



Assessment Policy

This policy was formulated by the staff of St. Mochta's National School following a whole school interest in best practice in assessment. The development of this policy has been guided by legislative requirements as well as recommendations from the Department of Education and Skills. There has been input from the leadership team, whole staff and the PDST. Our school recognises that assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning.

As part of our strong commitment in St Mochta's National School to continuously improve our practices this Assessment Policy was revised and updated during the 2020/2021 academic year.

This policy has been developed in line with the following:

- the Education Act (1998)
- the Data Protection (Amendment) Act (2003)
- the Equal Status Act (2000)
- the Education (Welfare) Act (2000)
- the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)
- the Disability Act 2005
- the Freedom of Information Acts (1997, 2003)
- the Data Protection Act 2018
- the Children First Act 2015

The policy has also been informed by information and guidance provided in:

- the Primary Curriculum
- the NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment) Website
- NCCA "Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum- Guidelines for Schools"
- Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties – A Continuum of Support – Guidelines for Teachers
- PDST Website
- the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020
- the Interim Review 2017 of the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People
- Circular 02/2005
- Circular 0138/2006
- Circular 0056/2011
- Circular 0018/2012
- Circular 0013/2017
- Circular 0018/2021
- Recommendations from the Inspectorate, WSE 2015

Rationale

This Assessment Policy sets out to clarify the purpose and practice of assessment in St. Mochta's National School. In our school we are dedicated to helping each child to achieve his/her individual potential. We consider assessment to be an integral part of teaching and learning. Assessment enables teachers to know at what level to pitch work and how to move forward in teaching. It allows parents and children to have feedback on how well a child is doing in learning, and to understand what they can improve upon, and how they can do this. In our school we recognise that Assessment data should be used systemically by all teachers to differentiate learning outcomes and tasks for the range of learners. Additionally, we are committed to early identification of children who may have learning difficulties and put in place a school response to their needs.

At St. Mochta's National School we are committed to providing a rounded education to the pupils in our care. We therefore hope that within that context our Assessment Policy will enable us to:

- Identify developmental stages of pupils
- Help identify children needing support
- Outline procedures and practices in relation to pupil assessment
- Assist planning (short/long term)
- Develop communication structures for the involvement of parents in their children's education
- Aid both child and teacher self-evaluation

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

St. Mochta's National School adopts a holistic approach to the education and development of each child. We believe;

"Everybody gets opportunities to succeed. Everybody gets treated with respect."

Our aim is to have high standards of teaching and learning and to enable each child to attain the highest level of his/her ability at every stage. As such assessment activities used in our school will contribute to pupil learning and development. This will be achieved by highlighting key areas of strength and need. Parents are acknowledged as their children's primary educators and as such are encouraged and facilitated to work together with teachers for the benefit of their children

Aims and Objectives

The primary aims and objectives of the policy are:

- To benefit pupil learning
- To monitor learning processes
- To generate baseline data that can be used to monitor achievement over time.
- To involve parents and pupils in identifying and managing learning strengths and difficulties.
- To assist teachers long and short term planning.
- To ensure continuity from class level to class level.
- To co-ordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis.

Through the implementation of this policy we strive to:

- Facilitate pupils to participate in the full curriculum for their class level.
- Develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes to school and learning.
- Enable pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners within their own ability.
- Involve parents in supporting their children's learning.
- Promote collaboration among teachers
- Establish early intervention programmes to enhance learning and to prevent/reduce difficulties in learning.
- Optimise the teaching and learning process.

Policy Content

Purposes of assessment

- In St Mochta's National School our purpose is to gather, record, interpret, use and report information about the children's progress and achievements in developing their knowledge skills and attitudes.
- To inform planning for, and coverage of, all areas of the curriculum.
- To gather and interpret data at class and whole school level and in relation to national norms.
- To identify children with particular learning needs and exceptionally able children.
- 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 and groups of pupils are being addressed.
- To facilitate communication between parents and teachers about pupil's development, progress and learning needs.
- To facilitate the involvement of pupils in assessment of their work.
- To compile records of individual pupil's progress and attainment and the updating of same.
- To help co-ordinate whole school assessment and analysis.
- To enable teachers to monitor their own approaches and methodologies (self-assessment)

Definition of Assessment

In line with the NCCA, our school believes that assessment is integral to teaching and learning and is concerned with children's progress and achievement. We concur with their definition of classroom assessment as

“the process of gathering, recording, interpreting, using and reporting information about a child's progress and achievement in the developing knowledge, skills and attitudes” Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for Schools (NCCA)

Assessment, therefore, involves much 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.

Assessment can be described in the following terms:

- **Formative:** Helping the child in the process of learning.
- **Evaluative:** Helping the teacher to evaluate the learning opportunities provided. We can carefully plan activities considering the needs of the child so that their skills, knowledge and understanding are fully developed. Children will also be involved in assessing their own work.
- **Summative:** Providing information for reports and school records. We can then write a summary report based on evidence of what a child knows, understands and can do.
- **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.

