

Saint Brigid's G.N.S. Policy on Assessment.

Introduction:

This policy was originally drafted during the Croke Park hours in the month of March, 2012. The policy is to replace our Learning Support policy ratified in 2003. Teachers reviewed their assessment practices and gave suggestions on how to improve on current practice. The policy was redrafted in April 2012, and was ratified by the Board of Management in May 2012. It was amended in April/May 2013.

Policy Rationale:

The core of this policy is that all pupils should experience success at school and should be enabled to reach their full potential. The policy endeavours to establish a process to identify at the earliest possible opportunity, pupils who may have learning difficulties and put a school response in place to meet their needs. An effective assessment policy is central to achieving this objective. With changes in Literacy and Numeracy, the school year 2011-2012 was seen as an opportune time to reflect on current practice and review our existing attitudes to assessment.

Relationship to School Ethos:

St. Brigid's GNS is a Catholic school. Its ethos and philosophies are based on a belief in God and in the values of the Gospels. Our fundamental belief is that, just as every child is equal in the eyes of God, every pupil in St. Brigid's is treated equally. The aim of the school is to provide an education which will assist each pupil to reach her full potential in a safe, secure and caring environment.

An effective Assessment policy ensures that with early intervention, every pupil is encouraged to reach her potential. The policy ensures that procedures are put in place to increase confidence, raise self-esteem and that appropriate learning opportunities are suitable for all learners.

Aims and Objectives:

The primary aims and objectives of the policy are:

- To review and revise current practice.
- To facilitate improved pupil learning.
- To create procedures for monitoring learning.
- To generate baseline data that can be used to monitor achievement over time.
- To put a "continuum of support" in place for pupils who need it.
- To track learning processes which assist the long and short term planning of teachers.
- To co-ordinate assessment procedures on a school basis involving parents and pupils in managing strengths and weaknesses.

Policy Content:

(a): Purposes of Assessment:

Assessment provides the teacher with information to identify and celebrate the pupil's learning, and to provide her with appropriate support for future learning at all levels.

Among our reasons for assessing are:

- To inform planning for, and coverage of, all areas of the curriculum.
- To ensure lesson objectives and contents have been met.
- To gather and interpret data at class/ whole school level and in relation to the national norms. Standardised tests used: SIGMA-T, MICRA-T, NNRIT and MIST.
- 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 e.g. whole school policy for learning support including continuum of support approach.
- To facilitate the involvement of pupils in assessing their own work.
- To find out what pupils already know and use this as a baseline for lesson planning.
- To gather information of how a child learns as well as what they learn.
- To monitor pupil progress and attainment so that pupils can reach their full potential.
- To enable teachers to assess their own teaching methods and strategies.
- To enable teachers to modify and differentiate their teaching strategies, methodologies and activities, as appropriate.
- To compile records of individual pupils' progress and attainment over time.
- To gauge and measure the interests, strengths and weaknesses of all pupils.
- To facilitate communication between parents and teachers about pupils' development, progress and learning needs.
- To enrich teachers' understanding of themselves and of their pupils.
- To identify how well the school is providing for the literacy and numeracy needs of individual pupils.
- To help inform national education policy for literacy and numeracy and to identify ways of improving the Irish school system.

(b) Assessment for Learning: Assessment for learning takes place when the teacher shares information about the pupil's learning with the pupil and when the teacher uses this information to plan the next steps in her teaching and in the pupil's learning.

Examples of informal assessment already in use in our school include:

- Teacher observation;
- Teacher designed spelling and table tests, weekly;
- End of year teacher designed curriculum tests;
- Teacher designed tasks;
- RUDE - an approach to problem solving adopted as part of our Numeracy plan,

- weekly.
- Oral questioning/answering;
- Correction of homework and written assignments;
- Work samples: Art portfolio, Scrapbooks, Sketch books,
- Project work. Etc.

