

## ASSESSMENT POLICY

### Introduction

This policy is geared towards using assessment to inform planning and identify the needs of all pupils, so that adequate strategies are put in place early enough to facilitate remediation. Each curriculum area will be assessed to encompass the knowledge the child acquires, the skills the child learns, the attitudes and values the child develops and the dispositions the child shows using various methods of assessment.

The policy is based on advice and information provided in the Primary Curriculum, the NCCA Website, the NCCA booklet Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for Schools and Circular 0138/2006, as well as Teacher Experience of working with students with physical and multiple disabilities.

The following materials and information were also consulted:

- Primary Curriculum Framework for Primary and Special Schools (2023)
- Special Educational Needs – a Continuum of Support, Guidelines for Teachers and Resource Pack for Teachers, NEPS, 2007
- Learning Support Guidelines, DES, 2000
- Circular 0138/2006 Supporting Assessment in Primary Schools
- Circular 02/05 Organisation of Teaching Resources for Pupils who need Additional Support in Mainstream Primary Schools
- Working together to Make a Difference for Children, NEPS
- Drumcondra English Profiles. G. Shiel & R. Murphy, ERC, 2000
- Commonsense Methods for Children with Special Needs, Peter Westwood, Routledge Falmer, 1997
- Useful documents and resources on the NCSE website: [Assessment – National Council for Special Education – Working to deliver a better special education service \(ncse.ie\)](https://www.ncse.ie/assessment)
- Report Cards Templates. [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie)
- info@ncca, September 2005. Issue 1, p. 8. Assessment for Learning

### Rationale

Central to the assessment policy of the school is the belief that assessment is a core and essential part of planning for effective teaching and learning, that appropriate assessment should both encourage and motivate students towards achieving their potential. Information gained through the process of assessment enables the teacher to reflect on skills already acquired by students and gives insight into needs to be met. It informs as to future planning, and putting in place the appropriate responses necessary to those needs. It enables the teacher to develop differentiated educational programmes as regards curricular content and methodologies` that will challenge students' learning ability and enable them to fully explore their potential.

Assessment is central to effective teaching and learning and therefore it is necessary to assess, inform and monitor the progress of all pupils. The information that we glean from the assessment process has to impact on the subsequent teaching and learning in our classrooms if all pupils are to succeed. Our policy therefore covers both assessment of learning and assessment for learning.



Assessment of learning is assessment for accountability purposes, to determine a student's level of performance on a specific task or at the conclusion of a unit of teaching and learning, as well as assessment to enable teachers to compare the reading and Math performances of their pupils with reading and Math age norms. This type of assessment includes standardised testing. The information gained from this kind of assessment will be used in reporting. Assessment for learning, on the other hand, acknowledges that assessment will occur as a regular part of teaching and learning and that the information gained from assessment activities will be used to shape the teaching and learning as well as the planning process in our school.

Therefore, key purposes of assessment are as follows:

#### Aims of the assessment process

- To build an educational needs profile of each student
- To have a continuum of assessment for each pupil in the school that progresses through their time with us.
- To benefit student learning
- To enhance the holistic development of the student by assessing non-curricular areas e.g. behaviour, play, social and vocational and life skills.
- To monitor learning process
- to involve parents and pupils in identifying and managing learning strengths or challenges
- To generate baseline data that can be used to monitor achievement over time
- To assist teachers' long and short term planning and inform school's strategic planning
- To coordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis

#### Relationship to the School's Mission Statement and Ethos

Enable Ireland Sandymount School adopts a holistic approach to the education and development of each child and the enhancement of teaching processes. An effective assessment policy identifies interventions that need to be put in place to ensure that relative success, increased confidence and raised self-esteem is achieved.

#### Functions of Assessment

The Primary Curriculum Framework for Primary and Special Schools outlines the importance of meaningful and collaborative assessment that involves students, teachers, parents and others to ensure high quality teaching and learning (p. 6, 2023).

There are four functions of assessment which include formative, evaluative, summative and informative:

- Formative: Helps the pupils in the process of learning.
- Evaluative: Helps the teacher to evaluate the learning activities provided. Pupils are also involved in assessing their own work.
- Summative: Provides information for reports and school records.
- Informative: Provides information for parents and for the pupil's next teacher.



## Objectives of Assessment

- To inform planning, for and coverage of, all areas of the curriculum
- To systematically gather, record and review each students cross curricular attainment level and achievements
- To compile records of individual pupils' progress and attainment
- To assess, record and report on a wide range of students
- Identify, as early as is possible, the level at which each child is functioning,
- To identify and gather information on the particular learning needs of students and groups of students
- To track individual progress
- Use information to inform the school's strategic planning
- To identify strengths and weaknesses in provision by the school
- To enable teachers to modify their programmes in order to ensure that the particular learning needs of individual students and groups are being addressed
- To facilitate the involvement of pupils in assessment of their own work
- To enable teachers to monitor their own approaches and methodologies

## Assessment of and for Learning

### Assessment for Learning (AFL)

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.