Assessment provides essential information in relation to:

- A student's development
- Sharing information with parents/relevant personnel
- Matching student's learning to the curriculum
- The effectiveness of the teaching programme
- Progress/achievement

Assessment for Learning and Assessment of Learning

“Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools” was launched by the NCCA in November 2008. These guidelines recognise two approaches to assessment – assessment of learning and assessment for learning.

Assessment of learning generally focuses on providing a record of the child’s progress and attainment at the end of a given period of learning (unit of work, term, year) Information gathered about the child’s learning are often expressed as a grade or mark.

Assessment for learning generally focuses using assessment information to provide feedback to the child to enable him/her to monitor their own learning. In order for the child to do this, they need feedback that is focused on the learning or on the task at hand, that indicates to them the next steps to be taken in the learning and that ultimately directs them to achievement. Assessment for learning helps children and teachers decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how to get there.

At St. Mochta’s school we recognise that Assessment for Learning and Assessment of Learning can inform teaching and learning.

In the course of engaging in both Assessment for Learning and Assessment of Learning, teachers may use the following methods of assessment in this school:

- Teacher observation, children’s behaviour, checklists on letter/sound recognition, number recognition etc.
- Focused Observations - observing a child or a group of children at an activity.
- Incidental Observations - monitoring what is happening i.e. works better in a group, alone, tires easily, responds to visual promptings etc.
- Structured Observations - observing one particular child each day at set intervals.
- Teacher designed tasks and test: spellings, children composing own question, Maths tests etc.
- Questioning: Blooms Taxonomy of questioning will be used as a guide. Each teacher will have a copy
- Concept mapping used in English and Maths
- Portfolios: art, writing, samples penmanship
- Error analysis
- Self-assessment: KWL etc.
- Conferencing: interviews with children
- Discussion, conferencing - talking to and questioning the children about their work, setting targets for future work.
- Presentations - evaluating with the child the outcome or end product - writing, drawing, diagram, model charts etc.
- Assessments at the end of blocks of work
- Peer assessment
- Completed assignments by pupils – projects, copybooks, activities, work samples, homework, portfolios...
- Parental, pupil feedback or observation

- Screening
- Standardised tests
- Diagnostic tests

Self-Assessment

Self-assessment is an essential part of Assessment for Learning. Self-assessment is the process by which pupils reflect on what they have learnt, it helps children take an active and engaging role in the assessment of their work and it is personal to each child. Children are involved in self-assessment when they look at their own work in a reflective way, identify aspects of it that are good and that could be improved, and then set personal learning targets for themselves. Self-assessment can be used by children of all ability levels and in all areas of learning. In age-appropriate ways, it can be used throughout the primary school and across all subjects. Self-assessment creates a safe context for children to express their own thinking about their learning. Self-assessment can also positively build links between home and school around the learning of the child.

Self-assessment is promoted and advocated at our school as it encourages our pupils to:

- Take responsibility for their own learning
- Become independent learners
- Improves self-esteem, motivation and concentration.
- Explore their own learning and the learning of other children.

Assessment Folders

The assessment folder supports assessment practice by providing a dedicated place for teachers to gather and record relevant information on the progress and achievement of the whole class and individual pupil learning. This information and evidence of learning is gathered using a variety of assessment methods during the year. Gathering information about the child's learning is not an end in itself but only the beginning of the process. How teachers use the information gathered is a key part of the assessment process. The information gathered and recorded in the assessment folder serves two purposes:

- Reporting on the child's learning progress and achievement to parents and other relevant people such as SEN teacher, the principal or the school psychologist. This use of the assessment information is called Assessment of Learning.
- Identifying the next steps to be taken to improve the child's learning. This approach to assessment is called Assessment for Learning.

The following should be included in an assessment folder:

- Class standardised test results (if applicable)
- Class checklists
- Class test results
- Portfolio of work samples
- Self-assessment

- Teacher observations
- Assessment Policy

The following information may be included for each child:

- Child's name
- Class level
- Interests
- Strengths
- Areas for development
- Learning needs
- Information from Parent/Teacher meetings
- Observations regarding subject areas (dated)
- Selected samples of child's work (dated)

It is recognised that a small number of carefully selected work samples gathered during the year are more meaningful and useful than having large quantities of samples in a folder. When selecting samples of children's work for inclusion in the assessment folder consideration will be given as to how they will support reporting learning progress to parents and others (Assessment of Learning) and in identifying the next steps needed to improve the child's learning (Assessment for Learning). It is also very important that the child chooses some samples of work for inclusion in the assessment folder.

Screening

To facilitate the early identification of learning strengths and difficulties, screening tests can be administered. These are administered by the Learning Support Teacher and results interpreted in consultation with the class teacher. Our school also administers the Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST) yearly in Senior Infants. Screening is used by the school to initiate intervention as per Circular 24/03, Circular 02/05 and our Learning Support Policy. In addition, the school places strong emphasis on early intervention.

