

Ballynacally National School

Assessment Policy

Introductory Statement and Rationale

This policy was formulated by the staff of Ballynacally N.S. during Staff meetings/”Croke Park Hours” from April 2013 onwards. It is based on current advice and ”best practice” provided by the Department of Education and Skills, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (N.C.C.A). in its recommendations contained in its publication ‘Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for Schools’. Likewise we adopt the advice and recommendations of the Special Education Support Service (SESS). This policy document reflects current practice in our school to which all teaching staff adhere to.

Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school

Our assessment activities contribute to pupil learning and development by the gathering of relevant information to guide each pupil’s further learning (assessment for learning) and by providing information on each pupils achievement at a particular point in time (assessment of learning).

As with all our school’s policies our assessment policy reflects the core values and ethos of our school.

Aims

By introducing this policy, Ballynacally School hopes to:

- *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 or difficulties*
- *To assist teachers’ long and short term planning*
- *To coordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis*

Purposes of Assessment:

- To inform planning for, and coverage of, all areas of the curriculum
- 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 including the exceptionally able
- 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
- To facilitate accurate and effective 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

Definition of Assessment

Our staff agrees with the definition of classroom assessment as given by the NCCA: 'Assessment is the process of gathering, recording, interpreting, using and reporting information about a child's progress and achievement in developing knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes'.

We agree that Assessment involves much more than testing. It is an ongoing process that concerns the daily interactions between the teacher and the child that include moment-by-moment conversations, observations and actions.

Range of Assessment Methods used Throughout the School

Both assessment of learning and assessment for learning will be used by teachers to make professional judgements about pupil achievement/progress. Professional judgements, mindful of school policy, prevents conflicting interpretations, facilitates clarity and lessens the likelihood of confusion.

Assessment for Learning:

- Types of informal assessment methods used in the school are
 - *Teacher observation*
 - *Teacher-designed tasks and tests*
 - *Work samples, portfolios and projects.*
 - *Responses children make to teachers*
 - *The participation and interaction of pupils in whole class or group based activity*
 - *The reaction of children to content and teaching strategies.*

- We use a variety of informal or ‘‘teacher designed’’ assessment methods, appropriate to age and ability level. Teachers design tests suitable to their own class i.e particular to pupils’ needs, progress and the teaching and learning happening at a given time.
- Teacher designed testing in Literacy and Numeracy, in association with our on-going work in School Self Evaluation Reports and School Improvement Planning, are conducted in each class at the end of term or on specific dates relevant to the teacher’s work progression. Teachers may also conduct and include results from tests in other subject areas if they wish.
- Recording of ‘‘Teacher Designed Tests’’ by staff and monitoring of same by the Principal is facilitated by each teacher completing a table displayed in the Staff Room.
- Teachers assemble portfolios of pupil assignments, work samples and end of school year reports. These include standardised test results and ‘‘End of term’’ teacher designed test results
- Our ‘‘School Plan’’ for each curriculum subject specifically refers to assessment and methodologies of same.
- Error analysis
- * Teacher designed tasks and tests for all curricular areas
- Concept mapping
- Questioning
- Work samples, portfolios and projects
- Homework
- Parental/ pupil feedback
- Teachers ‘ end of year report

A) Standardised tests.

- All children from 1st class upwards are tested in June using nationally standardised norm-referenced tests in both English (MicraT) and mathematics (SigmaT). Pupils are also tested in English (Micra T) in September on admission to 1st class.
- Micra T testing is conducted during the last week of May, with Sigma T testing taking place during the first week of June. These allows for whole-school compilation and analysis of results.
- Testing dates are agreed early in the school year and dedicated dates for school-wide testing set aside.
- Traditionally it was our practice to undertake standardised testing at the end of First and Fourth classes, the results of which were communicated to parents at Parent/ Teacher meetings and in written form in School Summer reports.
- We have developed this practice, as a consequence to the DESS initiative ‘‘Literacy and Numeracy in Learning for Life 2011’’, whereby each class from First Class upwards is tested in mathematics to facilitate our School Self Evaluation Report/School Improvement Plan.