Different forms of assessment are used to assess different subjects, (e.g. Checklists for P.E., project work for S.E.S.E. etc.). Teacher observation, oral questioning, checklists are used more often with younger pupils whereas teacher designed tests in every subject are more prevalent at Senior level. As managers of their own classrooms, teachers have discretion in informal testing; however, class groups meet to plan the delivery of the curriculum of which assessment is a vital part. Teachers, therefore, agree in class groups the level of assessment necessary for their groups.

Portfolios are used as an assessment tool in some subjects. Every pupil has an art portfolio in which she keeps her art work for the year. This goes home with her at the end of the school year. In Junior Infants each child starts a scrap book and sketch pad into which samples of handwriting, sketches, and worksheets are kept. This moves with her through her school years so that, by the time she leaves school, she has samples of her work from every year since Infants.

Saint Brigid's School Plan addresses the subject of assessment for each and every individual curriculum subject. Teacher designed tests and tasks are used to assess all curriculum areas.

Pupil self-assessment is now an established routine in our school. Among the strategies used are:

- Proofreading and the use of symbols;
- Looking at and responding to pupil's own work and the work of others.
- Comparing and contrasting samples of work;
- Self-correction – using checklists;
- Homework guideline list;
- Traffic lights;
- WILF and KWL strategies.
- Thumbs up/ thumbs down;
- Two stars and a wish etc.

Every pupil has a designated personalized folder into which evidence of progress is stored. Copies of end of year reports, profiles, continuum of support documents, standardized test results are put into the folder. All teachers have access to same. Individual teachers also keep pupil folders with work samples enclosed, especially at Junior level. Junior and Senior Infant teachers also store language checklists in the pupil folders. Every staff member has her own resource file on "Assessment" with examples of indicators, profiles, checklists enclosed. These form part of the resources used to draw up individual plans for pupils needing classroom support.

(c): Assessment of Learning: Assessment of learning is used to provide a summary of what the pupil has achieved at fixed points in her primary education, particularly at the end of 2nd, 4th and 6th classes. Information from assessment of learning can be used to inform teaching, learning and policy. It can also be used to inform parents, other teachers and other schools. In St. Brigid's assessment of learning is carried out using formal testing methods, e.g. standardized tests.

Procedures for Testing:

The Deputy Principal is responsible for the purchase, distribution and co-ordination of standardised tests in our school.

The class teacher administers the tests, with assistance from Special Education Needs' (SEN) teachers, if required.

Pupils absent on the day of testing are given a second opportunity to take the test at a later date.

Some pupils are re-tested if the scores achieved are deemed to be an inaccurate reflection of their true ability.

Parents are informed in advance of the general time frame for testing to try to ensure optimum attendance.

All new pupils are tested on entry to the school providing their entry is not within three months of the school testing in May.

Raw scores are recorded on the school's student management system, echipmunk. Class based scores are recorded from Micra-T test results.

The STEN score is given to parents in the end of year reports. A letter of explanation on interpreting scores is supplied to new parents.

A reading age is derived from the test results for pupils whose scores show discrepancies. Test booklets for Sigma and Micra-T are stored for one year in pupils' assessment folders; only the front score page is retained for the following years that the pupil is in school. This information is kept in the school until the pupil is 21 years old.

The results of standardised tests inform teaching and learning by:

- Providing a summary of what the pupil has achieved at certain intervals in her primary education;
- Indicating every child's learning style;
- Helping to identify pupils with learning difficulties;
- Helping to identify exceptionally able pupils;
- Identifying pupils who need further diagnostic testing;
- Providing a mechanism to report to parents;
- Ensuring SEN support is given where it is most needed.
- Tracking school trends and group trends.
- Helping to identify resources necessary to improve teaching and learning.

(d) Standardised Tests and Screening:

Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST) This test is used for the early identification of

learning strengths/difficulties. This test is administered in the 5th term of primary school (2nd term of Senior Infants). The test is administered in groups of up to 20 pupils at a time by class teacher and a learning support teacher. The class teacher corrects the tests, completes class record sheet and interprets the results in conjunction with the learning support teacher. A follow-up programme will be carried out by the class teacher/Learning Support teacher with children whose results fall below the cut-off point in each section.

