S.N. Baile Clár na Gaillimhe

Polasaí Measúnú

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ASSESSMENT POLICY

Introductory Statement

The Assessment Policy was drafted in a process that involved consultation, discussion, collaboration and planning by the school staff, the Board of Management, the parents and the children of the school. This policy was formulated in accordance with DES guidelines and circulars and recommendations by NCCA in 'Assessment in the Primary School'. This policy is linked to the Record Keeping Policy, Data Protection Policy, Special Educational Needs Policy and all curricular policies. It also takes account of the National Strategy for Literacy and Numeracy.

The policy

* supports both Assessment of Learning (AfL) and Assessment of Learning (AoL) across all class levels;
* identifies a range of assessment methods used to gather information about pupil progress and achievement;
* provides practical support to the teacher in how self-assessment is expected to be used by the pupils;
* supports consistency on what information is recorded about pupil learning progress and how this information is shared with parents, teachers and other professionals.

Rationale

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

The Assessment Policy is reviewed regularly and takes into account:

* Developments in the Primary School Curriculum
* The Learning Support Guidelines issued by the Department of Education & Science 2000
* Circular 02/05 in the Organisation of Teaching Resources for Pupils who need Additional Support in Mainstream Primary School.
* The NCCA information leaflet for parents regarding Reporting Standardised Test Results
* Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum Guidelines for Schools by the NCCA 2007

This Assessment policy is also guided by the following legislative requirements:
* The Education Act 1998
* Data Protection Amendment Act 2003
* Equal Status Act 2000
* Education Welfare Act 2000
* Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004
* Freedom of Information Acts 1997, 2003

The above give guidelines to teachers on how to
* gather information about children's progress and achievement
* use this information to enrich teaching and learning
* report this information to all those concerned with children's education

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

S.N. Baile Clár na Gaillimhe is a Catholic School with a Christian group of pupils, parents, staff and management who share a similar vision. Children and families of other faiths and beliefs are also welcomed into our school and share this vision.

We, the staff in S.N. BaileClárnaGaillimhe aim to:
* provide for the holistic development of each child - physically, intellectually, emotionally, creatively, spiritually and socially
* enable each child to develop in an open, happy, safe, stimulating and mutually respectful environment
* provide an active, enriched learning environment for children with the availability of appropriate, instructional materials, resources and classroom adaptations (as resources permit)
* develop a love of learning and an openness to lifelong learning
* foster a sense of community between management, teachers, parents and children and an awareness of belonging to the whole community
* develop in students an awareness and appreciation of our culture, heritage with particular emphasis on the Irish language
* develop an appreciation of the environment and one's responsibility for its preservation
* prepare each child for his/her future in education and in society

Mission Statement

The Board of Management, staff and parents of S.N. BaileClárnaGaillimhe are committed to the following mission:
S.N. BaileClárnaGaillimheis a happy, safe and welcoming environment for all, a place where:

* Catholic values are practised and valued and there is a shared commitment to the Catholic ethos of the school
* everybody is respected, included and is treated fairly and equally
* there are clear goals that are commonly agreed and shared

* honest, open communication and consultation is fostered and decision making is a democratic process with input from all members of the school community
* diversity is valued and evident and emphasis is on inclusion
* the highest standards of learning and teaching are promoted and celebrated
* emphasis is on the provision of a holistic education, enabling each student to achieve their full potential
* effort and commitment is recognised, affirmed and encouraged
* teachers and children are inspired to be lifelong learners in a vastly changing world
* parents are appreciated as partners in education
* a sense of community and pride in our local parish is fostered
* all strive for school improvement from year to year and change is embraced in a positive way
* a love of Irish culture is developed and use of Irish language is promoted

Aims

The primary aims of the assessment policy are to:

* facilitate improved pupil learning
* monitor learning processes
* generate baseline data that can be used to monitor achievement over time
* track learning processes which assist the long and short term planning of teachers
* involve parents and pupils in identifying and managing learning strengths or difficulties
* coordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis involving parents and pupils in managing strengths and weaknesses.

