Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa

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Policy on Assessment

Introductory Statement

This policy was originally drafted in 2004. The policy was redrafted in 2013/14 due to development of assessment practices in our school and taking the NCCA guidelines on Assessment into consideration.

Policy Rationale:

The core of the policy is that all children should experience success at school. This policy endeavors to identify at the earliest possible opportunity, children who may have learning difficulties and put in place a school response to their needs. An effective assessment policy is central to this core objective.

Relationship to School Ethos:

The school adopts a holistic approach to the education and development of each child, 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.

The primary aims/objectives of the policy are;

- To facilitate improved pupil learning

- To create a procedure for monitoring achievement

- To track learning processes which assist the long and short term planning of teachers

- To co-ordinate assessment procedures on a school basis involving parents and pupils in managing strengths and weaknesses

Policy Content:

This policy aims towards using assessment to inform planning and identify the needs of all pupils, including the exceptionally gifted so that adequate strategies are put in place early enough to facilitate remediation. These strategies may include pupil self assessment, assessment portfolios, two way communication between parents and teachers, modification of teacher programmes and individual education plans.

A range of modes of assessment

A broad continuum of modes of assessment is necessary in order to create a picture that will reflect the full range of the child's progress, attainment and development. Such a continuum includes

- teacher observation and questioning

- teacher designed tasks and tests/checklists

- work samples, portfolios and projects

- Self-assessment/conferencing/concept mapping

- standardised tests

- diagnostic tests.

No single form of assessment is adequate in developing a comprehensive profile of the child. The essence of 'assessment for learning' lies in its effective use to improve the quality of the child's

learning experience. The information obtained from assessment can be used to enhance the child's opportunity to advance his/her knowledge, to understand a concept, or to master a skill; and this can involve a variety of timescales.

Teacher Observation and questioning:

Information gained from the child's response to generative, rich questioning by the teacher, as well as ongoing dialogue between the teacher, the child and the child's peers may be used in the immediate classroom situation. The quality of the child's answer can, for example, suggest further questions that can lead the child to a greater understanding of an idea in the context of a single phase of a lesson. In the same way, observation of a child's errors in oral reading can be used to enhance the nature and quality of feedback that the teacher provides. In these cases the micro elements of teaching and learning are being addressed and improved through the assessment process.

Teacher designed tasks and tests / checklists:

Such continuous interaction will also form a part of a more extensive application of assessment when used in conjunction with a task or test. Furthermore, when a task or test, whether in a written or more interactive form, is used for assessment purposes it will be in the context of the information the teacher has already obtained through observation in a lesson, or indeed in a series of lessons. This wider picture of the child's progress and attainment can, in turn, be used to identify learning activities calculated to advance the child's understanding and capability in the area concerned.

Learning, portfolios, work samples and projects:

When, at the end of a longer period of learning, portfolios, work samples and projects are used for assessment purposes, the information gained from them will be informed both by the teacher's observation of the child, and the different tasks, tests and activities with which the child has engaged during the period in question. The information obtained about the child's progress using these modes of assessment can be used to plan future learning experiences designed specifically to address the stage of learning and development the child has attained.

Self-assessment/ conferencing:

A crucial element in using assessment for learning is the extent to which the child is actively involved in the learning process. It is important that the child understands the purposes of his/her learning and the use of assessment to support that learning. The use of good questioning and quality feedback is vital to enabling the child to develop effective strategies for self-assessment. If this practice is incorporated as a consistent feature of assessment throughout the primary

school, children should become reasonably good self-assessors by the time they reach sixth class. This will not only assist the child in constructing his/her learning on an on-going basis but will provide a strong motivational factor in learning.

In the writing process, for example, after discussion of the subject, audience and purpose of a piece of writing, the child will produce an initial draft. This will be used as the basis for a discussion between the child and the teacher. In the course of this process the teacher will, through questioning, discussion and suggestion, help the child to see how the writing can be improved by providing greater detail, conveying thoughts and feelings in a more expressive form, sequencing the writing in a clearer way, using punctuation to provide greater clarity of expression, choosing vocabulary and syntax more appropriate to the audience and purpose of the writing, and using correct spelling. The child will then redraft his/her writing using what he/she has learned from the discussion process. In this way the teacher assesses writing in an interactive way with the child, and the assessment is related directly to the next stage of learning.

Parents have an important contribution to make to assessment for learning. Their knowledge of their own children's personalities, strengths, learning styles, home experience, and any difficulties they may be experiencing can be used to inform the teacher's own assessments. This will help to provide a fuller picture of each child's learning needs and guide the teacher in constructing learning experiences that will best promote the child's development.

Standardised Testing:

The school uses Drumcondra tests in English, Mathematics and Spelling. All classes from First class upwards are tested. The tests are usually administered in May. Standard Scores, STen and percentile ranking scores are recorded on the class record template and stored by each individual teacher with a copy held in the administration office and on the school server.

