

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. Our school believes that an effective assessment policy is central to this core objective. It is of overriding importance that assessment at Holy Family School should motivate pupils and enable and encourage them to achieve to the best of their ability. It is important that it is accessible to parents/guardians and involves them in the process.

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.

Our policy covers both assessment of learning and assessment for learning. What we understand this to mean is that 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 and Math performances of their pupils with Reading and Math standards nationally. The information gained from this kind of assessment will be used in reporting.

Assessment for learning, on the other hand, acknowledges that assessment will occur as a regular part of teaching and learning and that the information gained from assessment activities will be used to shape the teaching and learning process in our school.

Relationship to School Ethos

We aim to provide a well-ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of the pupils are identified and addressed. The school adopts a holistic approach to the education and development of each child and to the enhancement of teaching and learning processes. We believe that an effective Assessment Policy will help teachers to identify 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 and objectives of the policy are:

- To facilitate improved teaching and pupil learning.
- To create a procedure for monitoring achievement.
- To track learning processes which assist the long and short term planning of teachers.

- To co-ordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis involving parents and pupils in managing strengths and weaknesses.
- To plan the assessment of learning outcomes that informs future teaching
- To diagnose difficulties in learning in order to provide intervention strategies
- To identify gifted and able or talented children who require extension activities
- To give positive feedback to the learner with clear ways forward
- To encourage increasing skills of self assessment
- To keep records of attainment that will inform the reporting process
- To use validated assessment data to inform target setting and to raise expectations and standards
- To ensure consistency and the standardised agreement of levels of work collated by teachers
- To analyse performance of different genders and ensure appropriate intervention is taken

Policy Content

This policy outlines how assessment is used to inform planning and to identify the needs of all pupils including the exceptionally gifted so that suitable strategies are put in place to facilitate meeting their needs. These strategies may include pupil self-assessment, teacher led assessment, formal assessment, communication between parents and teachers, modification of teacher programme, differentiated learning, Individual Profile and Learning Programmes (**IPLPs**) from Learning Support Guidelines and Individual Education Plans (IEPs) from Resource Teaching Guidelines.

Assessment Methods

The following eight assessment methods can be used for AfL (Assessment for Learning) and AoL (Assessment of Learning):-

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

No one assessment method, of itself, will provide sufficiently useful information to the teacher and it is inevitable that at various stages methods will overlap. For example, a teacher-designed task may also involve questioning and observing children.

While no single assessment method is exclusive to AfL or AoL the first four methods generally have a stronger AfL focus while the last four generally have a stronger AoL focus.

Assessment Folders

By September 2014 each class will have received an assessment folder with examples of particular assessment techniques enclosed. These techniques are based on *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum-Guidelines for teachers* - in particular samples of pupil-led assessment, such as traffic lights/WALT, WILF/ KWL charts/Learning Logs/Rubrics/Mindmaps, Graphic Organisers, etc.

Over the course of the school year each assessment folder will show a number of completed assessments, both teacher-led and pupil-led. The folder will be kept in each class and will be passed on to the next teacher from year to year.

Assessment for Learning (Formative Assessment)

Assessment for Learning (AfL), often referred to as formative assessment, actively involves the child as well as the teacher and should always inform planning. In AfL the learning intention and the learning criteria are shared with the pupils and the teacher provides feedback. The feedback focuses on the learning or task in hand and indicates the next steps, points to areas of achievement and challenges and has a positive impact on the child's learning. Developing the skills of self assessment in children is a gradual process involving assessment techniques such as those outlined in *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum-Guidelines for teachers*, which will be promoted and developed on a whole school basis.

Standardised Testing and Record Keeping

Assessment of Learning (Summative Assessment)

- Standardised tests i.e. Micra-T/Drumcondra and Sigma-T are administered in the month of May from 1st – 6th classes.
- M.I.S.T. (Letter Sounds)/Jolly Phonics Assessment and Maths Mastery Check-Up are given to Junior Infants.
- Drumcondra Early Literacy Test and Maths Mastery Check-Up time 1 are given to Senior Infants.
- The NNRIT is given by the Learning Support Teacher (LST) to all pupils in 1st and 4th class

Standardised tests are administered by the class teachers. The infant testing is done in small groups by the LST.

