

# **St. Brigid's Boys' National School, Foxrock**

## **Assessment Policy**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Assessment is central to the process of teaching and learning, enabling staff to monitor learning processes and to ascertain achievement, or failure to achieve, in each area of the curriculum. Assessment is further designed to identify children with specific difficulties and the nature of those difficulties. Early intervention to address the difficulty, increases the likelihood of empowering the child to fulfil his potential. It is crucial that all assessments be carried out in a positive, nurturing and affirming environment. Assessment policies and procedures support and enhance the successful inclusion and participation of all pupils vulnerable to exclusion, including those with special educational needs.

In formulating and operating this policy, we understand Assessment to mean:

**“The process of gathering, recording, interpreting, using and reporting information about a child’s progress and achievement in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes.”**

*[Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum- Guidelines for Schools NCCA 2007]*

### **RATIONALE**

This assessment policy sets out to clarify the purpose and practice of assessment in St. Brigid's Boys' School. The core of the policy is that all children should achieve success at school. It is very important that assessment in our school should motivate pupils and enable and encourage them to achieve to the best of their ability. Assessment procedures used in our school will also inform our planning in all areas of the curriculum. This policy sets out to formalise our existing practice within the school. Reference should also be made to the school's policies on Special Educational Needs and Homework. The development of this policy has been guided by legislative requirements and recommendations from the Department of Education and Science in relation to best practice in the area of pupil assessment. This organisational policy was coordinated and formulated by Ms. Angela Hayes in consultation with the Principal and the teaching staff of the school.

### **AIMS**

**The primary aims in introducing this policy are:**

- To benefit pupil learning
- To compile records of individual pupil's progress
- To inform teaching methods and strategies
- To identify children with specific learning difficulties at an early stage
- To monitor learning processes, attainment and generate base-line data that can be used to monitor achievement over time
- To involve parents and pupils in identifying and managing learning strengths or difficulties
- To co-ordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis
- To evaluate teaching and learning at a personal, school and systems level
- To gather and interpret data at class/whole school level and in relation to national norms
- To identify the particular learning needs of pupils/groups of pupils in order to inform

classroom support, school support and school support plus.

- 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, developing the skills of self-assessment

### **Assessment for Learning (AfL) and Assessment of Learning (AoL)**

We recognise the four functions of assessment as being formative, summative, evaluative and diagnostic. The focus is on assessment for learning (AfL), as well as assessment of learning (AoL). This means that evidence is used on an ongoing basis to inform teaching and learning, in addition to the periodic recording of children's progress and achievements. The concept of **AfL** emphasises the child's active role in his own learning, in that the child and the teacher agree what the outcomes of the learning should be and the criteria for judging to what extent the outcomes have been achieved. The provision of feedback is central to AfL. Feedback, focused on the learning or task, can help children identify and celebrate progress and achievements, pinpoint challenges and decide what the next steps should be. This level of involvement can increase children's awareness of themselves as learners and encourage personal responsibility for, and pride in, their learning. Progress is monitored through a range of both formal and informal methods.

The most common forms of informal assessment used in our school are

- teacher observation
- teacher designed tests
- projects
- homework

These informal assessments are at the discretion of individual teachers. Records of teacher-designed tests are kept by the individual teachers and communicated to parents at the Parent-Teacher meeting each year and in the end of year school report. Each teacher has discretion as to the format, administration and frequency of in-class testing.

The most common types of teacher designed testing in our school are:

- tests on the strands and strand units for curricular areas
- spelling tests
- tables tests
- maths tests
- dictation exercises
- quizzes.

Teachers are encouraged to employ a variety of assessment techniques to take account of the variety of learning styles of the pupils.

**AoL** focuses more on medium and long-term assessment. 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, and assessment to enable teachers to compare the reading, spelling and Maths performances of their pupils with reading, spelling and Maths standards nationally. The information gained from this kind of assessment will be used in reporting. The teacher's professional judgement is key in the interpretation of the children's understanding and mastery of concepts, knowledge and skills. Teaching methodologies, approaches and outcomes may be adapted or changed as a result of the ongoing process of assessment.

