

# **Assessment Policy**

## **Scoil Bhríde BNS**

### **Introduction**

This policy was originally developed in 2009 by the Principal and Deputy Principal of Scoil Bhríde in consultation with Teaching staff and Parent representative, in response to the issue of 'Assessment in Primary Schools' Guidelines for schools (NCCA). It formalised assessment procedures which had been in place within the school for a number of years. The policy was drafted and formulated in accordance with the guidelines mentioned above. It was brought to the staff for agreement and input and to the BOM for ratification.

A review of the policy was carried out in 2012 by the Deputy Principal in consultation with the Principal and the teaching staff. It also had input from the Parent representative to the BOM.

We adhere to the NCCA definition of assessment as "the process of gathering, recording, interpreting, using and reporting information about a child's progress and achievement in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes" (NCCA, 2007, p. 7). This policy is also designed to comply with the Department of Education Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2011.

### **Policy 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.

### **Relationship to the School Ethos**

This policy was developed with regard to the school's Mission Statement and in particular, where the mission states that 'Positive self-concepts are nourished and the learning environment is supportive and respects diversity and inclusiveness'. Scoil Bhríde adopts a holistic approach to the education and development of each child and the enhancement of teaching processes. An effective Assessment policy identifies early interventions that need to be put in place to ensure that relative success, increased confidence and raised self-esteem is achieved.

### **Aims of this Policy**

The primary aims/objectives of this policy are to:

- Help to inform Teaching and Learning in the school
- Facilitate improved pupil learning
- Identify and celebrate current learning
- Enrich understanding of what a particular child's needs might be
- Construct a picture of the child, allowing for planning for the child

- Provide opportunities for assessment for learning
- Provide opportunities for assessment of learning
- Create a procedure for monitoring achievement
- Track learning processes which assist the long and short term planning of teachers
- Co-ordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis involving parents and pupils in managing strengths and weaknesses
- Inform new teachers and parents of assessment procedures
- Outline procedures for assessment in the school for interested parties
- Comply with Department of Education and Skills Literacy and Numeracy Strategy for 2011

## **Principles**

1. 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.
2. Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process, a valuable formative tool.
3. The range of opportunities for carrying out continuous assessment is increased by good classroom organisation, which encourages children to work independently while the teacher is concentrating on a small group.
4. The outcomes of assessment modify our teaching methods, provide feedback on the Curriculum as well as indicate pupil progress.
5. We recognise 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.
6. In addition to normal assessment, opportunities are taken to record significant points in a child's development, such as:
  - A moment of 'breakthrough' in understanding
  - Surprises and unusual reactions
  - Interesting examples of strategies for mental calculation
  - Difficulties encountered and possible reasons for them
7. Results of assessment are reported in a way useful for pupils, teachers, parents and other interested parties
8. 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.
9. Assessment records must be easy to interpret, useful, manageable and should not be administratively burdensome.

## **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 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/Student Support Files. (See also SEN Policy).

### **Approaches to Assessment**

The two main approaches to assessment are:

- **Assessment for Learning (AFL)** - involves the teacher sharing the learning intentions with the children. WALT (We are Learning To) and WILF (What I'm looking for) charts are used and displayed in all classrooms. AFL involves children in reflecting on and assessing their own work.
- **Assessment of Learning (AoL)** - involves assessing what has been learned at the end of a learning period. The teacher can use a variety of assessment tools such as tests, questioning and observation.

These interrelated and complementary approaches emphasise two aspects of assessment that are central to the teacher's work:

- The teacher uses evidence on an ongoing basis to inform teaching and learning (AFL).
- The teacher periodically records children's progress and achievement for the purpose of reporting to parents, teachers and other relevant persons (AoL). (Guidelines for Assessment, p.8)

### **Formal Assessment**

The intake class (2<sup>nd</sup> Class) is assessed in September of each year. Tests used usually include the NNRIT, Sigma Maths and Micra-T Reading and, following correction, the results are discussed with the parents in the annual parent-teacher meeting. Further diagnostic tests are carried out throughout the year by the Learning Support Teacher on specific children as the need arises.