The value of standardised tests lies not just in their potential to quantify a child's performance. They can also provide information on the child's performance in specific aspects of learning, including individual test items. An item by item analysis of a child's performance on standardised tests can sometimes enable the teacher to identify areas of particular difficulty. Moreover, an error analysis by the teacher of a child's incorrect responses can be particularly informative in illuminating the precise nature of a child's misunderstandings or difficulties. The teacher can then draw inferences about the content or processes that should be emphasised in teaching and learning, either for an individual child, or for a class or a smaller group. Standardised tests can be used to plan for teaching and learning arises from a comparison of subtest scores. For example, individuals or groups may perform well in certain aspects of reading (for example, word identification) and poorly on others (for example, higher order

comprehension processes). This information is useful to the extent that an aspect of learning on which children perform weakly can become the focus of subsequent teaching and learning.

The LS/RT team and Principal analyse the results in June to decide if further diagnostic assessment/teacher assessment is necessary for certain pupils and to inform allocation of resources to pupils in September.

Diagnostic Assessment:

The school policy on Learning Support lists all diagnostic tests used by the school. Such tests are administered by the Learning Support and Resource Teachers following referral by the class teachers in consultation with parents/guardians.

The administration of formal diagnostic tests in curriculum areas such as reading or mathematics can facilitate an interpretation of the nature of children's learning difficulties, and enable the class teacher or learning-support teacher to form hypotheses about how such difficulties can be addressed during the teaching and learning process. 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.

The diagnostic tests used in the school include;

Jackson – Get Reading Right

British Vocabulary Scale

York assessment of Reading for Comprehension,

Spar/ Reading Spelling,

PhAB,

Dyslexia Screening Test

M.I.S.T.,

Early Literacy Test

nferNelson Graded Word Reading Test

N.R.I.T

Maths Assessment for Learning and Teaching (MALT)

 Profile of Maths Skills (France)

Quest

Screening:

The screening tests used to identify learning strengths and weaknesses in the school are;

Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST)

Early Literacy Test

Non Reading Intelligence Test (NRIT)

These tests are administered individually or on a class basis. The MIST and Early Literacy Test are administered on a class basis around Easter of each year, while the Aston Index is administered individually by the Learning Support Teacher when deemed appropriate. The Non Reading Intelligence Test (NRIT) is administered in First class and Fifth Class each April/ May.

Screening is used by the school to initiate the staged approach to intervention as per Circular 24/03 and Circular 02/05.

Psychological Assessment:

If 'Classroom Support' and 'School Support' plans fail to deliver adequate intervention, the class teacher/Principal will contact the parents for permission to secure a psychological assessment for their child (see Learning Support Policy). An assessment will determine the subsequent level of intervention. Teachers use a range of assessment tools; teacher observation, teacher designed tests, projects, portfolios, questioning, conferencing and homework. Records of assessments such as teacher-designed tests, work samples and significant observations are kept by the individual teachers and are communicated to parents at the Parent-teacher meeting and inform the school report issued at the end of the school year. 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 math's tests, spelling tests and quizzes.

Recording:

Each pupil has a file which is stored in the classroom. This file records standardised test results and end of year reports. This file is passed from teacher to teacher as the child progresses through the system. Procedures are in place to manage sensitive data. Children are also involved in their own Assessment for Learning. Self-Assessment and Learning Folders are stored in each

classroom. During this process of supporting the child's learning through Assessment for Learning, it may be useful for the teacher to record significant observations that can be referred to as an aide memoire when reviewing and discussing the child's progress or when planning future learning experiences. Assessment information will be shared with parents as the need arises and in a formal capacity each year using a school Report Card. Standardised Assessment results for First to Sixth classes are enclosed with an explanation sheet with the children's report card.

Success Criteria:

This policy is considered successful if;

Early identification and intervention is achieved

Clarity is achieved regarding procedures involved in a staged approach

Procedures are clear, with roles and responsibilities defined

The Learning support/Resource team have clearly defined roles and objectives

There is efficient transfer of information between teachers

Roles and Responsibilities:

Mainstream, Learning Support/Resource 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 School Support stage, the responsibilities are shared with the LS/RT Team. The Principal assumes a primary role at School Support Plus stage when an Educational/Psychological Assessment may be required. Parents have a role at all stages and the lines of communication must be always kept open.

Implementation:

This policy supersedes the policy drawn up in 2004 and is effective from its ratification date as below.

Timetable for Review

The new policy be reviewed and, if necessary, amended in 2018

Ratification & Communication

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa on 09/04/2014

The policy will be communicated to the Parents' Association and will be available to all parents on request.   The policy will be uploaded on the schools website and excerpts will be available in the school's Information Booklet

Date: 09/04/2014

Signed:

Chairperson, Board of Management

References:

Assessment in the Primary School NCCA Guidelines

Assessment in the Primary DES Circular 02/05 – 24/03

DES Learning Support Guidelines 2000

www.sess.ie

Working Together to make a Difference for Children - NEPS