A broad range of assessment methods are used by all teachers in Holy Family School (HFS) These include teacher observation, portfolio assessment, teacher designed tasks and tests, checklists and questioning. We also encourage self assessment by pupils(traffic lights,PMI/,KWL charts,learning logs,rubrics, etc..)

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 targets for themselves with the assistance of the teacher.

On completion of standardized testing, diagnostic tests are administered to pupils at risk in June/September. These include Drumcondra test of Early Literacy – Diagnostic, Jackson Phonics tests 1 – 11, Basic Sight vocabulary tests, Marino/Schonell Word Reading Test, RAIN sentence reading, Schonell/MALT Spelling tests and various checklists.

Administration of Standardised Tests

Standardised tests and teacher Manuals are distributed to each class teacher by the LST on the evening prior to testing. Instructions to be given and total time required for administration of tests are highlighted in each test manual “Administering the Test”.

The assessments indicate which pupils are selected for supplementary teaching. We endeavour to provide supplementary teaching in English and Maths to pupils on or below the 12th percentile from 1st to 6th classes. We provide early intervention to pupils at risk in Junior Classes. The assessments also help the class teacher to identify children’s individual learning strengths and weaknesses. When it is felt that students have serious difficulties, they are referred for psychological assessment.

The class teacher is responsible for the administration, correction and recording of tests as outlined for classes. Class teachers are responsible for passing the results to the office where the data is collated and given to the learning support team, currently Linda Hanafin and Francis Quill. Scores on standardised tests will be analysed and discussed on a whole school basis.

The test results are stored on the office computer. A hard copy is kept by the LST in class files and also in the records room in a bound book. Each test booklet is kept and filed alphabetically for 2 years in the records room. The last test administered to each pupil in 6th class (i.e. Micra – T level 4 and Sigma - T level 5) is kept for 10 years.

Under the freedom of information Act, parents will have full access to their children’s test results.

Under NCCA guidelines the score given for standardised tests in Maths and English in the end-of-year report is the STEN score. An explanatory leaflet explaining the STEN score accompanies the report. It has been agreed that no teacher will give the result of a test without carefully explaining the meaning of the results to the parents.

Using assessment information

The principal use of information from assessment tests is to identify gaps in pupil learning and to address these gaps in order to improve learner outcomes.

In order to facilitate easy access to individual pupil attainment scores year-on-year pupil assessment records are available from 1st to 6th. This will help to track pupil progress in a more comprehensive manner and also highlight those pupils in need of special attention.

Children with Special Educational Needs

Children with learning disabilities find it more difficult to learn, understand and do things than other children of the same age. They can continue to learn and make progress all through their lives, but at a slower pace than other children. A learning disability can be at the level of mild, moderate or severe/profound.

Children with mild learning disabilities develop at a slower rate than other children. Their speech and language may take longer to develop. They have difficulty in putting their thoughts and ideas into words. Some children may show a lack of coordination in motor activities e.g. handwriting.

Children with moderate learning disabilities show significant delays in reaching educational milestones such as appropriate reading age, writing skills, etc. They have considerable difficulties with basic literacy and numeracy and their language communication is affected.

Children with severe learning difficulties show **serious** delays in reaching educational **and** developmental milestones. They usually have considerable difficulties in communicating with other people.

A special educational need (SEN) represents only one aspect of a child's development, it should not define the child.

SEN Support:

