



St. Ita's N.S.

Assessment Policy

October 2022

Introduction:

This policy was reviewed by the staff in October 2022 and was ratified by the B.O.M. on Thursday, 20th of October 2022.

Policy Rationale:

The core of the policy is the improvement of teaching and learning in our school. This policy endeavours 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.

'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.'

(NCCA Guidelines on Assessment)

- Assessment is a key element in planning for effective teaching and learning
- This policy aims to document the assessment procedures in use in our school
- This policy will be followed in conjunction with other policies in our school plan, the S.E.N. Policy, Curricular Plans and Record Keeping, in particular

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.

Aims and Objectives:

The primary aims/objectives of the policy are:

- To evaluate pupil learning
- To facilitate improved pupil learning
- To involve pupils and parents in identifying and managing learning styles, strengths and difficulties
- To create a procedure for monitoring achievement on a whole school basis
- To 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
- To generate data that can be used to monitor achievement over time
- To compare with national norms in Literacy and Numeracy

Policy Content:

This policy is geared 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, pupil profiling, two-way communication between parents and teachers, modification of teacher programmes and individual education plans.

Forms of Assessment:

1. Non-Standardised Assessment

The following forms of non-standardised / informal assessment are used in our school:

Pupil Self-Assessment:

'Children are involved in self-assessment when they look at their own work in a reflective way, identify aspects of it that are good and that could be improved, and then set personal learning personal targets for themselves'
(NCCA Guidelines p.14)

- Pupil self-assessment emphasizes the child's active role in his / her own learning. At the start of the lesson the teacher can share the learning objective with the class or group. This could be done orally, depending on the age of the pupils and the curriculum subject. Junior pupils can show smiley faces and thumbs up / down / sideways. In the case of middle to senior pupils this can be done on the whiteboard. Pupils in these classes can use two stars and a wish and KWL (what I know, want to know, have learned) about a piece of work.

- Pupils at all levels should evaluate their own work, progress and performance (P.E., Drama, Ceol etc.) in order to learn how to self-assess meaningfully.

Conferencing:

‘Conferencing in the context of assessment means that those concerned with the child’s learning share their knowledge and understanding of the child’s work, its processes and outcomes during a planned or intuitive meeting. For example, teacher / child conferences, parent / teacher conferences and teacher / teacher conferences.’

(NCCA Assessment Guidelines p.24, 25)

- Conferencing can be used as a strategy for Assessment for Learning (AfL), with regular informal teacher / child conferences as a follow up to homework and other assignments.
- Formal Parent / Teacher meetings are held during first term (usually late October or early November) and at various other times during the year when the need arises.
- Class teachers meet with S.E.N. teachers regularly during the course of the school year to review and assess the learning needs of the pupils. S.E.N. meet parents at least twice during the school year.

Portfolio Assessment:

‘A portfolio is a collection of the child’s work, reflecting his or her learning and development over a period of time.... The teacher decides on the purpose(s) of the portfolio before beginning to use it’

(NCCA Assessment Guidelines p.30)

- Teachers and / or pupils select work samples for the portfolio, as a form of assessment or collaborative assessment. Contents will include a range of samples from different subject areas. The portfolio could also be in electronic format (e-portfolio).
- The pupil portfolio will be brought home at the end of the school year.

Concept Mapping:

‘The purpose of concept mapping is to help the child show what and how he / she thinks about an idea. The maps are graphic organisers or picture summaries of the child’s understanding of ideas and the relationships between ideas’

(NCCA Guidelines p.36)

- Concept mapping is particularly useful in areas such as SESE, English etc.

Questioning:

‘Questioning underpins all classroom assessment methods. Teachers ask questions to assess knowledge and understanding and to guide children in their learning. In using questioning as an assessment method, teachers are also modelling good questioning which aids children in their own learning through better questioning of teacher and peers’

(NCCA Assessment Guidelines p.42)

- Teachers in St. Ita’s N.S. use a variety of oral questioning types to assess (AoL) and to assist learning (AfL). These closed question and open-questioning forms.
- Opportunities are provided for pupils to get opportunities to ask and to answer questions at appropriate times during lessons. Pupils are encouraged to practice different questioning styles in structured class discussions, pair work and group work where pupils have particular roles to ensure that all pupils are included in the learning process.
- The modelling of good questioning by the teacher will be very important in this matter. *(Reference: NCCA Guidelines p.42 for details on Bloom’s Taxonomy of Questioning).*

Teacher Observation:

‘Teacher observation, spontaneous or planned, can happen anytime a teacher and child interact. Observations made by the teacher in the classroom provide some of the most immediate and accurate information about a child’s learning. When compiled as a written record it can make the planning of further work for an individual, group or whole class more focused and systematic’

(NCCA Guidelines p.39)

- Teachers will decide when it is appropriate to keep a written record of a child’s learning, particularly if a teacher or parent has concerns about the academic progress of a child.
- Teacher observation is part of Stage 1 of the Staged Approach to Learning Support. *(See Appendix 1)*
- A teacher may use an appropriate screening checklist to record observations and build up a pupil profile that would inform teaching and the on-going review of the pupil’s progress. *(See Appendix 2)*

Teacher Designed Tasks and Tests:

‘Tasks and tests can take the form of written or oral assessments or practical assignments developed by the teacher to assess children’s learning’

(NCCA Guidelines p.54)

- In St. Ita's N.S., teachers use self-designed written tests, practical assignments and quizzes to assess what children have learned in a topic to assist the child's learning and to inform the teachers' teaching methodologies
- Feedback is given to the pupil on areas that need attention and on successes achieved.
- Oral assessment is informal and is on-going during the delivery of new topics and in the final stages of lessons to assess understanding. It is also used to assess memory of facts e.g., tables, tables games, and spellings (spelling bee), sounds / sight words (junior classes) and poetry and project-work (senior classes).

