

Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál Policy on Assessment

Introduction: This is a review of our original Assessment Policy and is informed by the NCCA's School Assessment in the Primary Curriculum Guidelines. It was formulated by the staff of the school during the school year 2011/2012. Assessment was prioritized by our staff. We received in service from a cuiditheoir from P.P.D.S. and we discussed and considered this policy at staff meetings as part of the Croke Park Agreement. This process involved self-evaluation of our existing assessment practices and includes recommendations and strategies for improvements to existing practices.

Draft copies were supplied to School Staff, Board of Management and our Parents' Association for their input and observations. The general body of parents were also informed that draft copies of this policy were available on request. This policy was then ratified by our Board of Management. Our policy now incorporates the views and opinions of Board of Management, Staff and Parents.

Rationale: The Education Act (1998) requires schools to regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to the students and their parents. Our existing Assessment Policy was limited in context and content and was in need of review. This policy will aid and inform both teaching and learning and will enable teachers to identify appropriate teaching strategies and learning activities that will improve the pupil's learning on a daily basis.

This Policy complies with and fulfills the requirements of D.E.S. Circular 56/2011.

Gathering evidence about how well our students are learning and using this information to improve their learning opportunities are essential elements of this policy.

Our school will use assessment information to inform our self-evaluation, reflective practices and school improvement plans.

This Policy will specify how teachers will

- gather information about children's progress for the purpose of assessment **for** learning and assessment **of** learning
- assess different dimensions of the child's learning and development including the cognitive, the creative, the physical and the social.
- ensure that the school's assessment policy and practice promotes equality and prohibits discrimination against individual children.
- Use diagnostic assessment to identify children with learning difficulties at the earliest possible stage so that appropriate support and intervention can be put in place.
- record significant observations of children in day-to-day learning activities and details of children's performance in tasks and tests.
- report the results of the assessment of children to their parents at parent/ teacher meetings and in the school report forwarded to parents in June.
- manage assessment records including providing access to records, transferring records, and keeping records secure.

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of our School

Assessment activities used in our school will contribute to pupil learning and development by identifying particular learning needs of pupils/groups of pupils including the exceptionally able ; by contributing to our school's strategy for prevention of learning difficulties and by monitoring pupils' progress and attainment. These will aid the harmonious development of the pupils, increase their confidence and enhance their self esteem.

Aims:

The primary aims of this policy are :

- 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
- To coordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis.

Objectives:

The primary objectives of this policy are :

- 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 pupil's progress and attainment.
- To facilitate the communication between parents and teachers about pupil's 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

A.F.L. is important as the information collected helps the pupil to learn better and the teacher to teach better. Both teacher and pupil are active learners. It also develops the concept of pupil self evaluation and encourages the pupils to look at their own work in a reflective manner, to identify aspects of their work that are good and aspects that could be improved and to then set learning targets for themselves.

Our school will :

- Ensure that information from a broad range of assessment methods and tools is used to plan for and support the child's learning experience in all areas of the curriculum.
- Match assessment methods and tools to curriculum objectives in order to maximise learning
- Identify practical methods of recording assessment information including teacher observation, teacher-designed tests and tasks, standardised tests and diagnostic tests.
- Use information derived from a range of assessments, including standardised tests, to construct relevant learning experiences for individual children.
- Provide opportunities for parents to share relevant information about their children and incorporate this information in the process of planning for the child's learning.
- Specify the kinds of opportunities they will provide for children to discuss the assessment information as a means of motivating them to learn, and provide children with opportunities to develop self assessment skills.
- Use the results of assessment in planning the acquisition and deployment of educational materials and resources, taking account of the full range of children's abilities.

Strategies used in our school to develop A.F.L. include:

- Teacher questioning
- Teacher observation
- Teacher designed tasks and tests
- Self-Assessment – Rubrics: Thumbs UP/Thumbs Down: Traffic Lights: PMI Diagrams: Talk Partners: Ladders: What Went Well : Even Better IF : 2 Stars and a Wish
- Conferencing – those concerned with the child's learning share their knowledge and understanding of the child's work.

Just as the Primary School Curriculum takes the broadest view of what is entailed in the education of the child “the cognitive, the creative, the affective, the physical and the social” (introduction, 1999, p.18), the school’s assessment policy will address not only each area of the curriculum but also the different dimensions of the child’s development.

