

# Assessment

June 2012



## ASSESSMENT

### Introductory Statement/Rationale

This policy was formulated in the Spring/Summer term of 2012 following a review of the previous policy and in light of the recommendations made by Mr. G. Kearney, schools inspector in Sept. 2011 and also take into consideration areas highlighted by the National Strategy for Literacy and Numeracy.

### Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school

*Assessment activities used in this school will contribute to pupil learning and development by identifying children's strengths and areas of difficulty. A range of assessment tools will be used in order to identify children's various learning styles. All assessments, whether formal or informal, will be conducted in a non-threatening style and we will endeavour when carrying out formal assessment to allay children's nervousness so that they can perform to the best of their abilities. Children will be asked to assess their own performance across a variety of curricular subjects, and parental input will also be central to any assessment of our pupils.*

### Aims

The aim of all assessment in Carron NS is to –

- *To benefit pupil learning*
- *To monitor learning processes*
- *To generate baseline data that can be used to monitor achievement over time*
- *To involve parents and pupils in identifying and managing learning strengths or difficulties*
- *To assist teachers' long and short term planning and differentiation*
- 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 including the exceptionally able
- To contribute to the school's strategy for prevention of learning difficulties
- To monitor pupil progress and attainment
- To enable teachers to modify their programmes 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 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 monitor their own approaches and methodologies

### Assessment for learning

Assessment for learning helps teachers and children focus on three key questions

- Where are the children now in their learning?

- Where are the children going in their learning?
- How will children get to the next point in their learning?

It does not generally happen at the end of a particular piece of work, but takes place in the day to day interaction between teachers and children. Everything the children do has the potential of providing the teacher and the children themselves with information about what they do and do not understand and what they can and cannot do. Teachers then use this information to support the children and to plan ahead. As teachers we also use this information to evaluate our own teaching and the appropriateness of our teaching methods and strategies, as well as our organisational and planning strategies.

In our school, we make use of the following strategies -

- *Teacher observation*
- *Teacher-designed tasks and tests*
- *Work samples, portfolios and projects.*

While much of our observation is not documented, more of it is informed by checklists and mastery lists. For example, we use the Drumcondra English Profiles in giving focus to our observation of children's oral language work. At infant level, dolch word lists and lists of commonly used words are used. As well as observing children's academic participation, we observe children keenly for their social and emotional development and their ability to cooperate with their peers.

Teacher designed tests and tasks are commonly used. These generally include homework tasks, weekly tests in aspects of literacy, gaeilge and numeracy such as tables, spellings, phonics, vocabulary, cloze tests and unaided writing. In other areas, especially at the senior end of the school, children regularly take tests in aspects of SESE. Occasionally, at the senior end of the school children take a pre-test before a unit of work. This helps the teacher to plan ahead for the teaching of the unit.

The children maintain their own portfolios in art. We use A4 notebooks for recording work in history, geography and science. Concept maps in these books serve as useful AfL tools.

### Standardised tests

All children from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class take standardised tests in literacy and numeracy in June each year. In this school, we currently use the MICRA T test and the SIGMA T test. It is proposed to begin using the Drumcondra Spelling test in the senior classes at the beginning of the 2012/2013 school year. Each class teacher administers her own testing and the overall results are collated by the school principal. We record the raw score, standard score, percentile rank, STEN and reading age for all children. Results are analysed by both teachers individually and collaboratively. Our learning support teacher is also involved in the collaborative analysis. The information gleaned from analysis of test scores helps us to identify children who will receive supplementary teaching from the Learning Support teacher. It also helps us to identify areas of weakness on an individual and whole class basis.

We keep an individual standardised testing result card for each student, as well as class result cards. Data from standardised tests is compared with national norms and is presented annually to the Board of Management.

Results are communicated to parents via our school report card issued in June and again at parent-teacher meetings organised in October/November. We communicate results using a STen score, and give a simple explanation of what each score means.

