Assessment Policy
Scoil Mhuire Junior

Section 1: Whole School Assessment

Introduction

The review process of the assessment policy began in May 2022 in tandem with our Special Educational Needs policy review to bring it in line with current practice. It has been reviewed by staff, the parent body and the Board of Management. The policy is in line with current practice in the school and our school procedures are fully informed by the NCCA publication, 'Assessment in the Primary School: Guidelines for Schools' (2007).

The Vision for Scoil Mhuire states that:

The board of management, staff and parents working as a team provide support and education to all children of every class, creed or ability. That every aspect of each child's intellectual, emotional, spiritual and social needs be nurtured and encouraged to develop to its utmost potential, in his or her own time, in a happy safe environment.

Rationale

Assessment is an essential element of the teaching and learning process. In order to teach effectively, teachers need to be aware of what knowledge and skills the student has, where they need to go next and where there are any areas of difficulty. Assessment informs all teaching and learning in the school. We place the student central to the assessment process and recognise their role as assessors of their own learning and the importance of the voice of the student.

Early Intervention

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 are presenting with difficulties and put in place a school response to their needs. An effective assessment policy is central to this objective.

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
- To monitor pupil progress and attainment
- To enable teachers to modify their teaching 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 communication between parents/guardians 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 reflect on their own approaches and methodologies

This policy aims to:

- Outline procedures for assessment in the school for all the education partners and the wider community
- Inform new teachers and parents/guardians of assessment procedures
- Formalise procedures which already exist in the school
- Give direction to teaching and learning in the school
- Enrich understanding of what a particular child's needs might be

- Provide insights into each child to ensure appropriate planning
- Provide opportunities for assessment **for** learning
- Provide opportunities for assessment **of** learning
- Generate baseline data that can be used to monitor achievement over time

Methods of Assessment Used

The basis for the school's practice is the NCCA document *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Teachers*. These guidelines present a continuum of 8 forms of assessment ranging from the student leading and taking an active role in his/her assessment to the teacher leading the assessment. These are:

self-assessment; conferencing; portfolio assessment; concept mapping; questioning; teacher observation; teacher-designed tasks and tests and standardised testing. (Appendix A)

Each section on the continuum carries equal weight in the school and we recognise the value of each of these forms of assessment. We are careful to use a wide variety of assessment methods in the teaching and learning within the school. Some of these methods include but not limited to:

checklists, tick-sheets, teacher marking & feedback, teacher designed tasks and tests, publisher tests in line with schemes being used, informal observation notes (annotation of plans etc.), 'traffic lights', 'thumbs up/thumbs down', 'smiley faces', peer assessment of writing; self-correction of work; '2 Stars and a Wish', portfolios and work samples, digital assessments, hot seating, use of paddles, KWL charts, spider diagrams, conferencing, running records, observation of reading, presentation of projects, assessment in self-directed online programmes, peer feedback on presentations, use of photographs.

Assessment FOR Learning and Assessment OF Learning

Many of the assessment methods outlined above are formative and provide opportunities for assessment *for* learning, allowing the teacher to use the assessment information to inform planning and adapt teaching where necessary.

The methods above which are summative (assessment *of* learning) take place after instruction and give opportunities for analysing overall and individual student progress and attainment.

Both assessment of learning and assessment for learning play key roles in information gathering and decision making in the school.

Standardised Testing

Standardised testing is carried out in the school as follows:

- The NNRIT (New Non-Reading Intelligence Test) is administered in all 1st classes during the month of March.
- The Micra T & Sigma T Level 1 are carried out in all 1st classes during the month of May.
- The Micra T & Sigma T Level 2 are administered in all 2nd classes during the month of May.

Mop-up testing takes place for children who were absent on the day of the testing. The school recognises that this means that the results for these children are not standardised.

Decisions on exemptions, in line with the testing guidelines, are made by the Principal and Deputy Principal and are based on individual students' circumstances.

The results of the NNRIT, Micra-T and Sigma-T in 1st class are analysed by the Principal, Deputy Principal, subject co-ordinators and the SET team to analyse overall performance in line with our DEIS plan. The results are also used to inform SET assessment as outlined in Section 2.

The results of the Micra-T and Sigma-T tests in 2nd class are used to analyse teaching and learning and overall progress in line with our DEIS plan. These results are also shared with the senior school to inform planning and support in 3rd class.