What is Assessment?

Assessment is the process of gathering, recording, interpreting, using and reporting information about a child's progress and achievement in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Purpose of Assessment

* To inform planning for, and coverage of, all areas of the curriculum in teaching and learning
* To assess readiness to progress (formative assessment)
* To identify the particular learning needs of pupils/groups of pupils including the exceptionally able (diagnostic assessment)
* 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 and give a cumulative picture of progress (summative assessment)

* 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
* To assess the programme being taught (evaluative assessment)

Principles

* Careful thought is given to the purpose of assessment, adopting a wide range of methods to reflect the whole curriculum and learning opportunities. The main purpose of assessment must be to facilitate progress in a pupil's learning.
* Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process, a valuable formative tool.
* The range of opportunities for carrying out continuous assessment is increased by good classroom organization, which encourages children to work independently while the teacher is concentrating on a small group.
* The outcomes of assessment modify our teaching methods, provide feedback on the curriculum as well as indicate pupil progress.
* We recognize the potential for assessment in developing a positive self-image in the pupil from positive and constructive feedback and the feeling of success, which encourages further study.
* Results of assessment are reported in a way useful for pupils, teachers, parents and other interested parties.
* Assessment of behaviour and performance gradually builds up into a profile for each pupil over his school career. This is a working document for the use of teaching staff only. It is not an official school record. The profiles are stored in the Principal's office and are available to teachers on request.
* Assessment records must be easy to interpret, useful, manageable and should not be administratively burdensome.

Approaches to Assessment

There are **two approaches to assessment** used in the school which enable teachers to create the most supportive learning environments in which children are more motivated to learn:

(a)**Assessment for Learning (AfL)**

(b) **Assessment of Learning (AoL)**

	Assessment of Learning	Assessment for Learning
When?	√ Happens after the learning takes place	√ An integral part of the learning process
Who?	√ Information is gathered by the teacher	√ Information is shared with the learner
What?	√ Information is usually transformed into marks or grades	√ Information is available on the quality of learning
Why?	Why? √ Comparison with the performance of others	√ Comparison with aims and objectives is important
Purpose	√ looks back on past learning	√ Looks forward to the next stage of learning
Both Inform Teaching and Learning		

Assessment Methods

The following assessment methods are used for the Assessment for Learning and/or the Assessment of Learning. They are a continuum of methods starting with the child leading the assessment and concluding with the teacher leading the assessment:

* Self-assessment
* Conferencing
* Portfolio
* Concept mapping
* Questioning
* Teacher observation
* Teacher designed tasks and tests
* Standardised tests

Self-Assessment
Children are involved with self assessment when they look at their own work in a reflective way. They identify aspects of it that are good and that could be improved and set personal targets for themselves. Teacher can encourage child to think about his/her own work using guiding questions, tools or aids, e.g. rubric's (a rubric is an assessment tool which describes varying levels of quality of a piece of work0.eg Know, Want to know, Learned (KWLL) Grids, Plus, Minus and Interesting (PMI) Diagrams, ladders, traffic lights, talk partners/buddies, checklists and webs. Self assessment is an essential part of AFL and can also be used in AoL.

Conferencing
At designated times during the year the child's work and progress can be the subject of meetings between the child/teacher, teacher/parents, teacher/teacher or all parties together. Conferencing is used for both Af L and AoL

Portfolio
A portfolio is a collection of the child's work reflecting his/her learning and development over a period of time. The content depends on the purpose e.g. to show improvement/range of work, strengths/interests/best work etc. Portfolio represents both AfL and AoL.

Concept Mapping
Concept mapping is a process used to make spatial representations of ideas and the relationships between these ideas. The concept mapping begins with a discussion on a relevant   idea or concept. Through discussion the teacher and children record key words. These words become the basis for creating concept maps. The number of concepts representing a child's concept map provides evidence of the depth of the child's   understanding of the topic. Children use lines to represent the relationships across the concepts and sub-concepts, arrows indicating the direction of the relationship. Concept mapping can be used for AfL and AoL.

