School Policy on Assessment

Introduction/How the policy was developed?

This policy document was originally composed following a whole-school planning day, which took place on October 17th 2006. This was part of the review towards the compilation of a Strategic Three Year Plan under the school's inclusion in the DEIS programme. The document was discussed at the Support Teaching Team's meeting on Friday 27th October. It was discussed on a whole school basis at a staff meeting on Friday 10th November and was then submitted to the Board of Management for discussion before ratification at its meeting in December 2006. It was reviewed and updated in February 2013 and is in line with the NCCA Guidelines and the National Strategy for Literacy and Numeracy.

Policy Rationale/Purpose of Policy

The core of the policy is that all children should experience success at school It is of overriding importance that assessment at Our Lady of Lourdes National School should be of relevance to all pupils, motivating, enabling and encouraging them to achieve to the best of their ability. This policy also 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 these core objectives. It is also important that it is accessible to parents/carers and involves them in the process.

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 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:

1. To facilitate improved teaching and 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.

5. To plan the assessment of learning outcomes that informs future teaching

6. To diagnose difficulties in learning in order to provide intervention strategies

7. To identify gifted and able or talented children who require extension activities

8. To give positive feedback to the learner with clear ways forward

9. To encourage increasing skills of self-assessment

10. To keep records of attainment that will inform the reporting process

11. To use validated assessment data to inform target setting and to raise expectations and standards

12. To ensure consistency and the standardised agreement of levels of work collated by teachers

13. To analyse performance of different genders and ensure appropriate intervention is taken

Policy Content

This policy is geared towards using assessment to inform planning and identify the needs of all pupils from the most able to the least able so that adequate strategies are in place early enough to facilitate meeting their needs. These strategies may include pupil self-assessment, two-way communication between parents and teachers, modification of teacher programmes and Individual Pupil Learning Profile.

<u>The Assessment Process</u>

Standardised Testing

Having examined the available Irish standardised tests, the school has chosen to use the Micra T and Sigma T for formal yearly assessment. Senior Infant Classes do the Drumcondra Tests of Early Literacy & Numeracy
The tests are administered as per the "Screening Timetable" as outlined in this policy. The outcomes of testing in May are used to monitor pupils progress and inform classroom planning. Scores on standardised tests are analysed and discussed on a whole-school basis. As a result of analysing results over a number of years, the school has adopted a grouped ability to numeracy and literacy. Standardised Test results in conjunction with teacher input are used to make an informed decision on the appropriate placement of children in groups suitable to their ability. Within these groupings teachers will use the results to set specific targets to cater for the individual needs of children. These plans will be recorded by the individual teacher in their fortnightly planning schemes. Standard and Percentile Rankings scores are recorded on the class Record template and stored by each individual teacher with a copy held by the Support Teaching Team and principal. The results are also recorded on the school's server by the principal/secretary as appropriate. The Support Teaching Team analyse the results in June for allocation of support to pupils in the following September. Results of standardised tests are sent home as part of the end of year report in mid-June.

Informal Assessment

The most common form of assessment used in our school is teacher observation, teacher designed tests, projects, homework, oral and non-written tasks. 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 & strand units for each curricular area, spelling tests and tables tests. Informal assessment is interpreted in conjunction with other formal testing and used to inform planning.

Screening

The screening methods used to identify learning strengths and weaknesses by class teachers in our school are:

☐ Teacher observation

☐ Use of homework, teacher-designed tests & projects

☐ Evolving Reader Stage of Development Checklist

☐ Belfield Infant Assessment Programme (B.I.A.P)

☐ Drumcondra Test of Early Literacy and Numeracy

☐ Non Reading Intelligence Test

☐ Non Verbal Abilities Test

☐ Behaviour Checklists

☐ Standardised Tests

Screening results are interpreted in conjunction with other formal and informal test results and used for forward planning.

Current practice for reporting of screening results is as follows:

- B.I.A.P: Parents meet class teacher where overall results are under the mean score for their age group, also where any particular area is under the mean or critical score for their age group. Letters sent to other parents detailing results with an option to discuss these results with the class teacher.

- Drumcondra Early Literacy and Maths: Parents meet class teacher where pupil falls below cut off point.
- Behaviour Checklist: Parental contribution invited and outcomes discussed.

Screening Timetable

Class Test Time Administered

(C) = Class Teacher (S) = Support Teacher (P) = Parents

Upon Enrolment	Milestones Checklist (completed by parents) before child starts school
Junior Infants	Early Years Behaviour Checklist (if required) (C) Before Halloween
	Evolving Reader Stage of Development Checklist (C) June
	Checklists for Difficulties in Mathematics (C) June
	Checklist from Jolly Phonics (C)
	Reading Schemes Word Checklists (C)
	Belfield Infants Assessment Pupil's test (C)/(S) March/April
Senior Infants	Checklists for Difficulties in Mathematics (C) June (from 2007/08)
	Early Years Behaviour Checklist (if required) (C)
	Checklist from Jolly Phonics (C) Halloween & June
	Reading Schemes Word Checklists (C)
	Drumcondra Tests of Early Literacy & Numeracy(S)June
	Drumcondra Diagnostic Tests for Literacy & Numeracy(S)June
First Class	Dolch Sight Word Tests before Halloween & Easter
	Teacher Designed Math Test (C) Before Christmas
	Standardised Maths (C) May
	Standardised Reading (C) May
	Non Reading I.Q. Test Level 1(6.4-8.3) (S) Second Term
	Non Verbal Abilities Test 6-10yrs (S) Second Term
	Maths Scheme Assessment Tests termly
Second Class	Teacher Designed Math Test (C) Before Christmas