Screening

- The school designed 'Phonological Awareness and Reading Readiness' checklist is completed at the end of Junior Infants by Junior Infant Teachers.

- In the final term, the incoming Junior Infants attend group sessions in a Junior Infant classroom. During the classroom visits, SET and classroom teachers observe and record their observations of the children in specific key areas using an observation record sheet. These observations are a crucial piece of information when it comes to arranging the children into their respective classes for September and also help to identify potential needs (e.g. speech and language, behavioural, social skills) where a report or assessment hasn't yet been furnished to the school. Short parent interviews are also held in order to give the parents/guardians opportunity to share information about their children and/or any concerns they may have.

Parent/Guardian Involvement in Assessment

We recognise the unique position of the parent/guardian in understanding their child's learning and we therefore welcome parent/guardian input, observation and feedback on the student's progress, areas of strength and any difficulties they may have. We also recognise the importance of keeping parents/guardians informed of their children's progress in school and any areas of particular strength or difficulty identified through assessment. Communication with parents/guardians on assessment and learning progress takes place in the following ways:

- Parent Teacher Meetings; in line with the school's Parent Teacher Meeting Policy
- Informal discussion: by phone, email, Aladdin Connect or in-person; parents/guardians are frequently reminded that our door is always open and are encouraged to talk to class teacher, SET teacher or the principal if they have any concerns.
- Consultation on and review of School Support Plans (as outlined in Section 2)
- End of year reports; Reports are issued two weeks before the end of the final term to allow parents/guardians sufficient time to speak to the teacher regarding the report.
- Standardised test results: The Sten scores are shared in the end of year report and a note of explanation is included.

Recording the results of assessment

- Results of NNRIT, Micra-T and Sigma-T are stored electronically on Aladdin.
- Support files, support plans, records of communication with parents, end of year reports and teacher observation notes are stored as student profile documents on Aladdin. Only personnel directly involved with a child will have access to a child's information.
- Reports from formal assessments are stored on Aladdin under 'report'.
- Hard copies of formal assessment reports and signed support plans are stored in a child's file in a locked filing cabinet with the Deputy Principal.
- Observation notes, teacher designed tasks/tests, screening and diagnostic tests, work samples and other forms of ongoing assessment are stored in teachers' assessment folders.

Section 2: Assessment in Special Educational Teaching

Assessment is central to the process of special educational teaching in the school. As per our Special Educational Needs Policy, the principle that pupils with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest levels of support is of primary importance. Effective assessment is how we identify and monitor those with the greatest level of need.

Identifying those most in need of support and identifying specific areas of difficulty:

- Screening and standardised testing are used to identify students who may be in need of further testing.

- Diagnostic testing and checklists are among the methods used to identify specific areas of difficulty and in particular to find baseline data. The SET team has access to a large selection of such assessments and select the appropriate testing based on the needs of the child. (See Appendix B.)

- Children in 1st class who may be having difficulties in literacy are identified through analysis of the Micra-T results which are also compared with the results of the NNRIT. All children entering 2nd class who have scored below a STEN of 4, or where there is a particular concern regarding difficulties or lack of progress, are assessed through diagnostic literacy testing. Those most in need of literacy support at the start of 2nd class are identified through this process.

- Students identified by the 'Phonological Awareness and Reading Readiness' checklist at the end of Junior Infants as needing further support are assessed using diagnostic testing at the start of Senior Infants to identify those most in need of support and to give further relevant information.

- The results of the D-TEL screening test at the end of Senior Infants are used to identify children who may be in need of further support in literacy in 1st class. Diagnostic testing is carried out on all children scoring below the cut-off point (a raw score of 17 or below). The results of the D-TEN at the end of Senior Infants are used to identify children who may be in need of further support in maths in 1st class.

- As per the continuum of assessment and our whole school approach as outlined in Section 1, SET teachers use a wide variety of assessment methods to inform their teaching on an ongoing basis.

Assessment for children on the continuum of support

The NEPS 'Guidelines for The Continuum of Support' are used to inform our practice.

Assessment in Relation to Classroom support
Assessment is central to classroom support where the class teacher identifies an area of difficulty and puts specific intervention in place to address this difficulty. The teacher uses checklists and teacher observation in line with the Special Educational Needs Policy of the school. SMART targets are assessed at the end of the period of intervention.