## **Assessment Methods**

A continuum of assessment methods is used in the school. These range from child-led to teacher-led and include:

- Self-assessment
- Conferencing
- Portfolios
- Concept mapping
- Questioning
- Teacher observation
- Teacher-designed tasks and tests
- Standardised testing

Our methods of assessment have been devised in response to the following four questions:

- What is the purpose of this assessment method?
- How is the method used?
- What information is recorded?
- How is this information used?

Much of the teacher's assessment is done intuitively while some is planned for particular purposes. Intuitive assessment and planned assessment are complementary and both are necessary if the teacher is to gain a comprehensive picture of each child's progress and achievement.

By interpreting much of the information children share through their words, their silences, their actions, and their interactions, the teacher can balance intuitive and planned assessment in order to benefit each child as a learner.

The range of assessment methods used include:

- Checklists / Mastery records
- Error analysis
- Logs/Diaries
- Homework
- Peer Assessment
- Interview method
- Parental Feedback
- School report
- Criterion-referenced tests
- Screening tests

- Diagnostic tests
- Pupil profiles
- Project work
- Oral presentations, book reviews
- Quizzes

### **Standardised Testing**

Standardised tests in **Reading, Spelling** and **Maths** are administered on an annual basis to all classes from First class to Sixth class. Class teachers administer the tests to their own classes, adhering strictly to the conditions outlined in the testing manuals. Specific dates are selected by the school management and tests are carried out on the same days across class levels. The dates on which tests are to be administered are communicated to parents. Our policy is that if a child is absent for a test that is administered in a group setting the test is not administered on their return to school. However, in circumstances where the teacher believes the test is warranted for a particular reason for a specific child then the test will be administered. Members of the SEN team will assist with testing in this instance.

The tests used will be Irish designed and norm referenced. The school currently uses the **Drumcondra Standardised Assessment Tests**. Testing currently take place in May. STen, Raw Score, Standard Score, Percentile Rank and Reading Age, where appropriate, are recorded on Aladdin, the schools administration system. If a teacher is concerned about a pupil's test result, s/he may discuss these concerns with the pupil's parents.

**Reporting to Parents:** Test results are communicated to parents on the school report cards and at the Parent/Teacher meeting. Results are also available to parents after the tests are administered and corrected. When a particular child's performance on the test is lower than expected or markedly lower than previous attainments, parents are invited to discuss the matter with the class teacher. To maintain consistency, STen and percentile scores are reported to parents where applicable.

**Analysis of Results:** Results are analysed on an individual basis by class teachers and on a whole-school basis by the post holder or Principal, in order to track progress. Teachers are required to input the results data on the Aladdin System to generate standard recording of the class and schools overall performance. Scores on standardised tests are analysed and discussed on a whole school basis. The analysis of these results informs teaching and learning practices in our school. Information gathered from the analysis of results informs planning and the allocation of school support.

### **Screening**

#### **(Refer to Special Educational Needs School Policy)**

A strong emphasis is placed on early intervention in our school. To facilitate the early identification of learning strengths / difficulties, the school administers screening tests in junior classes. Testing normally takes place early in the 2nd term in Junior Infants and Senior Infants. Tests are administered by the class teacher and members of the SEN team. Results are interpreted by the class teacher As a result of the initial screening and following the implementation of the Staged Approach Process by the Senior Infant class teachers, those children with low achievement in English and Maths are tested by the learning support team. In general, screening checklists, rating scales, screening profiles or curriculum profiles will be used with children with low achievement from Senior Infants upwards. Screening may eventually lead to specific intervention by the learning support teacher, in line with

our Staged Approach to special needs provision.