- Children in the Junior Infant class are assessed during the 5th term of school using the M.I.S.T test (Middle Infant Screening Test). This test assesses listening skills, letter sounds, written vocabulary, three-phenome words and sentence dictation.
- In Senior Infants teacher uses the Drumcondra Screening Tests for Literacy and Numeracy.
- When a pupil is in Senior Infants class teacher may also use the ‘‘Belfield Infant Assessment Profile (B.I.A.P) or part of this test in order to satisfy any concerns.
- In Senior Infants we also use the ‘‘Drumcondra Tests of Early Literacy & Numeracy’’ during the month of June. This facilitates accurate transfer of information between colleagues upon transition from Senior infants to First Class, and parents if necessary.
- Our Learning Support Teacher is responsible for purchase, distribution and co-ordination of testing material.
- Generally the Class Teacher administers the standardised tests but this can change under specific circumstances and only following liaison between the class teacher and learning support teacher.
- The Learning Support Teacher decides which test, and level, appropriate for all pupils. Our Learning Support Teacher also conducts the cognitive ability test ‘‘CAT 3’’ in September with pupils in Third Class.
- Procedures catering for a situation where a pupil is not taking a test with their classmates are be agreed between the Learning Support and Class teachers.
- All relevant results are recorded – raw score, standard score, percentile rank, STEN, Reading age. There is a uniform approach across all classes from 1st to 6th.
- All teachers i.e. Class Teacher, Learning Support Teacher and Resource Teacher, play a role involved in the analysis of results for an individual class, across a number of classes and at whole school level.
- The information gathered from tests identifies strengths and weaknesses of each student and group within each particular subject and assists in decision-making for teaching and learning.
- Results are communicated to parents at parent teacher meetings and in end of year report. Parents/Guardians are given percentile rank and STEN scores with explanatory notes.
- Recording of assessment/results is done on each pupil’s end of school year report, a copy of which is kept in each pupil’s folder and on the school’s administrative database ‘‘Aladdin’’.
- Terminology used by all teachers is specific as agreed at whole-staff level and is dictated by the preferred NCCA reporting template. (see Continuum of Support policy attached)
- Teachers are agreed on the need to record comments in an objective and instructive manner.(see Continuum of Support policy attached)
- Sensitive data is accessed on a ‘‘need to know basis’’ and with the Principal’s consent always.

Note:

Children scoring below a certain percentile or critical score for a given age (M.I.S.T.) will be referred to the Learning Support Teacher for diagnostic testing.

Pupils may also attend, at the class teacher's recommendation, for an assessment with the Learning Support Teacher. This will be conducted discreetly and sensitively. We believe prompt action by the Class teacher and Learning Support Teacher is best in this regard.

Occasionally, and in an effort to help ascertain the level at which a certain group of pupils are working to, the Learning Support Teacher may need to conduct assessment with a pupil or group of pupils who are performing satisfactorily in class. This enables the Learning Support teacher build a useful profile of the pupil/pupils for comparative purposes.

Pupils will only attend the Learning Support Teacher after the school initially makes contact with the Parent/Guardian and has written consent. Parents/Guardians will be kept informed of their child's progress on a regular basis

For additional information on our school policy on B)Screening, C)Diagnostic testing and D) psychological Assessment, based on *Learning Support Guidelines and Circular 02/05, please refer to our Special Educational Needs Policy over and our recently reviewed NEPS Continuum of Support Model 2013, which accompanies this document.*

As part of our Assessment Policy all children will be assessed in 3rd class using the CAT (Cognitive Ability Test). This test allows our teachers to identify each child's strengths and/or weaknesses, verbal and non-verbal. This test will be administered in the first term of the school year by the Learning Support Teacher.

Success Criteria

The success of the policy will be measured by how smoothly and efficiently the process of assessment runs throughout the school. A range of formal and informal assessment modes should be central to the process of placing assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning. Because each partner's role is so clearly laid out in the policy there should be clarity about what is expected and who is responsible for different aspects of the policy. Transfer of information from the various class teachers should happen efficiently at the beginning of the school year. The aims of the policy should be achieved seamlessly. As a result of the screening process those students most in need will receive supplementary teaching at the earliest possible time. Benefitting pupil learning is central to the whole process.

The complete success of this policy is entirely dependent on staff working pro-actively as a team supporting each other in the best interest of each pupil.

Roles and Responsibility

Particular responsibility for co-ordinating this policy rests with the Principal. However, as each staff member has a role in its successful implementation, review will be undertaken in a collaborative fashion and with whole-school staff consensus. Review will be undertaken annually and/or whenever our policy is noted to be ineffective in any way. Weekly Staff Meetings facilitate same.

Access to assessment results

Assessment records of individual children are confidential. It is recommended that direct access to individual, group or class assessment information may be given to designated persons in appropriate circumstances as follows:

- the child's class teacher
- the class teacher to whom the child is transferring
- relevant learning-support and resource teachers, and other relevant professionals
- the principal
- the DES inspector
- the relevant NEPS psychologist
- The Education Welfare Board and its officers
- parents and or guardians, who should have access to assessment information about their own children
- another school, primary or post-primary, to which the child is transferring, subject to the consent of the child's parent(s) or guardians(s).

Implementation Date

With immediate effect .

Timetable for Review

- Due to the central role of Assessment for teaching and Learning in our school review will automatically be scheduled annually.

Ratification & Communication

Ratified by Board of management on 14-11-12

Date of most recent review...Spring 2015

NON-STANDARDISED TEACHER DESIGNED ASSESSMENT

We use a variety of teacher designed assessment methods throughout the range of curriculum areas e.g...

- Teacher observation
- Teacher designed tests and tasks
- Daily, weekly and 'End of Term' tests using a teacher designed rubric/grid marking system
- Work samples
- Portfolios
- Projects
- Curriculum Profiles

End of Term in-class testing is discretely timetabled for the last three days of each term, with the final day of each term given over to recording and transfer of data to pupil folders by class teacher.

Reference Section

- Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for Schools, NCCA, 2007
- 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
- Primary School Curriculum – section on assessment for each subject
- 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
- A range of assessment tests are listed on the SESS website www.sess.ie
- Draft Report Cards Templates. www.ncca.ie
- info@ncca, September 2005. Issue 1, p. 8. Assessment for Learning