

St. Nicholas' Monastery National School



Policy on Assessment

Introduction

This policy was drafted by the Principal and staff of Nicholas' Monastery NS in order to address the issue of Assessment within the school.

Policy Rationale

The main purpose of this policy is to ensure that all children experience success at school. This policy will assist teachers to identify at the earliest possible opportunity, children who may have learning needs which are at variance with the majority of their peers in the classroom and to put in place a whole school response to those needs. This policy will also assist the school put in place systems to monitor student progress from Infants to sixth class.

Relationship to School Ethos

The school adopts a holistic approach to the education and development of each child, and an assessment of each child's learning needs leads to 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.

Aims and Objectives

The primary aims/objectives of the policy are to —

1. To facilitate improved pupil learning
2. To create a procedure for monitoring achievement
3. To monitor learning processes
4. To assist the long and short term planning of teachers
5. To involve parents and pupils in managing strengths or difficulties
6. To co-ordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis and
7. To generate baseline data that can be used to monitor achievement over time.

Purposes of assessment:

- To inform planning for, and coverage of, all areas of the curriculum
- To identify the particular learning needs of pupils/groups of pupils including the exceptionally able
- To contribute to the school's strategy for prevention of learning difficulties

- To monitor pupil progress and attainment
- To enable teachers to modify their programmes in order to ensure that the particular learning needs of individual pupils/groups are being addressed
- To compile records of individual pupils' progress and attainment
- To facilitate communication between parents and teachers about pupils' development, progress and learning needs
- To facilitate the involvement of pupils in assessment of their own work
- To enable teachers to monitor their own approaches and methodologies.

This policy is geared towards using assessment to inform planning and to identify the needs of all pupils including the exceptionally gifted so that adequate strategies are in place early enough to facilitate appropriate support. These strategies may include pupil self assessment, pupil profiling, two way communication between parents and teachers, modification of teaching programmes, and Individual Education Plans

Assessment in our School

The following forms of assessment are used in our school:

- Teacher observation
- Teacher designed tasks/tests
- Work samples
- Portfolios
- Projects and
- Homework.

These informal assessments are used by individual teachers to identify the learning needs of the children in their class. Teachers then plan their lessons and they identify differentiation strategies which they will employ to ensure the programme of work will closely match the needs of their students. Records of teacher-designed tests are kept by the individual teachers and they are communicated to parents at the Parent-teacher meeting and in the end of year report. Each teacher has discretion as to the format, administration and frequency of in-class testing. The most common types of informal teacher designed testing in our school are Maths tests, tables tests, comprehension exercises, spelling tests and quizzes.

Where children have identified learning needs, class teachers use testing which matches the abilities of the child and may require that these children perform differentiated tasks which are more appropriate to their ability. On occasions when teachers have concerns regarding pupil attainment levels or abilities further teacher devised testing may be carried out informally prior to conveying these concerns to other members of staff and the parents. For example where a teacher is concerned about a child's motor skills he/she may assess some element of a P.E. lesson. Again these assessments are at the discretion of individual teachers.

Teachers endeavour to involve students in assessment of their own work on a number of levels in this school. This applies more frequently to the lower achieving pupils. However, on many occasions teachers will point out where students may have presented better work or request

them to select pieces of work for inclusion in scrap books, displays or portfolios. Some teachers operate a Buddy system where children pair off to do initial correction of each other's written work prior to it being seen by the teacher. The school plans for each of the subject areas outline the assessments that are used for that particular subject in this school.

The following criteria are used to select children for Learning Support:

1. Children performing below 10th percentile in standardised tests of achievement in English.
2. Early intervention for low achievers in English based on class teacher's observations and recommendations.
3. Children performing below 10th percentile in standardised tests of achievement in Maths.
4. Early intervention for low achievers in Maths based on class teacher's observations and recommendations.
5. Children performing below 20th percentile in standardised tests of achievement in English.
6. Children performing below the 20th percentile in standardised tests of achievement in Maths.
7. Other children who would benefit from intensive intervention based upon class teacher's observations and recommendations and diagnostic test results.

Standardised Testing

The school uses the Micra T and Sigma T standardised tests on an annual basis. All classes from First class to Sixth class are tested. The Learning Support team are responsible for the purchase and distribution of test booklets and for the co-ordination of the testing process generally. The tests are usually administered in the second week of May by the class teacher. Standard scores, STEN scores and Percentile Rankings are recorded on the class Record template and stored by each individual teacher with a copy held in the Special Education Department and in the Principal's office. The Special Education Teachers analyse the results in June for allocation of resources to pupils in September. Class teachers analyse a proportion of their test results to identify strengths or weaknesses in their teaching and to modify or adapt lessons to address areas highlighted.