- Assessment of the **cognitive** dimension will take account of the child’s acquisition of knowledge, concepts and skills. It will also take account of the development of the child’s literacy and numeracy skills, and his/her mastery of higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Assessment of the **creative** dimension will take account of the development of the child’s capacity for creative expression and response. Just as creative thinking requires going beyond accepted knowledge in order to generate new knowledge and understandings, assessment of the child’s creative development will focus on the child’s ability to develop insights, and interpretation in responding to his/her environment.
- Assessment of the **affective** dimension is concerned with developing the child’s sense of capacity for expressing ideas and emotions in artistic form. It will encompass the emotional reactions of the child to artistic expression and to human relationships. It will also take account of the moral and spiritual development of the child.
- Assessment of the **physical** dimension will take account of the child’s development of the fine and gross motor skills and the gradual development of his/her bodily control and co-ordination. Assessment of the child’s development of psychomotor skills will not be limited to Physical Education but will be relevant to all learning experiences that involve the child in physical interaction with objects encountered in his/her learning environment. (B.I.A.P.).
- Assessment of the **social** dimension will take account of the child’s interpersonal and intrapersonal development, including the behaviour, attitudes and social values he/she develops throughout his/her engagement with the Primary School Curriculum and the general school environment.

Assessment of children throughout their primary school education.

The child's perspective on the world and on his/her experience of learning is more holistic in the early year when the separation of different curriculum subjects or areas in learning is largely irrelevant to the child. Later, children become more conscious of the nature of their experiences with different curriculum subjects. Our school policy on assessment reflects this growth and change and provides the basis for teachers to

- Take account of the developmental variability displayed by individual children, while being aware of the accepted milestones in children's development.
- Take account of the contextual basis of a young child's learning, and the degree to which school experience differs from home and pre-school experience.
- Allow time in each classroom day for observation of children and for listening to children in addition to the normal use of observation in the learning process, in order to construct as full a picture as possible of each child's progress and development.
- Make judgements over a period of time, and avoid snapshot judgements
- Use assessments which are appropriate to the child's age and stage of development, at all stages in his/her career in primary school.
- Fulfil the requirement of administering standardised tests in literacy and numeracy for pupils in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes.
- Ensure vigilance in identifying learning difficulties in particular children and use assessment information in providing appropriate intervention and support.

Equality:

Our school's assessment policy also promotes equality and prohibits discrimination against individual children, on the grounds of religion, age, disability or race (Equal Status Act 2000).

Curriculum Subjects: All our school’s Curricular Plans address the issue of assessment for each particular subject.

Learning Support/Resource Provision –

This policy encompasses, supports and reinforces the provisions and strategies as detailed in our school’s Whole School Policy for Learning Support/Resource Provision which addresses the areas of Roles and Responsibilities, Individual Education Planning: Prevention and Early Intervention : Early Intervention Programmes: Screening: Standardised Tests: Diagnostic Assessment : Communicating and Liasing with Parents : The Staged Approach to Assessment and Norm–Referenced Tests.

Mandatory Testing/ Standardised Testing:

As required by D.E.S. Circular 26/2011 “The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy” our school will implement, on an annual basis Standardised Testing in English Reading and Mathematics during the period May/June for students in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes.

Students may be excluded from standardised testing if in the view of the School Principal they have a learning or physical disability which would prevent them from attempting the tests or, in the case of migrant students, where the level of English required in the test would make attempting the test inappropriate.

The results of these standardised tests will be maintained by the School Principal and will be available for inspection by Department officials.

Standardised Tests/Screening and Norm – Referenced Tests

Class	When?	Name of Tests	Administered By:	Scoring	Interpreting Results and Reporting	Consultation Re: Outcome
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Junior Infants	Term 2	BIAP	Class Teacher	Class Teacher	Class Teacher	Principal
	May	LARR Letter Knowledge Listening Comprehension	Learning Support Teacher	Learning Support Teacher	Class Teacher And Learning Support Teacher	Class Teacher Special Education Teacher
Senior Infants	January (four terms In school Completed)	MIST	Class Teacher And Learning Support Teacher	Learning Support Teacher	Class Teacher And Learning Support Teacher	Parents Outside Agencies
	May	Quest Reading	As above	As above	As above.	
1 st -6 th	May	Drumcondra Primary Reading Test	Class Teacher	Class Teacher	Class Teacher SET	
1 st -6 th	May	Sigma-T	Class Teacher	Class Teacher	Class Teacher SET	

Diagnostic Assessment and the Early Identification of Learning Difficulties.

