in our school. The following standardised tests are used in St. Patrick's N.S.

MICRA – T

SIGMA – T

Both tests are administered annually in the third term

- In St. Patrick's N.S. standardised tests are administered to classes 1st to 6th
- Children with learning or physical disabilities, children who have English as an additional language and children who are in receipt of resource hours may be exempt from standardised testing at the discretion of the principal.
- In accordance with DES guidelines, STEN scores are communicated to parents in the form of a written report in sufficient time before the school closure for the summer vacation to allow parents a reasonable opportunity to seek meetings with the Principal and /or teacher(s) to discuss the written report if necessary.

- Results from standardised testing are reported to the Board of Management on an annual basis.
- Aggregated results of standardised testing in literacy and mathematics from classes 2nd, 4th and 6th are reported to the DES annually.
- Results are recorded digitally on the Aladdin school management system. Aggregated data is then analysed by the principal, class teacher and support teachers.
- The results of standardised tests are used by teachers to inform future teaching and learning.

Diagnostic Assessment

The staged model of intervention is used in St. Patrick's N.S.

After consultation with the class teacher where an individual child/ children's scores fall below the 12th percentile (pupils under this cut off point are given priority) and with the consent of the parents, a support teacher will administer an initial diagnostic assessment. At this point, the classroom teacher would have opened a class support file for the pupil. These results will be recorded in a support plan which is drawn up for the child.

The following diagnostic assessments may be used in St. Patrick's N.S.

- DTEL-D(Diagnostic)
- Dolch first 100 words
- Dolch second one hundred words
- Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive abilities
- CAT test
- Visual Stress Test
- Sound Linkage Assessment Test

After diagnostic assessment and a complete instructional term of Support Teaching, each child's Support File will be reviewed. These reviews record the progress the pupils have made as well as outlining any areas of concern. Parents are invited to take part in these reviews. Following a review, a pupil may return to classroom support, may continue with school support with new and/or updated targets or may be put forward for school support plus. This involves seeking the support of outside agencies such as NEPS, CAMHS or Primary Care services.

Psychological/OT/Speech and Language/Other Assessment

Children may be identified for assessment/observation at any time during the academic year. The class teacher, SET and/or Principal meet parents and a consent form is signed by the

parents if the child is being targeted for intervention by NEPS (National Educational Psychology Service). NEPS focus is on empowering teachers to intervene effectively with pupils whose needs range from mild to severe and transient to enduring. Psychologists use a problem solving and solution focused consultative approach to maximise positive outcomes for these pupils. NEPS encourages schools to use a continuum based assessment and intervention process whereby each school takes responsibility for initial assessment, educational planning and remedial intervention for pupils with learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Teachers may consult their NEPS psychologist should they need to at this stage in the process. Only in the event of a failure to make reasonable progress, in spite of the school's best efforts in consultation with NEPS, will the psychologist become involved with an individual child for intensive intervention.

If a pupil requires referral for OT or SLT, this is discussed with parents and the appropriate advice is given.

Recording Results of Assessment

- The results of each individual child's standardised test are recorded yearly on Aladdin. The back page of each standardised test booklet are also stored in the pupil's assessment folder
- Children's records are held in the school until they reach their 21st birthday. (NCCA Assessment Guidelines 2007)

Success Criteria

This policy will be considered successful if:

- Early identification and intervention is achieved
- Clarity is achieved regarding procedures involved in a staged approach to intervention
- Procedures are clear, with roles and responsibilities defined
- Assessment is used as a tool within the school to maximises pupil potential and success

References

Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life (0056/2011)

Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum, Guidelines for Schools (2007) www.sess.ie

Consultation

A draft of this policy, when approved by the Board of Management will be made available to parents and submissions may be made through the Principal. This policy is now available to view on the school website.

Ratification and Communication

This policy will be communicated to all teachers, parents and Board of Management.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Patrick's N.S. on

Date:

Signed:

Review

This policy will be reviewed in conjunction with our School Improvement Plan.