Where students whose first language is not English are enrolled in a class they are excluded from the test for year one and perhaps in year two if the class teacher in consultation with the principal feels that it would be inappropriate for them to attempt the test. Other suitable work will be prepared by the class teacher to occupy these students during the test time or they may be supervised by another teacher. Students who have identified learning needs may be required to attempt some form of standardised testing at first class level but may be excluded from testing further up the school. Supervision arrangements as outlined above will apply during the test for these pupils.

In line with the guidelines contained in Circular 0056/2011 this school has agreed to record the results of the standardised tests on the annual report card which is sent to parents in June of each year. It has been agreed that each teacher from First to Sixth class will record the STEN score achieved by each pupil on the report card. An explanation sheet, as outlined on the NCCA

website will be included with the report. The reports will issue by the middle of June to facilitate parents requesting to meet teachers to discuss the results.

Screening

The screening tests used to identify learning strengths and weaknesses in our school are:

- Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST)
- Non Reading Intelligence Test (NRIT)
- Sigma T
- Micra T
- Reading Recovery Assessment Tests
- Drumcondra Literacy
- Drumcondra Numeracy
- Drumcondra Spelling
- Drumcondra Irish

These tests are administered individually or on a whole class basis. The MIST is administered on a whole class basis with Senior Infants around February/March of each year. The NRIT is used annually and is usually administered the second week of October. Screening is used by the school to initiate the staged approach to intervention as per circulars 24/03 and 02/05. All students in Senior Infants have access to early intervention.

In all cases in our school, where teachers have concerns regarding pupil attainment or otherwise, the parents are informed at the earliest possible opportunity.

Diagnostic Assessment

The school policy on Psychological Assessments lists all diagnostic tests used by the school. Such tests are administered by a member of the Special Education Department following referral by the class teachers in consultation with parents/guardians and the Principal. The administration of such tests is in keeping with the approach recommended by Circular 02/05 where a staged approach is used by the individual class teachers before recourse to diagnostic testing/psychological assessment. Parents are provided with test results and if a psychological assessment is warranted, parental permission is sought and a consent form is completed. The Principal will facilitate such an assessment happening.

Psychological Assessment

If stages 1 and 2 fail to deliver adequate intervention the class teacher will consult with the Principal who will contact the parents for permission to secure a Psychological Assessment for their child. An assessment will determine the subsequent level of intervention, be it Learning Support or Resource hours. Where a child has identified learning or other needs they will receive resource hours as supported by the Department of Education and Science. In such cases the class teacher and the special education teacher will draft an individual education plan. Parents and the principal and other service providers are welcome to contribute to these plans.

Reporting to Parents

All parents are invited to attend an annual Parent Teacher meeting which is usually held in November. All children receive a written, annual school report in June of each year. Class teachers may invite parents in to discuss some aspect of their child's progress if they have identified some need and all parents are free to make appointments to see their child's teacher if they have any concerns about any aspect of school life. Where children have identified learning needs parents are kept regularly informed of their progress and are invited to contribute to the formulation of Individual Education Plans where these are deemed necessary.

Recording/Sharing Information

Files containing records of standardised test results and of end of year reports are stored in the filing cabinet in the Principal's office. Individual class teachers have access to these files as the children progress through the system. Procedures are in place to manage sensitive data (see Data Protection Policy).

Class teachers meet in September to discuss pupils who have transferred into their class. The special education teachers are free to meet with class teachers each morning from 9.15 to 9.30 prior to the commencement of formal instruction. These meetings are conducted in the classroom.

Success Criteria

This policy is considered successful if —

- Early identification and intervention is achieved
- Clarity is achieved regarding procedures involved in the 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

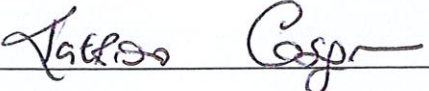
Roles and Responsibilities

Mainstream teachers, 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. At Stage 2, the responsibilities are shared with the Special Education team. The Principal assumes a primary role at Stage 3 when a Psychological Assessment may be required. Parents have a role at all stages and the lines of communication must always be kept open.

Ratification and Review

The staff, under the guidance of the Principal will review this policy every three years or if conditions change and review is needed.

Signed:  Date: 23/02/16
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed:  Date: 23/02/2021
(Principal)