Strategy for students' self-assessment:

- Setting clear learning targets / outcomes
- Followed by then setting criteria to make judgements before the child commences their work
- On completion by assessing their work according to the agreed criteria already set.

Assessment of Learning (AoL)

Assessment of learning (AOL) focuses more on medium and long-term assessment. AoL generally involves 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. The emphasis in AoL is on measuring a child's cumulative progress towards curriculum objectives. A grade or a score is often the only feedback a child receives. While these results are useful to the teacher they can be of limited value to the child, unless the teacher identifies the essential information they provide about the child's progress and achievement and communicates this to the child. AoL also helps the teacher to plan future work, to set new targets, and to provide feedback and information for end of year assessment.

Teachers uses 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 schools in meeting the learning needs of individual children.

Assessment for Learning	Assessment of Learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An ongoing process of recognising and responding to the pupil's learning in order to enhance his/her development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involves assessing a pupil's learning at the end of a given instructional period</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil-centred and pupil-directed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher-led</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal is to enable learners to further their own learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal is to establish levels of attainment</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes place in the day-to-day, minute-by-minute interactions between teachers and children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes place at the end of a particular piece of work or a period of time</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formative, more informal assessments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summative, more formal assessments</li> </ul>

Planning, assessment and recording and reporting are all inter-related and are integral parts of the teaching process. Checklists with pupil's progression in specified areas such as literacy; numeracy and social skills (so information on every pupil can be updated and passed on with ease of access from teacher to teacher) are provided in the appendices in our relevant plans/policies. In Enable Ireland Sandymount School we use a variety of assessment methods and these include:

- Teacher observation (every class)
- Teacher-designed tasks and tests (every class)
- Interview and questioning (every class)
- Diagnostic tests
- Standardised tests



- Psychological tests
- Adaptive skills tests
- LPL1 and LPL2 PLU Portfolios
- Classroom based Assessment
- School designed Leavers' Programme

Work samples, portfolios and projects are used to assess post-primary syllabi in our school and are examined by both external and internal examiners. The assessment relies on the production of work samples, projects and portfolios which are developed by the pupils over time. Other formats of assessment are also used and include:

- Assessment of the Junior Cycle in line with the Department of Education and Skills
- Some assessments are given at the discretion of individual teachers. However, it is necessary for the whole school to have a cohesive approach to assessment of each pupil and therefore the checklists provided in the relevant plans/policies will be completed for each pupil individually
- Assessments of literacy and numeracy will be carried out by the class teacher to identify areas of need and inform areas of learning for teachers
- Checklists, mastery records, profiles and teacher notes will be used to support teacher observation
- Portfolios and work samples will be used in all classes and in particular the post-primary classes

## Types of Assessment methods used in the school

### *Informal Assessment*

Teachers carry out informal testing in their own classrooms on an on-going basis where tasks are adapted according to the ability of the student. All of the following can inform the pupil's annual Report.

- Teacher observation: it is the most common form of assessment used by the teacher and is vital in planning to meet the individual needs of students
- Teacher-designed tasks and tests: this is a more structured form of assessment where activities are specifically designed to indicate the students understanding of particular concepts and use of skills
- Work samples and projects
- Checklists and record keeping
- Teacher Questions
- IT Integrated Learning Systems (ILS) with assessment tools
- Checklists are used to co-ordinate what is observed/recorded where assessment is based on teacher observation
- Portfolios of 'samples of work' are collected by teacher, demonstrating literacy and numeracy skills, cross curricular topics and art work that are a record of work done. They can show evidence of future learning needs as well as being a source of positive feedback
- Samples of fine motor skills
- Pupil self-assessment
- Subject plans incorporate the issue of assessment applicable to each area



- Teacher designed tasks tests are used to assess attainment levels in Maths, Literacy, SESE, Fine Motor Skills

### *IEP – Learning Targets*

We draw up individual education plans in the following ways:

- Establish student's current level of intellectual ability
- Establish student's current level of physical supports
- Identify student's strengths and needs in relation to learning
- Identify the student's optimum learning style (s).
- Identify education targets for the Individual Student (The IEP)
- Establish student's current level of interest in learning targets
- Develop strategies based on identified needs to encourage learning
- Develop communicative strategies so that staff members are clear on individual student's learning targets and approaches to teaching these

The following headings are considered when assessing student's access to the curriculum

- Physical ability – hand function, head control, posture, mobility
- Cognitive assessment
- Multisensory abilities
- ASD and behaviours associated with the diagnosis
- Verbal ability and articulation or non-verbal communications
- Auditory or auditory processing ability
- Vision or visual processing ability
- Medical conditions such as asthma, epilepsy, fatigue and side effects of medications
- Attendance
- Ability to remember
- Fatigue

### *Standardised Tests*

Due to the range of perceptual and reading difficulties of many of our students the application of these tests is limited and information gained from them needs to be used appropriately.

