

St. Joseph's National School

Moneygall

17003A

Assessment Policy

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 (Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum, Guidelines for Schools; NCCA, 2007, p.7). Assessment monitors and evaluates the pupil's learning. Self-assessment through reflection is used by teachers to monitor teaching and learning in their classrooms and practice (effective or not) shared with colleagues. **Assessment of Learning (AoL)** and **Assessment For Learning (AfL)** are an integral part of the teaching and learning process. AoL is summative assessment typically done at the end of an instructional unit. Formative assessment is used to feedback to the teaching/learning process and looks forward, informing what will be done next. Teachers in St. Joseph's N.S. Moneygall observe and discuss weekly with colleagues both work in progress and completed work. Teacher reflection on practice and learning is on-going.

The main purpose of assessment in St. Joseph's National School is to facilitate progress in a student's learning and therefore assessment should indicate both a student's level of performance and his/her potential. The outcomes of assessment modify our teaching methods; provide accurate feedback for the student and teacher as well as indicating student progress. We recognise the potential for assessment in developing a positive self-image in the student from positive and constructive feedback and the feeling of success, which encourages further study. Through assessment the teacher constructs a comprehensive picture of the learning needs of the student and plans future work accordingly.

Our reasons for assessment are as follows:

- To inform teachers' setting of learning targets and activities for individual pupils, groups and the whole class
- To inform the school improvement plan and to revise and update whole school improvement targets.
- To assist planning, evaluate and modify teaching strategies based on the outcomes of assessment
- To inform class groupings and differentiation of work
- To identify pupils with learning difficulties
- To use assessment outcomes to assist and improve the effectiveness of the teaching and learning programmes used in Moneygall N.S.
- To effectively and sensitively use assessment outcomes to assist pupils to reflect on their own learning
- To be able to provide accurate information about pupil's progress to relevant parties particularly parents
- To evaluate pupil achievement in curriculum areas in comparison with national norms
- In St. Joseph's N.S. the gathering of information on pupils' learning is timely and happens at regular intervals.

Assessing learning and teaching

A broad range of assessment approaches/strategies/tools are used in St. Joseph's N.S. Moneygall in all subjects, to cater for a wide spectrum of needs among the pupils taking into account their individual learning styles and needs. The pupils may be assessed with their class or individually out of the classroom, whichever is deemed the most appropriate for the pupil, at the time. Alternative assessment tools will be designed altered or sourced by the Special Education Needs (SEN) and class teachers should the assessments be deemed inappropriate to the pupil's level of ability.

Teachers use many different tools to assess children's learning and teaching effectiveness in all subjects including:

- Teacher observation
- Teacher reflection
- Teacher-designed tasks
- Work samples
- Concept mapping
- Curriculum Profiles
- Portfolio and project assessment
- Conferencing: teacher/pupil, teacher/teacher, teacher/parent
- Diagnostic and Standardised Tests
- Tracking of reading material

1. **Teacher observation and teacher reflection:**

Teachers are encouraged to use the following questions to guide them through the process of observation and assessment::

- What worked particularly well in my classroom this month?
- What was the most challenging moment in my teaching?
- If there was one thing I could do to improve the pupils' learning what would that be? What change/s could I make in my short-term planning based on my experience in the classroom?
- Was I clear about what learning I wanted the pupils to achieve in each lesson?
- How effective were my assessment methods in helping me identify what the pupils had learned?
- How did I cater for the different pupil learning needs and/or styles in my class?
- *Consider methodologies and differentiation* -Think about one pupil's progress this week?
- *Consider his/her learning / behaviour / social and emotional area;* How effective were the strategies I used to support this pupil?
- How effectively did I integrate literacy and numeracy learning in my lessons?

Class teachers reflect monthly 'in writing' on their practice and give this to the principal as part of their Cúntas Míósúil. Teachers often report on how individual pupils have progressed in these reflections and how they have adapted practice as a result of their observations/assessments. The principal in turn reflects on their practice individually. Her reflection is based on her regular visits to the teacher's classroom, observations of the teacher/pupil interactions and the teacher's personal written reflection. It is an opportunity to inform learning and affirm staff.

2. **Teacher designed tests/surveys**

Data from these tests/surveys are used by teachers to inform teaching and learning, adapting teaching methods/strategies, deciding where to focus their attention in their teaching and for sharing good practice and seeking advice with and from colleagues when required.

Surveys are also used to give parents 'a voice' in the work of the school. Parents were surveyed on their attitudes towards Numeracy, Literacy and PE in recent years when drawing our School Self Improvement Plans.

Spelling tests

See Whole School English Plan.

Phonics tests

Jolly Phonics is used in Junior Infants and Senior Infants and is monitored at class level linked to the weekly spelling/phonics tests.