The screening methods and tests used to identify learning strengths and weaknesses in the school include:

- Belfield Infant Assessment Profile (BIAP) all children in term 1 of Junior Infants
- Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST) all children in term 2 of Senior Infants
- Test 2R (for selected children who presented as at risk following analysis of the MIST)
- Phonics checklists
- Recognition of letter names and sounds
- Dolch List word identification
- Teacher observation
- Use of homework, teacher designed tests and projects
- Checklists for difficulties in mathematics
- Behaviour checklists

These tests are administered individually or on a class basis. The BIAP is administered on an individual basis in Junior Infants and the MIST is administered on a class basis in Senior Infants. In Term 1 of First Class the Micra T and Sigma T standardised tests are administered in English and Maths. These tests assist us in identifying children who require additional support in 1<sup>st</sup> class. Screening is used by the school to initiate the staged approach to intervention as per **Circular 24/03** and **Circular 02/05**. Screening tests may also be administered to children who have transferred from another school.

In Term 1 of 3<sup>rd</sup> class the NNRIT (New Non Readers Intelligence Test) is administered to all pupils. This test provides an intelligence quotient independent of reading ability for each child. Pupils who achieve at or above the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile in the NNRIT, Drumcondra Reading and Drumcondra Maths will be allocated additional school support to extend their abilities.

### **Diagnostic Assessment**

#### **(Refer to Special Educational Needs School Policy)**

Formal diagnostic tests are used to determine the appropriate learning support for individual pupils who present with learning difficulties. The particular set of diagnostic tests to be administered will depend on the child's stage of development. In the event of pupil performance falling below a standardised test cut-off point, further diagnostic testing will be recommended and parental consent sought. In this instance, parents will be met by class teacher and Learning Support teacher and the purpose of the testing explained. Diagnostic tests are administered by the Learning Support teacher, who will interpret results and advise class teacher of results. A school meeting will be arranged with parents to discuss the implications of results which may include –

- Classroom differentiation measures / Stage 1 monitoring; (Classroom Support)
- Referral to supplementary teaching / Stage 2 (School Support/School Support Plus)
- Further assessment by an outside agency e.g. an Educational Psychologist.

The administration of such tests is in keeping with the approach recommended by the Continuum of Support where a staged approach is used by the individual class teachers before recourse to diagnostic testing /psychological assessment. The results of the diagnostic assessment are recorded in the Individual Profile and Learning Programme for each pupil. The profile will also include:

- Previous test results

- Relevant information from class teachers, parents and other professionals
- Identification of the pupil's strengths and priority needs

Parents are provided with test results. After diagnostic assessment and a block of learning support, each child's progress is reviewed. The DES guidelines Continuum of Support are followed. The Diagnostic Tests and Screening Tests used by the SEN team include:

- Neale Analysis
- Dyslexia Screening Tests - Pearson
- York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension
- Renfrew Picture Action Test
- Bury Infant Check
- Schonell Reading and Spelling test
- Burt Word Test
- RAIN Sentence Test
- Marino Word Test
- McNally Murray Word Test
- Westwood Sentence Repetition Test
- NNRIT [New Non-Readers Intelligence Test]
- Wechsler Individual Attainment Test 3 (WIAT 3 - teachers) Word reading
- Basic Number Diagnostic Test
- Early Numeracy Diagnostic Test
- Progress in Maths
- Drumcondra Early Numeracy Screening Test
- Basic Number Screening Test

### **Psychological Assessment**

Should stages 1 and 2 of the continuum of support fail to deliver adequate intervention and if there are serious concerns expressed by the parents, SEN teacher and class teacher, further psychological assessment will be explored. The Principal/Learning Support teacher will seek advice of the NEPS psychologist and discuss the test results and concerns about the pupil. Based on the advice received, the application for a full assessment, if required, will be completed by the Learning Support teacher(s) and the class teacher in consultation with the parents. If a psychological assessment is warranted, parental permission is sought and a consent form is completed. The Principal/Deputy Principal/SET Post holder will facilitate such an assessment happening.

The recommendations stated in reports of assessments will inform the nature of the support provided to the child.

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Mainstream class teachers, members of the SEN team, the Deputy Principal and the Principal assume shared responsibility for the coordination and implementation of the assessment policy.