- *8-10 Well above average*
- *7 High Average*
- *5-6 Average*
- *4 Low Average*
- *1-3 Well Below Average*

Priority for supplementary teaching from our learning support teacher is given to children performing at the below average and low average categories in both Literacy and numeracy.

Beginning in September 2012, children will be administered the NRIT in second class. This will give a baseline standard for reasoning/thinking skills against which scores in standardised literacy and maths tests can be compared.

## Screening

Standardised test scores are used to identify pupils who may need learning support in English or Mathematics. In most cases, these scores will confirm judgements made on the basis of teacher observation and teacher designed tasks and tests.

In the case of children at infant level, the MIST test is administered by the class teacher in the last term of senior infants, while at junior infant level, the Belfield Infant Assessment Test will be administered in partnership with the learning support teacher.

We place particular emphasis on early intervention and attention is given to children who are achieving at a low level in infant classes. The class teacher in partnership with the learning support teacher decides on priority areas for intervention and supplementary teaching. Teaching materials and methodologies are chosen accordingly.

If a pupil comes to attention because of low achievement, it is the responsibility of the class teacher, in the context of ongoing communication with the pupil's parents to make them aware of the situation and to ascertain the parent's views of the child's school performance. If the class teacher and learning support teacher have deemed it necessary to carry out diagnostic assessment, it is the class teacher's responsibility to explain the role of such testing to the parents and to seek their approval for such testing. Following diagnostic testing, a formal meeting will be arranged between the parents and learning support teacher prior to the commencement of supplementary teaching. At this point parents can contribute to the development and implementation of the child's IPLP by discussing the learning targets for their child and by identifying activities that can be implemented at home to support the school's work.

## Diagnostic Assessment

In our school, the learning support teacher administers, scores, stores and interprets the results of diagnostic tests. The objectives of such testing are to identify those areas of literacy and numeracy in which the child has particular strengths or learning difficulties. Such information will enable the teacher to identify and record medium-term learning targets to be attained during the term.

The tests to be administered will depend on the pupil's stage of development . See appendix 1 for list of tests available.

In our school we observe the staged approach to intervention as outlined in circular 02/05

A Staged Approach to Meeting the Needs of Pupils with Special Educational Needs		
Observation	Process	Personnel Involved
<p>Stage 1</p> <p>Class teacher/parent has concerns regarding a pupil's academic, physical, social, behavioural or emotional development</p>	<p>Class teacher administers appropriate screening measures. Class teacher devises a plan, which aims to meet pupil's identified needs within the normal classroom setting. The success of this plan is regularly reviewed in consultation with parents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Class teacher</i></li> <li>• <i>Parent</i></li> </ul> <hr/> <p><i>Additional Supports Available</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Home School Liaison</i></li> <li>• <i>Teacher</i></li> <li>• <i>NEPS Psychologist</i></li> </ul>
<p><i>If concern remains after a number of reviews, the Learning Support teacher the School may be consulted about the desirability of a move to Stage 2</i></p>		
<p>Stage 2</p> <p>Child is referred to learning support teacher, with parental permission for further diagnostic testing.</p>	<p>If diagnostic testing indicates that supplementary teaching would be beneficial, this is arranged. Parent, class teacher and learning support teacher collaborate in devising, implementing and reviewing the pupil's learning plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Class teacher</i></li> <li>• <i>Parent</i></li> <li>• <i>Learning Support Teacher</i></li> </ul> <hr/> <p><i>Additional Supports Available</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Home School Liaison</i></li> <li>• <i>Teacher</i></li> <li>• <i>NEPS Psychologist</i></li> <li>• <i>Other Support Staff and Services available to school</i></li> </ul>
<p><i>If significant concerns remain after a number of reviews, it may be necessary to implement Stage 3</i></p>		
<p>Stage 3</p> <p>School formally requests a consultation, and, where appropriate, an assessment of need from a specialist outside the school.</p>	<p>A learning plan is devised by personnel involved, which includes identification of any additional available resources that are considered necessary in order to implement the plan. Parents should be fully consulted throughout this process. This learning plan should be subject to regular reviews, leading to revisions of the learning plan and referral for specialist review as necessary.</p> <p>Any private practitioner engaged by a school at Stage 3 should have the relevant Department of Education and Science Circulars and guidance notes drawn to their attention.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Class teacher</i></li> <li>• <i>Parent</i></li> <li>• <i>Learning Support Teacher</i></li> <li>• <i>Resource Teacher (if available)</i></li> <li>• <i>Relevant Specialist</i></li> </ul> <hr/> <p><i>Additional Supports Available</i></p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>NEPS Psychologist</i></li> <li>• <i>Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments</i></li> <li>• <i>Speech and Language Therapist</i></li> <li>• <i>Occupational Therapist</i></li> <li>• <i>Psychiatrist</i></li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Audiologist</i></li><li>• <i>Paediatrician</i></li></ul>
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## Psychological Assessment ( as per circular 02/05)