Micra-T/Sigma-T standardised tests: These tests are administered to all pupils in 1st- 6th classes (with the exception of EAL pupils with very poor English and/or particular SEN pupils for whom the test would not be suitable, at the discretion of the Principal). The tests are administered in April/May each year by the class teacher and SEN teachers. The class teacher corrects the tests and the Raw Score is inputted into the school management system. Class record sheets are then generated and distributed to class teachers. The record sheet on each child's booklet will be completed by the class teacher and filed in the child's Report Folder. The class teacher then interprets the results in conjunction with the SEN teacher. Results are also analyzed by the SEN team on a whole school level in order to assess particular areas of need and in order to develop targeted intervention programmes. Test results for 2nd, 4th, and 6th classes are sent to the Department of Education and Skills in accordance with Circular 0018/2012.

New Non-reading Intelligence Test (NNRIT): This test is administered to 1st and 4th classes in April/May each year. Results are analysed in conjunction with Micra-T/Sigma-T tests to identify pupils with a particular reading/Maths difficulty (highlighted by a significant discrepancy between NRIIT scores and the standardized test scores.). This test may also be administered to pupils in other classes if advised by the school psychologist.

Primary Schools' Assessment Kit (PSAK): This is used for pupils with English as an additional language and is administered as appropriate.

Reporting Results to Parents:

- Verbally at a parent-teacher meeting.
- Written on NCCA Report Card posted home in June.
- If diagnostic screening is required a meeting between parents and class teacher/learning support teacher will be arranged.

(e) Diagnostic Assessment: The following Diagnostic tests are used in our school to determine the appropriate learning support for individual pupils who present with learning difficulties:

- Schonell - Spelling;
- Diaphon - Spelling;
- M.I.S.T. - Learning strengths and difficulties;
- Neale Analysis: Comprehension;
- Jackson - Sounds/Phonics.

Classroom teachers consult with SEN teachers to decide what pupils will be selected for

diagnostic testing. Parents are consulted in advance. This will be done in the school year 2013-2014 by letter in early September to relevant parents seeking permission to carry out testing - if necessary - throughout the school year. Parents will be advised individually of the procedures used and the necessity to test if the need arises. Parents of pupils for whom a continuum of support is put in place will assist the class teacher in drawing up a classroom plan for the pupil and sign the standard form.

SEN teachers arrange and administer diagnostic testing and interpret the results. These results are used to help draw up IPLP's, IEP's , to inform teaching and learning and to indicate if further or repeated testing is necessary. Results and information gathered from the tests are given to and discussed with all relevant parties - teachers, parents, Principal. Results are recorded on NEPS application forms if applicable.

Interpretation of testing may indicate the need for supplementary teaching. Criteria used to decide who should receive help include using results from diagnostic and standardised tests. This criteria includes:

- All pupils who score below the 10th to 12th percentile in English and/or Maths after classroom support.
- Pupils who score below the 20th percentile in either subject - if personnel is available. Continuum of support model is used in our school so classroom support must be in place first – see Special Education policy.
- Pupils whose scores show a discrepancy between intellectual ability and standardised test results following a period of classroom support.
- Pupils with diagnosed specific learning disabilities.

This additional support may be given by the pupil's class teacher in the mainstream class, by provision of supplementary teaching in the pupil's own classroom or by the withdrawal of the pupil for extra support in the SEN room. It may be a combination of the above, depending on the needs of the pupil.

Crisis intervention will be given to pupils in emergency situations.

Pupils who move to our school who are in receipt of continuum of support will receive support at the level they obtained it in their previous school, if personnel is available.