2. Standardised Testing:

'A Standardised test is an assessment instrument that contains standardised procedures for its administration and scoring and for the interpretation of its results'

(NCCA Guidelines p.60)

- St. Ita's N.S. uses a number of standardized tests to assess pupils.
 - Middle Infant Screening Test (M.I.S.T.) is administered in May each year
 - The Drumcondra Standardised Reading test is administered in May each year to pupils in 1st to 6th classes inclusive
 - The Drumcondra Standardised Maths test is administered in May to pupils in 1st to 6th classes (*inclusive*)
 - The Drumcondra Spelling Test is administered to pupils in 1st to 6th classes each year
 - The NNRIT is administered to pupils in 2nd and 5th classes
- Standard and percentile ranking scores are recorded on the class record template and stored by each individual teacher.
- **In the S.E.N. setting the following tests are in use:**
 - Benchmarking to – establish entry level to A – Z readers
 - Running record for any reader
 - Jackson Phonics Test
 - Dolch List
 - Towre Test
 - WIAT 111 Assessment Kit for Languages
 - WRIT or NVRT non-verbal IQ test
 - The PSAK (Primary Assessment School Assessment Kit for Language) is used in the assessment of pupils for English as an Additional Language classes.

Diagnostic Assessment:

- The following diagnostic test is administered by the Special Educational Needs 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. Test results are discussed with the parents 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 test is used in the school:
 - WIAT 111

Screening:

- The screening tests used to identify learning strengths and weaknesses in the school are;
 - Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST)
 - New Non-Reading Intelligence Test (NNRIT)
 - Sigma T (occasionally)
- These tests are administered individually or on a class basis. The MIST is administered on a class basis around Easter of each year. 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 stages 1 and 2 fail to deliver adequate intervention, the class teacher/S.E.N. teacher will consult with the principal who will contact the parents for permission to secure a psychological assessment for their child. This assessment will be carried out by the N.E.P.S. psychologist assigned to the school. Only a small number of assessments are available each year and pupils are ranked according to priority of need. An assessment will determine the subsequent level of intervention, be it 'Learning Support Resource' hours or an 'Individual Education Plan'.
- The most common form of assessment used in our school is teacher observation, teacher designed tests, projects and homework (informal assessment). 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 and 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 on Aladdin. 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. (*See Data Protection Policy*)
- The Pupil Portfolio will be compiled within the classroom during the course of the school year. It will be returned to the pupil to bring home at the end of the school year.
- The file of Standardised Test Results is stored on Aladdin.
- S.E.N. teachers have access to the Standardised Test Results for the purposes of planning, reporting and conferencing regarding the pupils that they are working with. The S.E.N. teachers will keep a file on students at Stage 2 and Stage 3 in the Staged Approach containing relevant test results and checklists. A Continuum of Support for each child in receipt of S.EN. teaching will be retained and updated each year by the S.E.N. teachers.
- Each class teacher has access to the results appropriate to the pupils that he / she is teaching. The class teacher will decide what written observations he / she will retain during the course of the school year.
- Each class teacher will have an Assessment Folder to contain a selection of results from the various forms of assessment outlined in this policy. The School Report and the Standardised Test Results will be shared with the teacher the following year. The S.E.N. folders containing information in support files will be passed on. Teachers will collaborate regarding verbal reports on pupils where relevant.

Success Criteria:

This policy is considered successful if:

- All teachers are using a selection of the techniques, strategies and forms of assessment outlined above
- Pupils are trained and confident in the use of self-assessment strategies outlined above
- Early identification and intervention are achieved
- Assessment informs teaching and learning
- Procedures are clear, with roles and responsibilities defined
- The Special Education team have clearly defined roles and objectives
- There is efficient transfer of information between teachers
- Parents can see evidence of progress in their child's copies, tests and results generally

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Each teacher to familiarize himself/ herself with the school's policy on Assessment and the NCCA Guidelines: Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum, 2007
- The S.E.N. team, Deputy Principal and Principal will track pupils' progress following the standardized testing.
- Each class teacher has responsibility for carrying out, interpreting and recording the non-standardised / informal assessments in their class. This information should be shared with parents and/or the S.E.T. team.

- The class teachers will administer the standardized tests and will compile the standardised results and pass them on to the S.E.N. team. The results are stored on Aladdin.
- The class teacher will enter the pupils' results on the School Report Cards in June.
- The S.E.N. teachers is responsible for administering diagnostic and screening tests on individual pupils. The S.E.T. teachers carry out the M.I.S.T. assessment of senior infant pupils.
- The class teacher, S.E.N. teacher and Principal will consult with parents in relation to psychological assessments and liaise with the Psychologist where necessary
- The S.E.N. Mainstream, Special Education 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 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.

Implementation:

This policy will be discussed at a Croke Park Hour during first term each year to inform and remind all staff about the policy.

Review Timetable:

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis and amended as necessary by means of a whole school collaborative process.

Ratification & Communication:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on the 22nd of October 2022 and communicated to parents thereafter. A copy of the policy will be available to parents and guardians on the school website.

Signed: Monsignor Cathal Geraghty
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: Patrick Coyle
Principal

Date: 22/10/2022

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References:

- NCCA (2007) *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum, Guidelines for Schools*.
- *Preparation for Teaching and Learning – Guidance for all Primary and Special Schools* (Department of Education 2021)