Questioning
This involves the use of closed questions and open questions. Closed questions tend to be factual whereas open questions encourage a more critical analytical response. Teachers can assess depth of learning by questioning children about how they have reached a solution to a problem. Teachers' questions can also take the form of prompts. Prompts involve asking children to consider aspects of a task with the aim of helping them to reach a solution or to use a more appropriate method. It is also important to encourage the children to ask questions. Questioning can be used for AfL and AoL.

Teacher Observation
 Teacher observation provides the teacher with information of how the child interacts and works with others. It also helps to assess not only the child's ability to transfer skills and knowledge across the curriculum but his/her ability to use learning materials and resources. It also helps to find out the varying degrees of success, of mastering different skills and knowledge, to adjust teaching and learning context accordingly. It includes listening, watching, to notice, recognise and respond to the child's thinking and actions. Teacher observation can be used for AfL and AoL.

Teacher Designed Tasks and Tests
Teachers design tasks and tests can take the form of written or oral assessment or practical assignments.

Standardised Testing
Standardised tests are used to measure a child's language and mathematical skills and to determine their progress in those areas. These tests are normed tests that allow the teacher to compare a child's performance with the performance of children of that class level or age in Irish primary schools.
The main purpose of administering standardised tests it to:

* identify children with learning difficulties,
* identify exceptionally able children
* report to parents on their children's achievement and progress.

The following methods are also used for **informal assessment**

* Classroom observation, e.g. check lists, mastery records and Drumcondra profiles
* Asking questions
* Discussion about task
* Checking of homework
* Informal tests like spellings or maths
* Formal tests de
* vised by the staff
* Correction of homework
* Correction of school work
* End of week/term/year tests
* End of year report

Teachers use a combination of all the methods and tools listed above in their assessment of children's learning.

Standardised Testing

All children from Senior Infants up to 6th Class are assessed each year.

The following tests are used:

* MIST Test
* Drumcondra English Test
* Sigma T Test
* Drumcondra Irish Test
* Ballard West Test
* The BIAP test will be given to any Junior Infant who may be of concern to the teacher.
* Mist tests are administered to Senior Infants during the second term.
* The standardised Literacy and Numeracy Tests for Senior Infants will be used from September 2014 as an early screening device and for the implementation of suitable early intervention programmes.

Procedures

* Tests are administered in the month of May. Class teachers administer tests in other classrooms. Tests are corrected in pairs and all test results are inputted on the school database. The SEN team supports the administration of tests and the correction and synthesis of results.
* Results are then printed and graphs showing class results and school results in Literacy and Numeracy are printed. These results are analysed and results interpreted in order to plan for teaching and learning. Information is used to plan for individual children, class planning and whole school self-evaluation.

* Children who are experiencing learning difficulties or children who are exceptionally able are identified and support teaching is planned for the next school term.
* A copy of all test results is provided to the SEN team.
* Records of all tests are kept in the Principal's office. These tests are compiled in an assessment folder for that particular year.
* The results of standardised tests are communicated to parents/guardians on the child's End-of-Year Report Card. Included in the report is an explanatory leaflet on Standardised Testing and highlights key words and language used as well as an explanation of Sten Scores and their meaning. Parents/guardians are given the opportunity to meet with teachers to discuss the results of these tests.
* All report cards are filed in each pupils Personal File.
* If new pupils come to the school during the year with no record of previous test results, there are assessed by one of the learning support team in English and Literacy.