Vocabulary tests

Sight vocabulary/high-frequency word tests are administered regularly by the SEN team and class teachers from Junior Infants – 6th class. These are compiled using vocabulary from the DOLCH list. The Jolly Phonics word

boxes are used in Junior and Senior infants with ongoing assessment (at least once weekly depending on the needs of the child).

Writing tests

The teachers assess handwriting & report writing using a range of tools. As part of SSE in Literacy, writing profiles are being developed to monitor and assess three tracker children in each class (below average (not including children allocated resource hours), average and above average. Teachers will keep these records on file. These profiles will be used to establish a writing standard/expectation for our school.

Teacher-designed Maths test:

- A teacher designed mathematics test is administered at the end of every term based on the content material that has been covered. The tests are compiled from the 'Planet Maths', 'Maths Mate' 'Mad for Maths Problem Solving', 'Ballard Table Tests', 'Busy at Maths' and 'Belfield' Assessment Packs for Junior and Senior Infants.
- Teachers administer check-up assessments based on objectives covered in the textbooks throughout the year. A termly assessment (Planet Maths) is administered to all pupils from 1st – 6th class each year.
- Assessment results are analysed and used for screening, diagnosis of learning difficulties or identifying aspects of maths needing re-teaching. Teachers differentiate their lessons to cater for children with different needs. Team teaching and early intervention strategies are provided.

Physical Education (PE) Assessment

This assessment will re-commence in April 2018 (SSE)

A continuous jogging test for pupils is used to assess fitness. Children were asked to jog continuously around the playground for as long as they were able to sustain it. The teacher blew the whistle to stop when he/she felt the majority of the children were beginning to struggle. Targets were set as follows:

Infants – 4 minutes

Middle – 4 minutes

Senior – 7 minutes

When assessing fitness we also take into consideration the importance of enjoyment and maximum participation of all children as well as development of skills and fitness. We strive to maintain a balance between competitive and non-competitive activities.

Student surveys

Teachers 3rd-6th classes use surveys to gather information on the children's learning. Termly surveys are used to gather information on the children's well-being including anti-bullying surveys which are being used since the review of the anti-bullying policy (Easter 2016).

3. Work samples, portfolio and project assessment

A file/portfolio containing information, samples of work, attendance notes, test results etc. are kept for each child in a locked filing cabinet. An on-going record of student progress is also kept on file in teachers' classrooms. This folder on each child supports the teacher in reporting on a child's learning progress and achievement to parents and others (AoL) while also helping the teacher identify the next steps to be taken to build on and develop the child's learning (AfL). The assessment folder is a key element in supporting effective teaching and learning rather than an end in itself. Gathering information about a child's learning is important, but of central importance is **how** this information is used to improve learning.

4. Curriculum objectives/ learning outcomes/ concept mapping

Teachers don't always share the learning objective or learning outcome of a lesson with the children and it was agreed that teachers would start doing this. It was agreed that teachers and children would ask daily "What are we learning today", "What I Know already? What I Want to know? What I have Learned?". Reminders of WALT (What are we learning today?) and WILF (What I am looking for?) would be displayed in all classrooms.

In 2014 it was noted that there was a shift of focus in the literature and in DES policy from the phrase 'curriculum objective' to 'learning outcome'. Where a curriculum objective is focused on the content to be taught, a 'learning outcome' is focused on the pupil. "Learning outcomes are statements of what is expected that the student will be able to do as a result of learning the activity" (Jenkins and Unwin, 2001).

Simply stated, expected learning outcome statements describe:

1. What teachers want the student to know at the end of a lesson (content) AND
2. What teachers want students to be able to do at the end of a lesson (skill)

Learning outcomes have three major characteristics

1. They specify an action by the students/learners that is observable
2. They specify an action by the students/learners that is measurable
3. They specify an action that is done by the students/learners (rather than the teacher)

Teachers in St. Joseph's N.S. Moneygall regularly use the KWL strategy – asking children before a lesson what they know and what they want to know and then at the end of the lesson asking them what they have learned. Concept mapping is often used by teachers to elicit what a child knows before and after a lesson.

Tracking of reading material

During the Summer of 2014 a new library was set up in the school in the Resource Room with all books in stock graded and filed by author. Grading was divided into 4 levels of reading. Due to lack of space, use of library (resource room) many books are now in individual class libraries. Excess books are stored in classroom (front of school). Children have reading records to monitor their reading materials and responses.

Conferencing: teacher/pupil, teacher/teacher, teacher/parent communication

Pupils work, including non-written work and homework is regularly monitored and corrected. Pupils are provided with constructive feedback on their learning. Teaching is amended in the light of feedback. Teachers check pupil understanding during and at the end of lessons. Pupils are provided with meaningful feedback on their work to improve their Learning. Station teaching facilitates teacher/pupil conferencing.