Tests available for use in the school:

- Neale Analysis of Reading Ability
- Micra-T Level 1
- Young Group Reading Test
- Daniels and Diacks Spelling Test
- Young Group Maths Test
- Graded Arithmetic Mathematics Test (Vernon)
- The middle Infant Screening Test & Forward Together Programme
- Ghillam Basic Number diagnostic Test: national Numeracy Strategy Edition



### *Diagnostic Assessment*

Formal diagnostic tests are used to determine the appropriate learning support for individual pupils who present with learning difficulties. Developmental areas assessed can be academic, sensory, physical or emotional. The results from diagnostic tests are viewed as part of a holistic profile of the student and allow for a suitable intervention programme to be created, meeting those areas of difficulties that are highlighted.

- Neale analysis
- Quest
- Ghillam Basic Number Test
- Mist
- Galway Checklist
- ABLLS
- NARI
- Routes For Learning

### *Self-Assessment*

Self-assessment enables students to identify their own strengths and weaknesses as learners and allows them to evaluate the progress they have made, and to suggest steps for improvement. It can motivate and encourage self-directed learning.

### *Psychological Assessment*

Enable Ireland Sandymount School students and prospective students should have an up-to-date psycho-educational report. Assessments, including psychological assessments, are a central component in school life in Enable Ireland Sandymount School. If during the pupil's time in the school it is necessary to carry out a psychological assessment, the parents will be informed by the psychologist, explaining the procedures to be followed. The parent will have the right to refuse permission for a psychological assessment at any time. After the assessment, the parents will be invited to a feedback session where the results of the assessment will be explained. Where pupils refuse permission for a psychological assessment to be completed and where this impacts on the placement of the pupil in the school, the BoM may have to make a decision in relation to the placement of a pupil on reports that are already available. With parental consent the class teacher and school principal are responsible for requesting and arranging an assessment for pupils from specialists needs such as a Speech and Language Therapist, Audiologist, Occupational Therapist etc. This can be facilitated through the school. The psycho-educational assessment will be central in drafting an educational plan for a pupil. A psychological report is stored in the pupil's personal file. These files are kept in a locked filing cabinet in the principal's office. All information is stored in compliance with Data Protection principles and according to our Data Protection Policy.

- Principal will liaise with parents if it is felt that a psychological assessment or other assessment is required.
- Standard letters and consent forms are used.
- Principal arranges for consultation with psychologist from NEPs or Enable Ireland if required.
- The IEP is used as a means of ensuring that the results of the assessments inform subsequent learning plans from assessment tests are shared between teachers, parents and relevant interdisciplinary personnel at IEP and Parent/Teacher meetings.



- Results are stored in the Principal's office where they are available on request.

### *Recording of Assessments*

In fulfilling the requirements of the Education Act (1998) schools create and maintain individual records of children's learning while they attend school. They provide parents with assessment reports which contain accurate and clearly accessible information about their children's progress and achievement.

- The final copy of psychological assessment is kept in hard copy in the student's file, which is kept in the Principal's office.
- There is an agreed format and terminology used in recording assessments.
- Teachers are made aware of the need to record comments in an objective and instructive manner
- The IEPs will be reviewed and updated online every year.
- Agreed terminology is used to communicate results and teachers are mindful of the need to record any comments in an objective and instructive manner
- Digital files are kept in a secure space in the School's server only accessible to relevant personnel. These files are stored according to the school's ICT and Data Protection Policies.
- Final school reports are also stored in Aladdin for easy access for Parents/ Guardians
- Test results are communicated to those with an involvement in the pupil's learning – parents, therapist, school to which a pupil is transferring etc. (pending parents/ guardians authorisation)
- Once requested, relevant records, are given to the parents to give to the school to which the pupil is transferring.

### *Success Criteria*

This policy is considered successful if:

- Early identification and intervention is achieved
- Procedures, roles and responsibilities regarding all assessment outlined in this policy are clear to all relevant parties
- Class Teachers have clearly defined roles and objectives in the assessment process
- There is an efficient transfer of information, from teacher to teacher and from parent to teacher

### *Implementation, Review and Communication*

The Board of Management will monitor the implementation of all aspects of this policy and amend as required. The policy will be reviewed in the light of experience and using the following success criteria:

- Early identification and intervention is achieved
- Procedures are clear and role and responsibilities are defined.
- The transfer of information from Class teacher to Class Teacher and Class Teacher to Parent happens efficiently at the end of the school year.

It will be reviewed fully every three years or sooner if necessary. Any staff member, Board of Management member parent / guardian of a current student, may request a review at any time, and such a request will be dealt with as soon as possible.



Review and Ratification

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management.

Signed:



Sé Goulding, Chairperson of Board of Management



Jennifer Doyle, Principal

Date: 17 July 2024

