

Scoil Réalt na Mara
Kilmore
Co. Wexford
Y35 YX20



Tel: 053 9135230
Fax: 053 9135811
E-mail: kilmorens@gmail.com
Roll Number: 19352M

Assessment Policy

Introductory Statement:

The initial assessment policy was discussed/drafted by the Staff of at a whole school planning day in March 2012. The policy was reviewed in 2015 during an audit of assessment for learning and the most recent review took place during September/October 2020.

A further review was undertaken by Ms.Moore, Ms. Cosgrave & Ms. Gahan in April 2021 with a focus on class teacher assessment.

Rationale:

In Scoil Réalt na Mara, we endeavour to ensure that all children experience success at school. This policy aims to identify the earliest possible opportunity where support is needed. It provides the teacher with information to make decisions about what and how the child is learning. This information enables the teacher to identify the next steps in progressing the child's learning and adapt his/her teaching strategies and/or learning activities as appropriate.

Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school:

The school motto is "Recognise my worth, realise my potential". Assessment methods will identify where each child is placed in their learning and development, so that appropriate supports can be put in place to maximise learning opportunities and outcomes for him/her.

Aims:

This policy aims to:

- To benefit pupil learning
- To identify the earliest possible opportunity where support for a pupil is required
- 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.

Purposes of Assessment:

- 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 monitor pupil progress and attainment

- To enable teachers to modify their teaching 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 enable teachers to monitor their own approaches and methodologies

ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING (AfL): Informal assessment:

Research shows that effective AfL is a key factor in raising pupils' standards of achievement. Our school participated in an Assessment for Learning Audit in 2015/16 in conjunction with St Patrick's College and Zita Lysaght. (See Appendix 1)

At Scoil Réalt na Mara, we aim to ensure that staff:

- Embed this policy in the teaching and learning process
- Share learning objectives (intentions/goals) with pupils
- Help pupils to know and to recognise the success criteria they are aiming for
- Provide clear and motivating feedback that leads pupils to identify where they have succeeded and what they should do next to improve
- Have a commitment that every pupil can improve
- Involve both staff and pupils in reviewing and reflecting upon pupils' performance and progress
- Involve pupils in being able to assess themselves and their peers
- Adjust planning and teaching to take account of the results of assessment.

This will be done by:

- Observing pupils – this includes listening to how they describe their work and their reasoning
- Questioning – using open questions, phrased to invite pupils to explore their ideas and reasoning
- Setting tasks in a way that requires pupils to use certain skills and apply ideas in relation to their next steps for learning, including being reflective about their learning
- Adapting planning to include challenging tasks matched to pupils' learning needs.

Classroom Practice

AfL takes place using the following strategies:

1. Sharing the learning objectives (intentions/goals)
2. Developing and sharing the success criteria
3. Using a variety of questioning (including the provision on 'wait time')
4. Using self-assessment and peer assessment
5. Providing effective feedback

A. Sharing the learning objective:

The learning objective (sometimes referred to as WALT – We Are Learning To) is what teachers expect most children will know, understand or be able to do by the end of the lesson or group of lessons.

Teaching staff:

- Share the learning objective within the lesson in child-friendly language, and display it on the whiteboard/in the classroom. A dedicated space at the top of the room will be given to display WALT and it will be filled in at the start of each lesson where appropriate. It should be referred back to at the end of the lesson or group of lessons.
- Plan differentiated tasks that will fulfil the learning objective
- Share the learning objective to enable the child to know the purpose of the activity, thus transferring much of the responsibility for the learning from the teacher to the child

B. Developing and sharing the success criteria:

To encourage children to take responsibility for their learning, teaching staff:

- Explain and generate the success criteria (sometimes referred to as ‘Steps to Success’ or WILF – What I’m Looking For) for the planned task. Success criteria can be developed with the children as part of the learning process and then displayed on the whiteboard/in the classroom. WILF will be displayed for the children to refer to during the lesson or unit of work.
- Ensure the children have interpreted the expectations so they can apply them as they are working independently, thus making their own judgements against the criteria before any teacher assessment of the task takes place. Children will be asked to check their work or their peers’ work against the WILF before handing it up to teacher. Younger children could put a red, orange or green circle at the bottom of the page to indicate how they feel they met the learning objectives. Older classes could be given a rating score system where they score themselves out of 5 on how confident they feel about meeting the objectives. They should put their score at the bottom of the page before handing it up.
 1. I am confused.
 2. I’m getting there but need more help.
 3. I understand most of it.
 4. I have no problems.
- Model using the success criteria against an example piece of work to aid the process of self and peer evaluation.

C. Using a variety of questioning:

Questioning enables teaching staff to find out what pupils know, understand and can do while highlighting misconceptions in order to target teaching more effectively. Teaching staff use a variety of questioning skills when working with children by:

- Providing a high proportion of open questions (with reference to Bloom’s taxonomy)
- Providing time for pupils to think about and discuss their responses to questions (pair share ideas/talking partners)
- Providing supplementary questions to extend understanding
- Providing questions that encourage pupils to reflect on their thinking
- Providing pupils opportunities to generate their own questions.
- Questions may include:
 - How can we be sure that...?
 - What is the same and what is different about...?
 - Is it ever/always true/false that...?
 - How do you...?
 - How would you explain...?
 - What does that tell us about...?
 - What is wrong with...?
 - Why is... true?
 - Why do you think...?

[Guides to questioning are available in the AFL folder on the school Google Drive and at <https://www.pdst.ie/pp/literacynumeracy/aflresources>).