Teachers in St. Joseph's N.S. Moneygall meet weekly to plan together, share good practice and advise each other. Information regarding pupil progress in the curriculum areas is shared with relevant staff members as necessary

It is important that parents feel welcome in the school. Parents may meet the class teacher by appointment at any time during the year. Meaningful information regarding pupil progress is effectively communicated to parents regularly during the year via reading logs, homework journals...

Formal individual parent-teacher meetings take place in November. At these meetings, parents are consulted to ascertain their perspective on their children's progress. Information class level meetings for parents on the curriculum and classroom practice are held in April/May for new infants enrolling.

A written report giving a profile of pupil achievement in each curriculum area in qualitative and quantitative terms that are easily understood and meaningful are sent home to parents at the end of the school year. We use a template from the NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). Parents are informed of the standardised test score in literacy and numeracy on the end of year report card. It was agreed, that to avoid misinterpretation of written standardised test results by parents, information on standardised test scores and how to interpret results is

sent home with the end of year report card. The report is sent home two weeks before the end of the school year to facilitate parents who wish to respond to the report and meet the class teacher before the end of June.

7. Standardised tests and diagnostic tests

The DES require all schools to assess children using standardised tests normed on the Irish population at the end of 2nd, 4th and 6th classes.

To assess **literacy**, the MICRA T test was used in the school up to 2014. A decision was made to use the Drumcondra test in 2015.

To assess **numeracy**, The SIGMA T is used. It is administered in May to all pupils from 1st-6th Classes.

To assess **Gaeilge**, The Drumcondra is used. It is administered in May to all pupils from 1st-6th Classes.

To assess **tables**, The Ballard is used. It is administered in three times in the year to all pupils from 1st-6th Classes.

To assess **reading age in 1st and 2nd Class** the Literacy Lift Off PM book reading age tests are administered (in September) prior to the 6 week programme and following completion of same (in November/December).

The standardised tests are administered to all classes from 1st-6th Class in mid-May by the class teachers.. The MIST (Middle Infant Screening Test) was used in St. Joseph's N.S. Moneygall up until 2016. In June 2016 a decision was made by the special needs team after exploring a number of assessments to an alternative testing scheme for senior infants. A large majority of children scored well in MIST and teachers felt the test failed to identify the broad range of reading ability within the senior infant group. Having used the Jolly Phonics Level 2 test and the GRT (Group Reading Test) it was noted that it showed more clearly and accurately the range of ability in a class and a decision was made to continue using this test with Senior Infants from 2017.

Pupils who are absent on the day standardised tests are administered: If pupils are absent on the day of testing the test will be administered to them by a SEN teacher at a later date.

How does the data from standardised tests inform teaching and learning?

At whole school level the scores are used to inform teachers on how the children are doing in literacy and numeracy compared to their peers nationally.

The child's standardised test scores are recorded on the front page of their report card stored on file. Teachers compare standardised test scores from one year to the next to identify whether or not a child is improving or dis-improving. Concerns are discussed with the SEN team and interventions made.

When children score below the 12th percentile a diagnostic test may be used to explore where his/her difficulties lie. Teachers at different class levels use data from the standardised tests to identify strands/strand units in the curriculum where the children are scoring well/poorly and adapt their planning accordingly.

Individual educational programmes (IEPs) and group educational programmes (see Special Educational Needs Policy)

The Continuum of Support and Pupils Profiles are in use for pupils who are receiving SET support. A range of assessment tools are in use. See SEN policy.

RECORD KEEPING

Copies of individual end-of-year reports and standardised assessments are kept in the school for 9 years after the pupil leaves 6th class. Results of class standardised assessments are kept on file in the principal's office and used by staff to evaluate learning and compare results from one year to the next. Teachers' and school assessment records are useful and easy to interpret. Parents are entitled to their child's results. Results are given to them at the parent/teacher meeting in November. However, parents are welcome to arrange a meeting with teachers to discuss assessment outcomes at other times during the year and arrangements are made for this in consultation with the principal. These meetings are arranged generally outside school hours. If this is not possible, the principal will arrange supervision of classes to facilitate such a meeting.

STORAGE OF ASSESSMENTS

A file on each child is stored in the teacher's classroom. Teachers on the Special Needs team also hold relevant documentation on each child. All such information is treated as *confidential*. However, parents may view any information held on their child by making an appointment with the class teacher and/or learning support/resource/language support teacher. Two copies only of a child's psychological/ occupational therapy/speech and language reports etc. are kept in the school: one in the child's individual file by the class teacher and one in the filing cabinet accessed by the Special Needs team. No arrangement is made to assess a child by the school, without parent/s' consent. Teachers treat all such information as *confidential* and with respect.

A folder with monthly teacher reflections incorporated into the teachers monthly planning on learning and teaching is kept in the principal's office.

Ratification and Review

This policy was compiled by the Principal and teaching staff of Moneygall NS and reviewed by the Board of Management in April 2018.

It was ratified by the Board of Management on Date: _____.

Signed: _____ Chairperson, Board of Management.

Signed: _____ Principal