The class teacher and learning support teacher will liaise with parents if it is felt that a psychological assessment is required. The Learning support teacher will request and arrange assessments from specialists e.g psychologists, speech and language therapist etc. Parents must give written consent to such assessments being carried out (consent form in learning support file). Likewise if parents decline such assessment, they should do so in writing. Psychological reports will be securely stored in the children's files. Class teachers, learning support teachers will have access to these. Parents will be supplied with a copy of the test results and recommendations.

Information and recommendations gained from these assessments will be central to the formulation of children's IPLP's as well as informing any decision about human or material resources needed to help that child.

### Recording the results of assessment

- Results of formal assessments are recorded for individual children at on a class basis and kept in children's files, which are securely stored.
- Copies of the end of year reports are filed on an annual basis in children's files.
- Teachers are aware of the need to record comments in an objective and instructive manner. However, we always try to record comments about children's weakness and difficulties in language that is not negative or damaging to the confidence of those children or their parents.
- All sensitive data regarding our children e.g psychologists' reports is confidential and kept in the child's file in a locked filing cabinet.
- Information on children's assessment is only passed on to essential parties – e.g. parents, Learning support/resource teachers and substitutes where necessary. We do not communicate results of standardised tests to children and urge parents to do so with caution. We feel that injudicious communication of tests results leads to unnecessary comparisons being made between children.

### Success Criteria

We feel that our assessment policy will be successful if

- A range of informal and formal assessment modes are used to place assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning.*
- Procedures run smoothly and efficiently because there is clarity about what is expected and who is responsible for different aspects.*
- Transfer of information from class teacher to class teacher happens efficiently at the beginning/end of school year.*

### Roles and Responsibility

Each class teacher has front line responsibility for the assessment of her pupils. The learning support teacher will be responsible for further diagnostic testing of those children that are deemed to be in need of it. The principal has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that assessment is being carried out in a broad and balanced way in Carron NS.

This assessment policy will be reviewed at the end of the school year 2016.

## Ratification & Communication

The policy has been ratified by the BoM of Carron NS.

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## Reference Section

- Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for Schools, NCCA, 2007
- Special Educational Needs – a Continuum of Support, Guidelines for Teachers and Resource Pack for Teachers, NEPS, 2007
- Learning Support Guidelines, DES, 2000
- Circular 0138/2006 Supporting Assessment in Primary Schools
- Circular 02/05 Organisation of Teaching Resources for Pupils who need Additional Support in Mainstream Primary Schools
- Primary School Curriculum – section on assessment for each subject
- Working together to Make a Difference for Children, NEPS
- Drumcondra English Profiles. G. Shiel & R. Murphy, ERC, 2000
- Commonsense Methods for Children with Special Needs, Peter Westwood, Routledge Falmer, 1997
- A range of assessment tests are listed on the SESS website [www.sess.ie](http://www.sess.ie)
- Draft Report Cards Templates. [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie)
- info@ncca, September 2005. Issue 1, p. 8. Assessment for Learning