Standardised Tests

In St. Mochta's School we recognise that assessment is an enabler of effective teaching and learning. All forms of assessment, including standardised tests, help to ensure that our teaching is differentiated to meet the needs of individual children and class groups. In our school the standardised tests are used to collate the overall picture of the progress of children in the school. They are used for Assessment for Learning. Our testing is carried out adhering to Circular 0056/2011, 0018/2012 and Circular 0018/2021

Within the school the New Drumcondra Primary Reading Test and the New Drumcondra Primary Maths Test are administered to all classes from 1st to 6th.

- The tests are administered between May and June.
- Class teachers administer these tests to their own classes during the given period (indicated above), adhering strictly to the conditions outlined in the testing manuals.
- Where a pupil is absent and tested out of the class situation or with assistance, a note to this effect will be put with the test booklet. This test will be acknowledged as just assessment of learning in this incidence.
- NRIT is administered to Second and Fifth classes yearly.
- Exemption from standardised testing is considered when deemed necessary as per Circular 0138/2006
- sTen are recorded manually and electronically.
- Results are reported to parents. To maintain consistency, sTen scores are given along with a descriptor/explanation.
- The results of standardised testing and other information are shared with post-primary schools to support the transition of sixth class pupils from primary to post-primary.
- Results are analysed on an individual basis by class teachers and on a whole school basis by the learning support team, the Deputy Principal and the Principal. Whole-staff analysis of results informs teaching and learning practices in the school.
- Results from 2nd, 4th and 6th classes are reported to the Department of Education and Skills electronically via the Esinet portal.
- Data from our standardised testing supports the early identification of children who may be experiencing difficulty and require additional support.

Diagnostic Assessment

Formal diagnostic tests are used to determine the appropriate learning support for individual pupils who present with learning difficulties. Diagnostic tests are administered by the SET team following referral by the class teachers in consultation with parents/guardians. The administration of such tests is in keeping with the approach recommended by Circular 02/05 where the Support Continuum Approach is used by the individual class teachers before recourse to diagnostic testing. For a complete list of tests which are available in our school please see our Learning Support Policy.

Psychological Assessment

Psychological assessments are carried out with the prior written permission of parents/guardians and only after the Support Continuum Approach to intervention have been followed. This is in accordance with Circular 02/05, our Learning Support Policy and the Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties–A Continuum of Support–Guidelines for Teachers. These stages can only be skipped where a child has serious emotional or behavioural problems. Psychological assessments are presently carried out by NEPS. Results of psychological assessment are a key factor

in the drafting of pupil IEPs. Reports are securely stored by the school and confidentiality is maintained at all times.

Recording

- The results of each child's Drumcondra Test (sTen score) are recorded both manually and electronically. This allows us to build up an Individual Pupil's Profile, a class profile and a whole school profile.
- Results of NRIT (2nd and 5th) and MIST (Senior Infants) are recorded manually and electronically.
- At the end of each academic year we recognise it is best practice for teachers to communicate with colleagues before handing over a class. Areas for discussion could include strengths and areas for development of each pupil, content of the curriculum covered in the previous year and all relevant assessment information.
- Test results may be communicated to relevant individuals and agencies with an involvement in the pupil's learning – parents, psychologist, professionals such as speech or occupational therapist, Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills, Special Education Needs Organisers (SENO), Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs) of Tusla and post-primary schools to support the transition of sixth class pupils from primary.

Reporting

Circular 0056/2011 asked schools to implement a range of measures relating to the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. These measures included reporting of the results of standardised testing to parents, boards of management and the Department of Education and Skills.

Our school report card was developed using the online tool from the NCCA. It is used for reporting to parents on pupils' progress and achievement at the end of the school year. In addition, an information leaflet developed by the NCCA that explains standardised test results to parents is enclosed with the school report.

All primary schools are required to report aggregate standardised test results for 2nd, 4th and 6th classes once annually to the Department of Education and Skills electronically via the Eisnet portal Circular 0018/2021. This data on student achievement is essential to inform national education policy and to identify ways of improving the performance of the education system. The data is also used as part of a range of tools to create a profile of schools' learning support needs when allocating special education teaching resources.

Success Criteria

This policy is considered successful if;

- A range of informal and formal assessment modes are used to place assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning.
- Early identification and intervention is achieved.
- Procedures run smoothly and efficiently because there is clarity about what is expected and who is responsible for different aspects.
- Transfer of information from class teacher to class teacher happens efficiently at the end of the school year.
- Links between home and school are encouraged through parent teacher meetings and reporting at the end of the school year to ensure good communication between parents and teachers on their child's progress in school.

Roles and Responsibilities

Mainstream, Special Education Teachers, Post-holders, the Deputy Principal and the Principal assume shared responsibility.

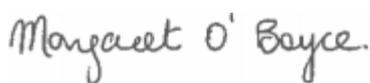
As part of our strong commitment in St Mochta's school to continuously improve our practices this Assessment Policy was revised and updated during the 2020/2021 academic year.

This policy is open to review by the Board of Management.

Ratified and signed on behalf of the Board of Management of St. Mochta's National School.



Valerie Haslam
Chairperson



Margaret O'Boyce
Acting Principal

21st September 2021

Date