### **Standardised Assessment/Testing**

The school currently uses the following standardised assessment methods:

- Micra-T Reading test (Third term)
- Sigma-T Mathematics test (Third term)
- The school also administers NNRIT – Intelligence test (First term). As it is an intelligence test, it is not necessary to administer this test annually.

All of the above are carried out in line with administration instruction, and all of the pupils will take these tests, with the following exceptions:

- Where the parents of the pupil refuse such a test
- Where the teacher deems that the pupil does not have the language skills to attempt such a test, and such an attempt would be a futile exercise.

All classes are tested. The tests are usually administered towards the end of the last term by the class teacher. Standard and Percentile Rankings scores are recorded on the class Record template and stored by each individual teacher with a copy held in the SEN room.

All results of standardised tests are retained within the school. These results are contained in digital and written form and are available to parents on request. Individual reports can be generated upon request. This system is currently administered by the SEN Teacher.

In hard copy, the information will be contained in a locked filing cabinet. In digital form, this information will be 'Password-protected'. These test results will be kept on file until the child reaches the age of 21.

The SET analyse the results in June for allocation of resources to pupils in September. The results of these standardised tests will inform decisions to be taken in regard to teaching and learning in the future. However, it is also recognised that a standardised test cannot be relied upon as the sole indicator of ability, it may contain a cultural bias and that in devising strategies for teaching and learning, a range of assessment strategies may be used.

Following DES guidelines all standardised test scores will be orally given to parents/guardians at Parent/Teacher meetings and a STEN score will be written in the end of year reports.

### **Diagnostic Assessment/Screening**

The screening/diagnostic tests used in the school include:

- SIGMA-T,
- MICRA-T
- NNRIT
- PM Reading Assessment – Big Cat books
- Primary School Assessment Kit (PSAK)
- Dolch Word List
- 6-14 Group Reading Test 11
- Aston Index
- GL Assessment Dyslexia Portfolio
- SNIP – Sight word spelling program with assessment
- Newell Literacy Programme
- NEPS – Phonics Skills checklist, First 100 words, Second 100 words

Such tests are administered by the SEN 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 prioritising such an assessment request.

These tests are administered individually or on a whole class basis. 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 request a Psychological Assessment for their child. An assessment will determine the subsequent level of intervention required.

## **Informal Assessment**

The most common forms of assessment used in our school are teacher observation, teacher designed tasks and tests, projects and 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/end of year report. 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 Maths tests, spelling tests and quizzes.

- **Class work** - 'Informal' assessment is ongoing during all lessons in response to oral work, team work, skill development, project work etc.
- **Homework** is checked both formally and informally in a routine way.

Homework and class work are marked and comments are made as appropriate. Marks and especially grades are not usually given. Work is ticked to indicate that the teacher has looked at it and a written comment to indicate sources of error, good points, areas that need improvement etc. will normally be made.

## **Other forms of Classroom Assessment**

We refer to the Guidelines for Assessment in Primary Schools. The following forms of assessment may be used in the classroom. These include but are not limited to

- Self-Assessment (KWL method)
- Conferencing
- Creating a portfolio
- Concept mapping
- Teacher Questioning

## **Teacher Records**

The teacher will normally keep their own record of informal observations, remarks, incidents etc. This may inform classroom planning and will serve as a useful tool for the teacher over the course of the year.

## **The Assessment Folder**

Each teacher, every year, will keep an Assessment folder. This folder may contain samples of the pupils' work, worksheets, assessment/test results and other information which will help to build a picture of the individual child's progress. It may be used to store documents filled in by the class teacher, learning support/resource teacher if appropriate. This file will support teachers and

children in their learning, will provide information for subsequent teachers and will help to inform the teacher when preparing reports for Parents.

It will be policy that no sensitive information will be contained in these folders. Sensitive data and Student Support Files on Pupils shall be kept in the office, filed appropriately, and Password protected, when stored digitally.

### **Assessment of curricular areas**

Some assessment methods will be particularly suited to certain curricular areas. We refer to the various curricular plans in place for further information on assessment methods in that area.

### **Recording**

Each pupil has a file which is stored in the 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 Student Support Plan which is kept in their file in the office and electronically on a password protected computer. Procedures are in place to manage sensitive data (see Data Protection Policy).