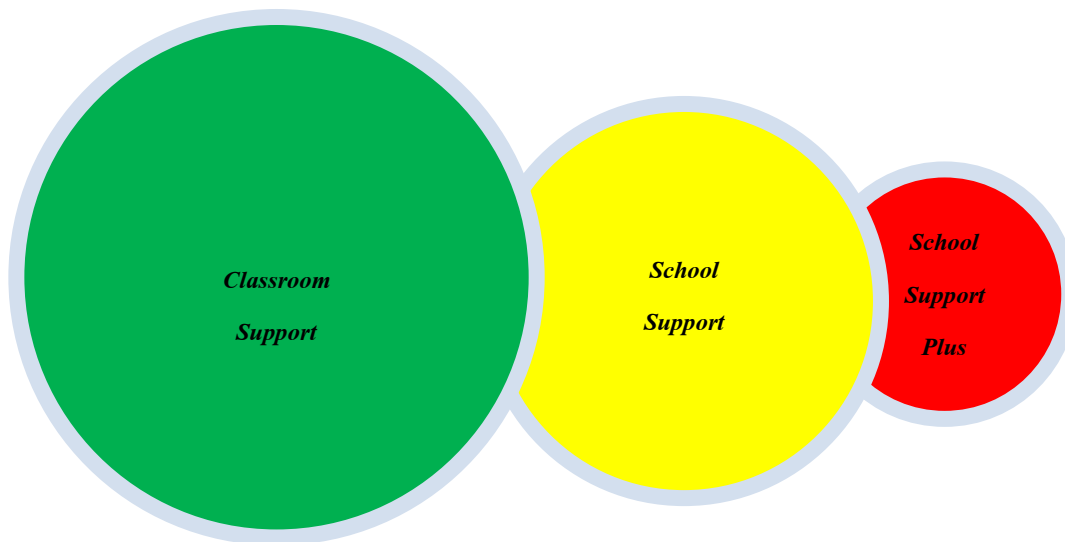
The spectrum of pupils with SEN ranges from under achieving pupils to high achievers. A range of assessment methods are used to ensure that pupils who require intervention receive it.

The Continuum of Support identifies different levels of support for pupils with SEN that build on each other. There are 3 stages in this process.

Stage 1 is the Classroom Support level and involves the teacher, parent and pupil.

Stage 2 is the School Support level and involves the teacher, parent, pupil and Learning Support Teacher.

Stage 3 is the School Support Plus level and involves the teacher, parent, pupil, Educational Psychologist, other professionals, Learning Support Teacher or Resource Teacher Support



Roles and responsibilities :

The role of the **class teacher** at the **Classroom Support Stage (Stage 1)** is to make parents aware of concerns about their child's progress and to liaise with them in designing supports which will best support their child's development. This may involve setting out an individual classroom support plan and differentiated teaching and learner outcomes.

Where a pupil's needs are such that extra intervention is required, access to the **School Support Stage (Stage 2)** is made available to the pupil. This access is contingent on parental consent. This extra support builds on the classroom support already being received and engages the support of the **Learning Support Teacher**. This support may be in the form of withdrawal from class for small group teaching or in-class support.

While the supports at Stage 1 and Stage 2 may meet the needs of the majority of pupils a minority of cases may need additional professional support to fully address pupil needs. These needs are best met at the **School Support Plus Stage (Stage 3)** and will involve input from outside agencies. These agencies may be DES based, HSE based or privately sourced. In the best interests of pupil needs further assessments will be carried out. These assessments will be in the form of any or a combination of the following : an educational psychological assessment, a psychiatric assessment, a speech and language assessment, an occupational therapy assessment or an assessment of need. The findings of these assessments may recommend the provision of **resource teaching hours** to be provided on an individual or small group basis by a **Resource Teacher**.

The **LST** (Learning Support Teacher) is responsible for drawing up an **IPLP** (Individual Profile and Learning Programme) for each pupil in the group.

IPLPs are developed in consultation with the class teacher and parents for pupils receiving supplementary teaching. The IPLP will have the pupils name, class teacher, LST as well as the date on which the pupil first joined the supplementary teaching programme.

The second part is used to record information obtained through screening and diagnostic assessment. Additional information from parents, pupils themselves, the class teacher or other professionals is also recorded before planning the IPLP.

Following the completion of the assessment/information sections the pupils strengths/attainments and priority learning needs can be stated. Learning targets are now set for the specific period of time and the date on which the pupil is considered to have achieved a particular target is noted under "Date Achieved".

The **RT** (Resource Teacher) is responsible for drawing up an **IEP** (Individual Education Plan)for each pupil who is awarded resource teaching hours. This plan is drawn up in consultation with class teachers, parents, learning support teachers and resource teachers . The principal is also consulted.