Learning Support

* The support team meet after all test results are submitted to see which children will need support for the following year.
* Children selected for learning support are based on test results and also teacher observation, teacher designed tasks and tests… The Staged Approach outlined in Circular 02/05 is used. The class teacher informs the parent that a child is experiencing difficulty and sets in place a programme of support within the class and with the support of the parent. Records of this supplementary programme and details of contact with and input from the parent are maintained by the class teacher.
* If a child is not succeeding in class, the class teacher will approach the Learning Support Team with the information and written records with samples of the child's work and observation sheets. A series of diagnostic tests will be administered. When children are selected for Learning Support an Individual Profile Learning Programme is drawn up in consultation with Class Teacher, Support Teacher, Parents and Principal.
* Children whose first language is not English may need to be assessed using the Drumcondra English Profiles and other Language assessments by IILT. Some children may be entitled to language teaching support each day. An Individual Language Plan is drawn up for each of those children in consultation with the Class Teacher, Language Teacher and Principal.

Diagnostic Assessment

The school uses a number of diagnostic tests which are administered by the Learning Support and Resource Teachers 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 a staged approach is used by the individual class teachers before recourse to diagnostic testing /psychological assessment. Parents are advised of the outcome 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.

Screening

Screening tests are also used to identify learning strengths and weaknesses. Some of the screening tests used are:

* Belfield Infant Assessment Programme
* Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST)
* Non Reading Intelligence Test (NRIT)
* Aston Index
* Sigma T .

These tests are administered individually or on a whole class basis. The MIST and BIAP are administered on a whole class basis before Easter of each year, while the Neale Analysis is administered individually by the Learning Support teacher when deemed appropriate. Screening is used by the school to initiate the staged approach to intervention as per circulars 24/03 and 02/05. Children undertaking the "Follow-On" programme after MIST testing are retested by the SEN teacher upon completion of the programme.

Psychological Assessment

If stages 1 and 2 fail to deliver adequate intervention the class teacher / Principal will contact the parents for permission to secure a Psychological Assessment for their child.

* If there are children who are deemed to have special needs, they are placed on a waiting list to be assessed by the school Psychologist or parents may have their children assessed by another psychologist.
* If the children have been assessed as having a disability in the Low Incidence Category, they will be entitled to hours with Resource Teacher and some may require a Special Needs Assistant.
* An Individual Educational Plan is drawn up between Class Teacher, Resource Teacher, Special Needs Assistant, Principal and Parent.
* A file is set up for all children who attend the Support Team, i.e. for English Language, Learning Support and Resource Teaching. The contents of this file consists of tests results, psychological assessments, speech therapy reports, occupational therapist reports, Individual Language Plans, Individual Educational Plans, Individual Profile Learning Programmes, copies of end of year reports, information with regard to other professionals. These files are stored at the end of the school year in a filing cabinet in the Strong Room.

Recording

Each pupil has a file which is stored in the administration office. Test scores are usually stored on a class record sheet with a copy in the office and one in the class of the teacher with overall responsibility for assessment in the school. Information is passed on from teacher to teacher on a need to know basis. Children receiving extra support in school have a separate file. Procedures are in place to manage sensitive data (see Data Protection Policy).

Roles and Responsibilities

* Class teachers, special Education teachers and the principal assume shared responsibility for the assessment of children in all areas of the curriculum.
* Class teachers, special Education teachers and the principal are involved at each stage of the standardised assessment process - gathering, recording, interpreting, using and reporting information about a child's progress and achievement in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes
* It is the responsibility of the class teacher to set in place staged interventions at class level.
* Class teachers and SEN teachers must plan appropriate programmes for those children identified through assessment.
* 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 be always kept open.

Success Criteria

This policy is considered successful if :

* Early identification and intervention is achieved
* Clarity is achieved regarding procedures involved in 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

References

* DES Circular 02/05 – 24/03
* DES Learning Support Guidelines 2000
* www.sess.ie / www.pdst.ie
* Working together to make a difference for children - NEPs
* Assessment in the Primary School - NCCA

Ratification & Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of S.N. Baile Clár na Gaillimhe and communicated to members of the school community thereafter.

Signed: *Anne Higgins*   **Date:** *25.8.2014*

Chairperson of Board of Management

Timetable for Review

This policy will be reviewed in the school year 2017-2018 or in the light of new procedures and recommendations.