(f) Psychological Assessment: Based on the results of formal and informal assessment and following the continuum of support process, it may become necessary from time to time to refer a pupil for psychological assessment. This process is initiated by the Principal in consultation with parents. St. Brigid's has access to a NEPS psychologist - Dorothy Holland at the time of drawing up this policy. The school normally has facility for four assessments per year and more if necessary. Before assessment takes place the Principal:

- Ensures continuum of support has been put in place
- Liaises with parents to get consent and fill out the standard documentation required
- Arranges the date, time and venue for carrying out the assessment, reporting back to parents and teachers etc.

In the event of the need for an assessment from other specialists, e.g. Occupational Therapists, Speech Therapists etc. the Principal requests and arranges for same following the recognized procedures. Recommendations from specialists are used to form IEP's for pupils. Reports from specialists are stored in a secure place in the Principal's office. Access to reports are restricted to personnel involved with the pupil. All data of a sensitive nature is marked "**Private and Confidential**" and there is limited access to it.

(f) Recording the results of Assessment. Both written and electronic formats are used to record the results of assessment tests. The eChipmunk student management system is the electronic system used in St. Brigid's. Before oral reports are given at Parent/Teacher meetings and before end of year reports are written, teachers are advised by the Principal to be fair and objective. There is an agreed template for school reports and agreed terminology.

Information based on assessments is transferred from teacher to teacher at specially designated meetings at the end of the school year and again, if necessary, at the beginning of the new school year. Information is reported to parents as applicable and in the end of year written reports. Information is transferred to secondary schools at informal meetings with 6th class teachers in the second term of the school year and again in June when the secondary schools are given copies of the relevant pupils' reports. Aggregated test results are given to the Department of Education and Skills under the terms of Circular 0018/2012. Aggregated Assessment data from standardized tests is reported to the Board of Management annually in June.

Success Criteria: Some indicators of the success of the policy include:

- Evidence in classrooms that assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning;
- Assessment procedures which run smoothly and efficiently;
- Clarity about what is expected and who has specific roles and responsibilities;
- Efficient transfer of information to relevant parties

Roles and Responsibility: The ultimate responsibility for the implementation of this policy lies with the Principal as the representative of the Board of Management. Mainstream class teachers are responsible for informal and formal assessment and for putting the continuum of support in place initially. SEN teachers are responsible for supporting class teachers, helping with the administration, correction and analysis of standardized tests and liaising with NEPS. As part of her Post of Responsibility, the Deputy Principal undertakes the role of purchasing, distributing and recording standardized tests and co-coordinating the testing.

Implementation Date:

The terms of this policy took effect from 30th August 2012 - the beginning of the School Year 2012-2013.

Timetable for Review:

This policy was reviewed in April 2013. The Principal initiated the review and advised staff members of it in advance of the first staff meeting in April. Teachers were asked to personally review the policy in advance of the meeting. The amended policy was ratified by the Board of Management at the meeting of 23 May 2013.

This policy will be reviewed again in April 2015 or sooner if the need arises.

Ratification & Communication:

The Board of Management officially ratified this policy on 17th May 2012.

The amended policy was ratified on 23rd May 2013.

The policy was circulated to all new parents in the school “Starter Pack” for 2013-2014.

The policy was uploaded on our school website for the convenience of all parents - www.stbrigidspalmerstown.com.

Glossary

SEN: Special Education Needs

S.E.S.E: Social, Environmental and Scientific Education

NEPS: National Educational Psychological Services

NCCA: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

IPLP: Individual Profile and Learning Programme

IEP : Individual Education Profile

NRIT : Non-Reading Intelligence Test

MIST: Middle Infant Screening Test

SIGMA – T: Standardised Irish Grades Mathematics Attainment Test

MICRA-T: Mary Immaculate College Reading Attainment Test

STEN: Standard TEN (ten-point scale) score

RUDE: Read, Underline, Design and Examine

WILF: What I’m Looking For

KWL: what I Know, what I Want to know and what I’ve Learnt

PSAK: Primary Schools’ Assessment Kit