A weekly planning and progress record or equivalent is maintained for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of support.

SEN also includes a responsibility to cater for pupils with exceptional ability. Every effort is made to provide a differentiated programme within the classroom for these pupils. Accelerated reading programmes , use of SRA Reading Labs and extensive use of ICT is accommodated where possible.

SNA Support

The role of the Special Needs Assistants involves tasks of a non-teaching nature and are supervised by either the Principal or the Class Teacher.

These include:

- Preparation and tidying of classrooms in which the special needs child is/are being taught.
- Assisting children to board and alight from the school bus.
- Special assistance for pupils with physical difficulties.
- Assisting with toileting.
- Assisting with out of school visits, walks or similar activities.
- Assisting the teachers in the supervision of pupils with special needs during recreational and dispersal periods.
- Accompanying individuals or small groups who have to be withdrawn temporarily from the class.

- General assistance to the class teachers under the direction of the principal with duties of a non-teaching nature.

Informal Assessment

The most common form of assessment used in our school is teacher observation, teacher designed 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 each November and 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 tests on the strands and strand units for each curricular area, spelling tests and tables tests.

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:

- The child's class teacher
- The class teacher to whom the child is transferring
- Relevant support teachers, and other relevant professionals
- The principal
- The DES inspector
- The school secretary (for recording purposes only)
- The relevant NEPS psychologist, currently Ms. Orlaith Griffin
- 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 written consent of the child's parent(s) or guardian(s)

Roles and Responsibilities

Class Teacher: Responsible for the administration, correction and recording of tests as outlined for classes. Class teachers are responsible for passing copy of results to the office where they are recorded. These results will in turn be given to the resource teachers. Scores on standardized tests will be analysed and discussed on a whole school basis.

Support/Resource Teacher: Responsible for the administration and recording of diagnostic tests and for the dissemination of the test results to class teachers, parents and principal.

Principal: Overall responsibility.

Effective feedback to pupils needs to be managed

- a) In the context of an ongoing dialogue between pupil and teacher in a positive teaching environment.
- b) In a sensitive language appropriate to the pupil.
- c) In a way that allows comments on strengths and weaknesses to be sensitive and to motivate improved performance.

Effective reporting to parents/guardians needs to:

- a) Provide clear communication about the achievement and effort of pupils. This needs to comply with the school's mission statement.
- b) Provide consistency across classes in order to give parents/guardians confidence that they have an objective picture of how their child is performing.
- c) Be in concise appropriate and legible language, avoiding jargon.
- d) Provide a diagnosis of pupils' strengths and weaknesses and clear strategies for improvement in Individual Pupil Learning Profiles.
- e) Be managed by teachers in a constructive manner.

Success Criteria

This policy is considered successful if:

- Early identification and intervention is achieved
- Clarity is achieved regarding procedures involved in staged approach
- Procedures are clear and roles and responsibilities are defined
- The support teaching team have clearly defined roles and objectives
- There is efficient transfer of information between teachers

Lift -Off Literacy Programme

The Lift-Off Literacy programme was initiated in the 2012/13 school year following much research, visits to other schools and substantial investment in appropriate material by the Board of Management.

Assessments are carried out on the pupils in each class at the beginning and end of the programme. Pupil entry and exit scores are determined using the following tests:-

- | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| Marino/Schonell Word Recognition Test | } | 1 st Class & Snr. Infants |
| • 72 Jolly Phonics Tricky Words | | |
| • D. Young Group Reading Test | } | 2 nd Class |
| (If score > 10 => Marino to determine R.A. | | |
| • D. Young Group Reading Test | } | 3 rd Class |
| (If score > 10 => D. Young Cloze Reading Test. | | |

Drumcondra Reading / Micra-T / Sigma-T Testing

In order to get the most out of the testing procedure and to assist the class teacher in the administration of the tests it has been decided, following discussion, to use the SEN staff as support.

A timetable is drawn up to this effect and posted in the staff room.

- The class teacher administers the test before sos break
- The role of the second teacher in the classroom is as an extra pair of eyes to ensure each child completes as much of the test as possible
- The second teacher is also willing to help out with correction of testing should any class teacher request it.