#### ***Class Teacher***

- The class teacher will engage in informal assessment on an ongoing basis in all curricular areas and record relevant details in Pupil's File

- The will administer correct and record standardised tests in accordance with the terms of this policy
- All class teachers will analyse results of standardised tests on an individual and class basis. This information will be used for further planning and additional testing by S.E.T.
- It is the responsibility of the class teacher to set in train staged interventions at class level
- Class teachers will consult with S.E.T. and identify children requiring additional assessment
- Class teachers will consult with parents in relation to these children and receive parental / legal guardian consent for additional assessment by the S.E.T.

### ***Special Education Team (SET)***

- Diagnostic assessment will be administered and interpreted by the S.E.T.
- The S.E.T. will report to class teachers, parents and Principal on assessment outcomes
- The S.E.T and class teacher will discuss the most appropriate form of intervention
- Shared responsibility with class teacher at stage 2 of Continuum of Support

### ***Post of Responsibility Holder***

It will be the responsibility of Ms Angela Hayes

- To share this policy with the teaching staff
- To implement the areas of this policy dealing with standardised testing
- To acquire and distribute standardised testing materials in English, Mathematics, Gaeilge and Spelling throughout the school
- To collect class results and provide Principal and Special Education Team with same
- To advise new teachers on testing materials
- To monitor and evaluate overall performances of students and report to staff where appropriate
- To review this policy when necessary

### ***Principal***

Overall responsibility for assessment in the school. The Principal and Post Holder for SET assume a primary role when a Psychological Assessment may be required through the NEPS Service.

### **COMMUNICATION / REPORTING**

Parents have a role at all stages and the lines of communication must be always kept open. Parents will receive feedback in relation to the ongoing process of assessment as follows:

- (a) At the formal parent/teacher meeting (November: 1<sup>st</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> class; January: Junior & Senior Infants) and
- (b) In the school report furnished towards the end of the school year

Should a parent have any concerns about their child's progress at any stage during the school year, it is the policy of the school to facilitate a meeting between the parent and the teacher and/or principal, at a time that is convenient to all parties.

It is imperative that any report arising from an assessment would be made available to the school as it would directly inform the nature of the support to be provided.

Parents are consulted and involved at all stages where a child with possible difficulties is identified.

### **Access to assessment results:**

Assessment records of individual children are confidential. Direct access to individual, group or class assessment information may be given to the following designated persons in appropriate circumstances as follows:

- class teacher
  - class teacher to whom the child is transferring
  - relevant support teachers, and other relevant professionals
  - Principal/Deputy Principal
  - DES inspector
  - school secretary (for recording purposes only)
  - relevant NEPS psychologist
  - National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) and its officers
  - parents and/or guardians
- 
- another school, primary or post-primary, to which the child is transferring

### **Reporting to outside agencies on individual pupils**

In the event of a request by an outside agency for a pupil assessment, the Principal will be informed and will be supplied with the report before it is forwarded. The Staff member who completes the report will keep a copy of the report and a copy will be kept in the school records. A copy of the request should also be kept on file and the reason why the report was sought. The Principal will have the discretion to bring any sensitive reports or requests to the Board of Management for their attention, advice or direction.

### **SUCCESS CRITERIA**

Practical indicators of the success of the policy will include:

- early identification and intervention is achieved
- a range of informal and formal assessment modes are used to place assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning
- clarity is achieved regarding procedures involved in the staged approach
- procedures are clear, with roles and responsibilities defined
- the special educational needs team have clearly defined roles and objectives
- there is efficient transfer of information between teachers
- children experience a variety of assessment methods and benefit from a curriculum which is differentiated according to their needs.

### **RATIFICATION**

This policy was developed and ratified by the Board of Management in April 2010. It was updated and revised in consultation with the teaching staff in January 2020. It was ratified by the Board of Management in February 2020 and presented to the Parent's Association.

### **REVIEW TIMETABLE**

This policy will be reviewed in 2024 or as required.

## Appendix: Schedule for Catholic Schools

A Roman Catholic school (which is established in connection with the Minister) aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and with other people. The school models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Catholic school provides religious education for the pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and tradition of the Roman Catholic Church and promotes the formation of the pupils in the Catholic Faith.