Assessment in Relation to School Support and School Support Plus
Prior to writing support plans, individual testing and assessment takes place to identify specific areas of strength and difficulty and to generate baseline data. These assessment methods include but are not limited to:
- Checklists
- Diagnostic testing
- Assessment kits
- Teacher designed tasks and tests
- Teacher observation in different settings
- Consultation with the child: interview checklists, questioning, conferencing

Ongoing assessment takes place throughout the life of the support plan using a range of assessment methods. We recognise the fluidity of teaching and learning and support plans and teaching methods can be adapted as necessary in line with this ongoing assessment and reflection.

The assessment methods used to assess SMART targets are decided upon in advance at the writing stage of the support plan. At the end of the intervention period the specific SMART targets of the support plan are assessed, the plan is reviewed and the next steps are agreed in line with the SEN Policy.

Assessment for In-Class Support/Team Teaching

- Screening, standardised test results and teacher assessment are used to group the children as per the SEN policy.

- Pre-testing and post-testing take place immediately before and after the intervention so that the effect of the intervention can be measured. Sample tracker children from each differentiated group are assessed individually and the data is collected and analysed by the relevant members of the SET team.

- Teacher observation and post-testing data are used to identify individual children, groups or classes who have the most need or where the intervention was least effective and further intervention may be needed. This is discussed by class teachers and the SET team at the end of the intervention and further intervention is planned for accordingly. (This can be in the form of further in-class support or withdrawal of individuals or groups where support plans will be used.)

- During every theme of Aistear, a suitable learning outcome from the Primary Language Curriculum will be chosen. Two differentiated targets (related to the learning outcome) will be chosen; one to accommodate the main cohort of children, one to accommodate children with additional language needs (SEN and EAL)

Assessment in Reading Recovery and Maths Recovery

Several members of staff are trained as Reading Recovery and Maths Recovery tutors. For both of these initiatives, specific scheduled testing and assessment takes place at intervals before, during and after the intervention. Daily assessment is also carried out and recorded and this informs the next day's teaching. Consultation with the child's class teacher and parent/guardian also takes place regarding the assessment process.

EAL Assessment

- Children in Junior Infants who are learning English as an additional language will be given an initial language assessment in November. The same assessment will be repeated in Feb/March to check progress.

- The Primary School Assessment Kit is used in the school to assess language levels of children learning English as an additional language. The assessments are carried out by members of the SET team and the results are used to inform timetabling and grouping of children for withdrawal. All children with less than B1 proficiency receive 2 years of explicit EAL instruction.

Roles and Responsibility:

Responsibility for the coordination of the policy rests with the Deputy Principal. The implementation of the policy is the responsibility of class teachers and SET teachers. The overall responsibility for the implementation of the policy rests with the Principal.
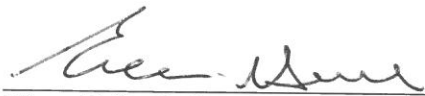
Review

This policy will be reviewed and updated within a period of 2 years.

