

Policy on Assessment

Introduction

This policy was originally drafted on October 16th 2006 during a whole-school planning day using the expertise of the School Development Planning Service facilitator, Jenny Dooley. The policy was redrafted in November and was ratified by the Board of Management in January 2007. The policy was reviewed and amended in October 2011 and further reviewed and amended in February 2015.

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. It endeavours to evaluate learning and teaching at our school and to monitor standards of learning.

Relationship to School Ethos

The school adopts a holistic approach to the education and development of each child, the enhancement of teaching processes. An effective Assessment policy identifies 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 / objectives of the policy are to –

1. To facilitate improved pupil learning.
2. To create a procedure for monitoring achievement.
3. To track learning processes which assist the long and short term planning of teachers.
4. To co-ordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis involving parents and pupils in managing strengths and weaknesses.

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 (IEPs)

Standardised Testing

The Drumcondra Maths, Reading and Spelling tests are administered in May of each year. All classes from First class upwards are tested.

The following tests are also given in our school:

- The MIST (Middle Infant Screening Test) test is administered to Senior Infants in the Spring term and is usually administered by the class teacher.
- The CAT (Cognitive Ability Test) test is administered in the Spring term of Third class or to new entrants in older classes.
- The Otis Lennon is administered in the Spring term of Second Class.

The class teacher usually administers the MIST tests and the CAT and Otis Lennon is administered by the SEN Team. Standard Scores and Percentile Rankings scores are recorded on the class Record template and stored by the Learning Support teacher in a locked cabinet. These results are also recorded in electronic format on our school LAN at the following location:

//SMM01/Staff/SENTestResults

Each individual teacher retains a copy of results for his/her class. The principal retains a copy of all results. The SEN Team analyses the results in June for allocation of resources to pupils in September.

Following consultation with NEPS in October 2011, it has been decided that in the case of children who achieve STEN scores of 1 or 2 on successive tests that they will not sit a further standardised assessment in class (Drumcondra assessments). Instead, the SEN team, in consultation with the class teacher will administer the Neale Analysis test (Standardised) and also administer assessments of the programme (literacy/numeracy) completed to date.

Diagnostic Assessment

The school policy on Psychological Assessments lists all diagnostic tests used by the school. Such tests are administered by the Learning Support and Resource 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 provided with test results and if a psychological assessment is warranted, parental permission is sought and a consent form is completed. The Principal will facilitate such an assessment happening.

The diagnostic tests used in the school include –

- Neale Analysis (Reading Test)

- Jackson – Get Reading Right (Phonics)
- Aston Index (assessment for specific learning difficulties/ dyslexia)
- Basic Number diagnostic test (Infant test, numbers 1 – 10)
- Word Recognition and Phonic Skills (WRAPS) (Word recognition test <9.5 years)
- Diagnostic Reading Analysis
- Early Literacy Test (Bill Gillham) Pre reading level
- Rain (Sentence Reading test)
- Quest Literacy and Maths test

Screening

The screening tests used to identify learning strengths and weaknesses in our school are –

- ✓ Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST) (Administered 5th term in school)
- ✓ SPAR / Parallel Spelling Test
- ✓ Non Reading Intelligence Test (NRIT)
- ✓ Aston Index (See above)
- ✓ Numeracy progress test (Baseline to Sixth)
- ✓ Mathematics Target Tests

These tests are administered individually or on a whole class basis. The MIST and **BIAP are administered on a whole class basis around Easter of each** year, while the Aston Index is administered individually by the Learning Support teacher when deemed appropriate. Screening is used by the school to initiate the staged approach to intervention as per circulars 24/03 and 02/05

Literacy Lift Off and Accelerated Reader

As part of the Literacy initiative in our school, we have introduced two reading interventions namely Literacy Liftoff and Accelerated Reader.

Literacy Liftoff is administered from Second Class to Junior Infants while Accelerated Reader caters for Third to Sixth Class inclusive.

With Literacy Liftoff, substantial pre and post screening takes place namely:

- ✚ Running records – this is done to place each child into a group by attaining their ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development)
- ✚ Reading Age – We administer the Schonell test to ascertain a reading age for each child.
- ✚ Written Vocabulary test – the children are asked to write as many words as they can in a 10 minute period.

These three screening tests are carried out both before and after the 6 week Literacy LiftOff intervention takes place.

Accelerated Reader is a reading intervention for Third to Sixth Class primarily. However, if another class/individual younger than Third Class shows an aptitude for reading, then they too are included in this intervention. At the beginning of the school year, each child in these

classes does a star test. This is a pre-intervention screening test which ascertains a reading age for each child. This star test is repeated again just before the Christmas break, just before the Easter break and again just before the summer break. The results from these star tests are an indication of reading levels of each child and are a vital piece of information for each class teacher. The literacy link teacher checks these reports on a regular basis and checks that the children are progressing towards their reading targets.

Psychological Assessment

If stages 1 and 2 fail to deliver adequate intervention the class teacher / Principal will contact the parents for permission to secure a Psychological Assessment for their child (see Psychological Assessment policy). An assessment will determine the subsequent level of intervention, be it Learning Support Resource hours or an Individual Education Plan. The most common form of assessment used in our school is teacher observation, teacher designed tests, projects and homework (informal assessment). 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.

Recording

Each pupil has a file which is stored in the administration office. This file records standardised test results and end of year reports. This file is passed from teacher to teacher as the child progresses through the system. Procedures are in place to manage sensitive data (see Data Protection Policy).

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 Special Education team have clearly defined roles and objectives
- There is efficient transfer of information between teachers

Roles and Responsibilities

Mainstream, 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 be always kept open.

Implementation

This policy is already being implemented in our school and supercedes any other policy

Ratification & Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 19th January 2007 and communicated to parents thereafter.

The policy was reviewed in February 2015 and ratified by the Board of Management thereafter.

Review Timetable

This policy will be reviewed and amended as necessary or as legislation necessitates.

References

D.E.S. Circular 02/05 – 24/03

D.E.S. Learning Support Guidelines 2000

www.sess.ie

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Signed: _____
(Chairperson, Board of Management)