Standardised Maths (C) May

Standardised Reading Test (C) May

    Maths Scheme Assessment Tests

Ballard/Westwood timed arithmetic test

Third Class   Teacher Designed Math Test (C) Before Christmas

        Standardised Maths (C) May

        Standardised Reading Test (C) May

        Maths Scheme Assessment Tests

Ballard/Westwood timed arithmetic test

Fourth Class   Teacher Designed Math Test (C) Before Christmas

Standardised Maths (C) May

Standardised Reading (C) May

Non Reading I.Q. Test Level 3(8.4-10.11) (C/S) Late First Term

Mathemagic Assessment Tests

Ballard/Westwood timed arithmetic test

Non Verbal Abilities Test 8-13yrs

Fifth Class   Teacher Designed Math Test (C) Before Christmas

Standardised Maths (C) May

Standardised Reading (C) May

Maths Scheme Assessment Tests

Ballard/Westwood timed arithmetic test

Sixth Class   Teacher Designed Math Test (C) Before Christmas

Standardised Maths (C) May

Standardised Reading (C) May

Maths Scheme Assessment Tests

Teacher designed Tables tests

Diagnostic Assessment

Such tests are administered by a member of the school's Support Teaching Team 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 will be provided with test results. For parents whose children are in receipt of support time, have allocated hours and those with psychological assessments in need of support will receive an IPLP in which results are outlined. If a psychological assessment is deemed necessary, parental permission is sought and a consent form is completed.

Psychological Assessment

With regard to psychological assessments, support teachers in consultation with class teachers compile a list on a yearly basis. Pupils who have been through the staged approach without success and those who present with a particular difficulty are considered. The NEPS psychologist associated with the school can offer only a limited number of places. Currently 4 places are available. There is a waiting list in operation. Those parents of pupils who remain on the waiting list are informed of the possibility of a private assessment which can be arranged through the school. Decision regarding those chosen for NEPS assessment rests with the Principal and Support Team. The most urgent are given priority.

Diagnostic Testing

The diagnostic tests used in the school include:

☐ Neale Analysis

☐ Schonell Word Reading Test

☐ Schonell Graded Spelling Test

☐ Jackson Phonic Test

☐ Dolch Sight Vocabulary Lists

☐ Domain Short Vowel & Long Vowel Tests

☐ Dyslexia Checklist

☐ Aston Index

☐ Basic numbers Diagnostic Test

☐ Quest Diagnostic

Recording and Storage of results

Results of screening, diagnostic and standardised tests are stored in each individual child's file in the Pupil Records section on the school's server.

See school's policy on Record Keeping Procedures and Data Protection for further guidance on storage and accessibility.

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

☐ personnel authorized by DES given the responsibility to review the SSP under the DEIS initiative

☐ the HSCL teacher

☐ the school secretary (for recording purposes only)

☐ the relevant NEPS psychologist

☐ 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 guardians(s).

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

Roles and Responsibilities

Class Teacher: Responsible for the administration, correction and recording of standardised tests as outlined for classes. Class teachers are responsible for passing a copy of results to the Support Team. These scores will then be analysed and discussed on a whole school basis.

Ongoing, continuous assessment and observation of individual pupil's work in all subjects.

Class teachers are also responsible for giving Monthly Reports to secretary to scan for future planning.

Administering tests as outlined in screening timetable.

Assistance with compilation of information for Psychological Assessments

Support Teacher:

Responsible for the administration, correction and recording of diagnostic tests and for the dissemination of the test results to class teachers, parents and principal as part of the IPLP process.

Discussing and analysing standardised test results in conjunction with class teachers.

Responsible for diagnostic testing where a concern is expressed about a pupil's performance.

Administering tests as outlined in screening timetable.

Compilation of information for & organization of Psychological Assessments

Post of Responsibility Holder: Responsible for recording rate of progress of individual teachers in the subject area and for reviewing the outcomes of assessment to inform classroom planning

Principal: Overall responsibility

Translating Policy into Action

In translating our policy into effective action we need to be in agreement on how we give feedback to pupils and how we report to parents/carers.

Effective feedback to pupils needs to be managed:

(a) In the context of an on-going 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/carers 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/carers 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 in Individual Pupil Learning Profiles, a diagnosis of pupils strengths and weaknesses and clear strategies for improvement.

(e) Be manageable by teachers.

(f) Inform parents of test results on an on-going basis.

Curricular Areas

Each teacher holding a post of responsibility has, with the cooperation of the school teaching staff, written an assessment policy for the curricular area(s) under their care. These assessment procedures cover the assessment of each of the strands of the individual subject areas. This assessment forms an integral part of the school's policies in each curricular area and are the basis for recording progress in the curricular area in question and in the compilation of the Monthly Reports. These Monthly Reports are stored in the class folder on the server.

Implication for Staff Training and Resources

Whatever training and resources are deemed necessary to effectively implement this policy shall be sought.

Implementation

Many elements of this draft policy are already current procedure in the school. This policy as a whole school policy was implemented when it was ratified by the BOM in December 2006.

Review and Evaluation Procedure

This policy will continue to be reviewed by the Support Teaching Team. Amendments deemed necessary to reflect changing practices and new thinking will be brought before the staff for further discussion. It was reviewed again in December 2012.

Ratification & Communication

This policy was initially ratified by the Board at its meeting on 5th December 2006. This policy can be accessed via the school website.