Ratification

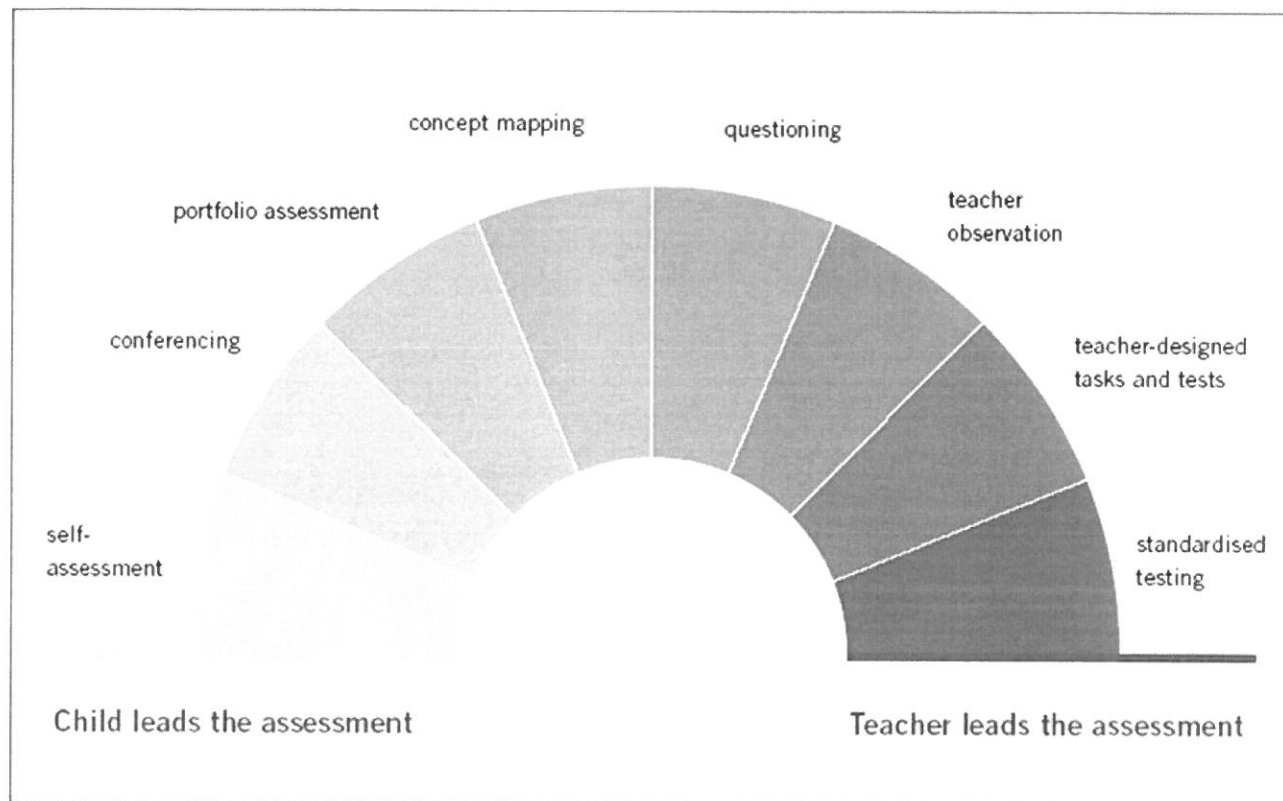This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on ___5/12/22___ .

Signed:

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Eileen Hall, Chairperson

Appendix A: The Continuum of Assessment

From Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Teachers, NCCA 2007

concept mapping

questioning

portfolio assessment

teacher observation

conferencing

teacher-designed tasks and tests

self-assessment

standardised testing

Child leads the assessment

Teacher leads the assessment

Appendix B: Testing used in Special Educational Teaching

This list is not exhaustive.

NEPS BESD checklists

BIAP: Belfield Infant Assessment Profile

AFASIC: from 'How to identify and support children with speech and language difficulties', LDA

Reading Recovery Assessments: running records, hearing and recording sounds, letter and sound identification

Maths Recovery Assessments: 1A, 1B, 1C, 2A, 2B, 2C, 3A, 3B, 3C

PM Benchmarking Kit

GL Dyslexia Screener

Phonemic Awareness Assessment: from 'Phonics from A to Z' by Wiley Blevins

NEPS Balanced Literacy Framework Checklist (A Balanced Approach to Literacy Document)

Dolch List checklists

'Ican Milestones' (communication milestones checklist)

English as an Additional Language/ Speech Language Communication Needs (EAL/SLCN) Checklist (Adapted from Worcestershire Speech and Language Therapy, 2019)

Primary School Assessment Kit

South Warwickshire Fine Motor Skills Programme (NHS)

The Pragmatics Profile of Everyday Communication Skills in Children, Hazel Dewart and Susie Summers

Balfe Auditory Direction Assessment

PEP-3: Psychoeducational Profile

BLS Junior Receptive and Expressive Assessment

Preverbal Communication Schedule (PVCS)

Westwood Sentence Repetition Junior: from Westwood, P. The remedial teacher's handbook

Observation Profile (Cumine, Leach & Stevenson, 1998)

Hello Two Peas Comprehensive Phonological Awareness Assessment

Communication and Language Checklists by Kathryn O'Mahony, Laura Gormley and Rosie Savage

Checklist for Comprehension: Moss, Geoffrey. (Editor) (1995) The Basics of Special Needs.

British Ability Scale (BAS 3:) Word Reading Test B