### **Primary to Secondary**

A meeting is held each year with key staff from the local second-level schools to discuss pupils' performance in their assessment tests and to report on individual pupils. This meeting is attended by the sixth class teachers and the principal.

For pupils leaving the school, up to date records are passed on to the principal by the class teacher for forwarding to the new school.

### **The Report Card**

A written report is issued to all Parents at the end of the year. This contains relevant information about the child's interests, strengths, educational progress, and achievements. The purpose of this report is to share assessment information with Parents in an accessible format so that they can use the information to help the child to learn at home, thus strengthening the link between home and school. The assessment methods used in the report are grades and narrative comments. These comments will be objective, instructive and phrased in a positive manner in order to support further learning and maintain positive attitudes towards school.

This report will issue in Early/Mid June, and shall allow a follow-up meeting between Parents and Teacher should the need arise.

This written report has been chosen from a list of templates available from NCCA. Results of the standardised tests shall be included in these written reports.

### Sharing of assessment information

- Standardised assessment information is available to Parents on request. The annual meeting with the teacher also allows an opportunity to discuss the results of tests undertaken. Test results shall be included in the written report to Parents. All Teachers will be supplied with standardised results prior to meetings with Parents. Assessment information shall also inform Individual Education Plan/Student Support Plan meetings.
- Assessment information is also shared at an annual meeting with our NEPS Psychologist. Standardised scores, especially NNRIT scores along with other assessment information, inform this meeting.
- Assessment information is also shared between Teachers. At the end of every academic year, an opportunity will be given to Teachers to share information with each other regarding pupils in their class/caseload. This is to facilitate planning for the year ahead.
- Assessment information will also be discussed at In School Management (ISM) level and shall form the basis for School self-evaluation and planning.
- Assessment information will also be provided to relevant second level schools and other Primary schools to which a child might move, providing that written permission is given by the Parents of the child. This permission is requested on enrolment in Scoil Bhríde.

### Success Criteria

This policy is considered successful if

- Early identification and intervention is achieved
- There is improved children's learning
- 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

### Roles and Responsibilities

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 always be kept open.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Chairperson)      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Principal)      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix 1:

### List of Screening / Diagnostic Tests in Scoil Bhríde

Domain	Assessment Tools
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NNRIT</li> </ul>
Attainments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ SIGMA-T,</li> <li>▪ MICRA-T</li> <li>▪ PM Reading Assessment – Big Cat books</li> <li>▪ Primary School Assessment Test (PSAT)</li> <li>▪ Dolch Word List</li> <li>▪ 6-14 Group Reading Test 11</li> <li>▪ Aston Index</li> <li>▪ GL Assessment Dyslexia Portfolio</li> <li>▪ SNIP -Sight word spelling program with assessment</li> <li>▪ Newell Literacy Programme</li> <li>▪ NEPS – Phonic Skills Checklist, First Hundred Words, Second Hundred Words</li> </ul>
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Observation, Checklists,</li> <li>▪ Information from parent,</li> <li>▪ BESD resource manual</li> </ul>
Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Observation,</li> <li>▪ Information from Parent,</li> <li>▪ Strengths &amp; Difficulties Q (SDQ), <a href="http://www.sdqinfo.com/py/sdqinfo/b3.py?language=Englishqz(UK)">http://www.sdqinfo.com/py/sdqinfo/b3.py?language=Englishqz(UK)</a></li> <li>▪ BESD Resource Manual</li> <li>▪ Checklists (see BESD Guidelines),</li> </ul>
Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Observation,</li> <li>▪ Information from Parent,</li> <li>▪ Spence Anxiety Scales – available from <a href="http://www.scaswebsite.com/docs/scas.pdf">http://www.scaswebsite.com/docs/scas.pdf</a></li> <li>▪ SDQ, Checklists,</li> <li>▪ BESD Resource Manual</li> </ul>
Motor /Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Observation,</li> <li>▪ PE,</li> <li>▪ Handwriting,</li> <li>▪ Information from Parent,</li> <li>▪ Organisational Skills</li> </ul>
Background / Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attendance,</li> <li>▪ Language of the Home,</li> <li>▪ Support</li> </ul>