It is important that assessment is used to identify children with learning difficulties at the earliest possible stage so that appropriate support and intervention can be put in place. Our school's assessment policy addresses the role of diagnostic assessment in this process. It is not necessary to administer formal diagnostic tests to all children. A summary of the approaches to the

early identification of learning difficulties recommended in the Learning-Support Guidelines issued by the D.E.S. is provided below.

- The class teacher should understand the nature and function of diagnostic assessment, and be familiar with a range of formal and informal diagnostic tests.
- All class teachers should be familiar with the Learning Support Guidelines issued by the D.E.S.
- The class teacher should routinely monitor children whom he/she perceives as experiencing learning difficulties.
- The class teacher should refer, to the Learning Support Teachers, those children for whom further, more formal, diagnostic assessment is appropriate, on the basis of his or her own assessments and the results of screening tests. Parental consent is required and parents must sign a Diagnostic Assessment Consent Form prior to any assessments.
- The Learning Support Teacher, will perform a formal diagnostic assessment, interpret the results of that assessment, and determine in consultation with the class teacher and Principal the most appropriate form of learning support for each child.
- Diagnostic assessment, where relevant, should lead to the development of an individual Profile and Learning Programme for the child, constructed by those members of staff supporting the child and in consultation with the child's parents and the pupil.
- The learning-support teachers, in conjunction with the class teacher, resource teachers, other relevant members of staff, and parents should conduct a review of each child's progress at the end of an instructional term, comprising
 - an assessment of the child's progress
 - an evaluation of the learning programme that has been implemented
 - a consideration of the level of learning support the child may require in the future
 - a review of learning targets.

- The Principal, in consultation with the Learning Support Teachers, class teacher and parents will determine if a pupil should be referred to the school's N.E.P.S. service or to any other relevant child support services.
- Having discussed assessment results and other relevant pupil profile with the Principal and parents the Principal may authorise the class teacher/Learning Support teachers or Resource Teachers to request and arrange a pupil assessment from relevant specialists (Speech & Language Therapists, Audiologist, Occupational Therapist).
- Pupil's Psychological reports and reports from relevant specialists are stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Principal's office. School personnel access these reports when required. Copies of these reports must not be made without consent.

Recording the Results of Assessment

- Our school has a report card for recording assessment information and reporting such information to parents. This report card will issue to parents not later than 15th June each school year.
- The results of assessment will be recorded in different forms, including marks, grades, checklists, profiles and narrative comment.
- The results of standardised tests will include a **Standard Score** and **STen Score** for each child (additionally, raw scores, reading ages, may also be added)
- The teacher should involve the children in the assessment of portfolios, work samples and projects, in a manner appropriate to the age of the child.
- The central record of each child's progress, attainment, and development will be updated annually, and take account of the child's strengths and needs, the progress he/she has made, and areas of development that need

particular attention. This record will be passed from teacher to teacher as the child progresses through our school.

Reporting Assessment Results

Assessment information is central to a variety of individuals and bodies who will be involved in furthering the child's progress and development both in primary school and later. These include children themselves, parents, other teachers, other schools, and other professionals concerned with the children's education.

Reporting to Parents:

Our school will inform and share meaningful information with parents about their child's education, twice during each school year, in the following ways

- A written School Report (as per NCCA report templates) will issue to parents not later than 15th June each school year. This written report will include the results of the Standardised Tests administered by the School. These results will be recorded on a separate section on the School Report Card and will state the Sten Scores and the Standard Score for English Reading and Mathematics.
- Our school will provide copies of the NCCA explanatory leaflets on Standardised Testing when issuing written reports to parents.
- A formal Parent-Teacher meeting will take place each school year during the November-February period.

Reporting to Board of Management

- The School Principal will report annually aggregated assessment data from Standardised tests to our Board of Management. The report will comprise the aggregated results of Standardised Tests administered in English Reading and Mathematics to pupils in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes. This report

will show the STen range achieved by pupils in the various standards and list the names of the Standardised Tests administered.

Reporting to other Schools

- Our School Principal will send a copy of the end-of-year Report Card, including the information from standardised tests, to the Principal of the Primary or Post-Primary school to which a student transfers. This Report Card will only be transferred to the new school following the pupil's enrolment in that school.
- It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to supply a pupil's new school with any additional reports that may be required to access additional support for their child i.e. Psychological, Speech and Language, O.T. Reports. The parents concerned will be informed by our Class Teacher/ Support Teacher/Principal of this responsibility.
- **Reporting to D.E.S.**

Our School will report annually aggregate Standardised Test results in Mathematics and English Reading for pupils in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes to Department of Education and Science. The template at Appendix A will be used to collect and report this data.

- **National and International Assessment:**

Our school will co-operate with national and international testing if requested to do so by the Minister for Education and Skills.

Managing Assessment Information

Recent legislation has a number of implications for how assessment is planned and managed in schools. Of particular significance are the Education Act, 1998, the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003, the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and D.E.S. Circular 56/2011. The Freedom of Information Act 1997 does not currently apply to schools). The school's assessment policy is informed by the relevant legislation concerning :

- **Nature of assessment records:** Any assessment information or personal data recorded by the school, including both formal school records and less formal records, whether in automated or manual form, comes under the terms of the Data Protection Act 2003. As already noted, ongoing reporting to parents should ensure that school regularly share assessment information with parents.
- **Access to assessment information:** Under the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 parents have a right to all assessment information about their children and they have the right to know the source of the assessment information. The following designated persons are also entitled to direct access to individual, group or class assessment information:
 - the child's class teacher
 - the child's special needs assistant
 - the class teacher, within the same school, to whom the child is transferring
 - the School Principal
 - relevant learning-support and resource teachers, and other relevant professionals including Special Educational Needs Officers (SENO's)
 - the DES inspector
 - the relevant NEPS psychologist
 - the Education Welfare Board and its officers

- **Transfer of assessment information:** The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 places a responsibility on the principal of a school to pass on to the principal of another school to which a child is transferring, details of the child's attendance record and information relating to the child's progress and attainment. The 2000 Act also provides that assessment information for individual children is also available to officers of the Education Welfare Board.
- **Length of time** assessment information should be retained by the school for a period of three years after the child's eighteenth birthday. The Data Protection Acts require personal data to be destroyed when the need for such data ceases, ie., until the possibility of litigation ceases.

- **Security of assessment records:**

The Data Protection Acts are very specific in relation to the security of data.

This is the responsibility of the data controller, who in the case of the school includes the Principal and any other members of staff responsible for compiling and recording data about individual children. A data controller has certain key responsibilities, which are summarized in terms of eight fundamental rules. These are to

1. Obtain and process information fairly
2. Keep it only for one or more specified, explicit and lawful purposes
3. Use and disclose it only in ways compatible with these purposes
4. Keep it safe and secure
5. Keep it accurate, complete and up-to-date
6. Ensure that it is adequate, relevant and not excessive
7. Retain it for no longer than is necessary.
8. If requested to give a copy of the pupil's personal data to the pupils parents/guardians.

Number 4, as listed above, is concerned with ensuring that assessment and personal data on pupils, whether manually or electronically recorded, are retained in a secure environment and are protected from any inappropriate or unlawful access.

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Board of Management:** Has responsibility to oversee the implementation and review of this policy .
- **School Principal :** Has overall responsibility for the co-ordination and implementation of this policy.
- **Teachers:** Have responsibility to ensure assessment procedures as outlined in this policy are administered, recorded and acted upon.
- **S.N.A. Staff :** Have responsibility to give appropriate assistance to those pupils identified as having low incidence disabilities.
- **Parents:** Have a responsibility to support the work of the school, collaborate with school initiatives and outside agencies and be actively involved in their child's learning.

Implementation Date: This is a review of an existing policy.

This policy will be implemented once it has been ratified by our Board of Management.

Review: The Board of Management has responsibility to Review this policy in 2014.

Communication: Copies of this policy will be given to all members of the Teaching Staff, S.N.As, members of B.O.M. and our Parents' Association. It can be accessed by the general body of parents on our school's website

Ratification: This policy was officially ratified by our Board of Management on 09/01/2012.

Assessment Policy

**Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál,
Creagh,
Ballinasloe,
Co. Galway.**



January 2012