D. Using self and peer assessment: (See AfL strategies below)

Self and peer assessment enables pupils to actively participate in their learning and, through their own assessment of strengths and areas to develop, has a positive influence on the learners’ self-esteem, motivation and progress. For pupils to use self and peer assessment successfully they need to:

- Understand the criteria or standards that will be used to assess their work (through teaching staff sharing learning objectives and success criteria)
- Practise self and peer assessment strategies following thorough modelling by the class

Teacher

- Identify and celebrate what they have done well
- Reflect on their own work to identify any gaps between what they did and what they could have done
- Identify the strategies and implications for future learning that they might use to close the gaps
- Be supported to identify where they need to improve
- Be given time to reflect on their learning and make improvements where necessary
- View mistakes as important learning opportunities, as part of a growth mind-set
- Be part of a positive and constructive process in a safe learning environment with clear guidelines for successful assessment.

Self-assessment strategies may include pupils indicating their level of confidence with a particular learning goal or using systems such as traffic lights where appropriate. This could lead to pupils making their own choices about the tasks and resources appropriate to their need. They could also indicate, in their own work, evidence of where they have achieved the learning outcome and/or success criteria.

Peer assessment in particular helps pupils to become clearer about their own expectations through trying to explain strengths and areas for development to others. This may result in the learning of new and more efficient strategies.

E. Effective feedback:

Feedback is any information that is provided to the child, both orally and written, about their learning. Teachers should give pupils regular feedback, both orally and through accurate marking, and encourage pupils to respond to the feedback. It is most effective when:

- It relates specifically to the learning objective and success criteria
- It focuses on the task rather than the pupil
- It is given regularly and while still relevant
- Suggestions for improvement act as ‘scaffolding’ between what the child can currently do and what they could achieve with direction
- It allows for quality communication around learning
- It encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem
- Mistakes are viewed as important learning opportunities
- Evaluative comments/reminders/questions/next steps are given which indicate how to make improvements
- Children are given time to act on the feedback by either improving the work their feedback relates to, or acting on the feedback in subsequent work
- Teaching staff use the information gathered to adjust their planning for the next lesson or series of lessons.

At Scoil Réalt na Mara we place a high importance on ensuring all feedback is effective and has the primary aim of driving pupil progress and outcomes, thereby eliminating unnecessary workload around marking. We achieve this by:

- Recognising that oral feedback given during the lesson is usually more effective than written feedback afterwards;
- Recognising the enhanced value of comment-only feedback;
- Building time into lessons to allow effective feedback to be delivered;
- Ensuring any written feedback is shared with the pupils in the following lesson in order to have the required impact (with regards to Mathematics, pupils are expected to complete some or all corrections, where appropriate, to demonstrate their developed understanding);
- Measuring the effectiveness of the feedback through how a pupil is able to tackle subsequent similar tasks (meaning that it is unnecessary for teachers to provide a written record of oral feedback);
- Recognising that self and peer assessment that meets the requirements of the success criteria is valuable feedback in itself and does not require further written feedback from

teaching staff;

It is important to have a wide range of feedback strategies and not rely heavily on one type.

Feedback strategies could include:

- Learners checking their work against the success criteria
- Learners comparing their own work with good quality exemplars or rubrics
- Teaching staff questioning/probing an individual/small group about on-going work
- Teaching staff raising an observed common problem with the whole class
- Peer and self-assessment

AfL Strategies

Some strategies we use at Scoil Réalt na Mara include, but are not limited to:

- WALT (at the start of each lesson)
- WILF (during the lesson)
- KWL (where appropriate)
- Teacher observation (in each lesson)
- Questioning (throughout the lesson)
- Peer and Self-assessment (where appropriate)
- Comment-only feedback (where appropriate)
- Two stars and a wish (written self-assessment once per week, recorded in copy)
- Traffic lights/rating score out of 5 (end of a lesson or when appropriate)
- Use two stars and a wish to give verbal/written feedback on their peer's work, especially effective for Art or writing genres (twice a week)
- Thumbs up/down (at any time during a lesson to check for understanding)
- Smiley face at the end of a page of writing (e.g. hand writing – begin in J1 & continue each year)
- Best work wall in class – children pick own best work to peg up (weekly or monthly)
- Put a circle with a 'g' or 'c' in it in margin on line or writing (older classes) Peer must find grammar error or capital letter missing for example. Only correct a mistake or an extra few for the older classes.
- Conferencing : One of the most powerful teaching methods for boosting student comprehension is the 1-on-1 conference. Conferencing is not when you circulate throughout the room and check in with students. 1-on-1 conferencing gives each student personal face time with you in a designated space in the classroom. Examples of conference sheets are available on Twinkl.
- Learning logs (every 1-2 months)
- Reflective Journals – my thoughts on school, homework, learning, social interactions, etc. (termly). Perhaps use templates? Samples available on 'Assessment in the Primary Curriculum'.

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

1. Standardised Tests

These tests will be administered once a year and the results will be recorded on Aladdin. Results will be available for parent-teacher meetings and used by teachers (and the school) to inform their teaching and learning. They will be of benefit in planning for the effective use of resources available and will inform individual teacher planning. In addition, it is recognised that summative assessment can be used formatively and teachers will endeavour to use summative assessment in this way. Standardised tests will be administered, corrected, interpreted, recorded and reported by the class teacher. If children are absent, 'catch up' tests will be administered by a support teacher as soon as possible. Reporting results to parents will be in accordance with Circular 0138/2006. Sten scores will be reported and we have agreed standard language descriptors to be utilised throughout the school.

- Drumcondra Reading Test is used annually in May from 1st to 6th class
- Drumcondra Maths Test is used annually in May from 1st to 6th class
- Drumcondra Spelling Test is used annually in May from 1st to 6th clas

2. Teacher-designed tasks and tests: Tasks and tests can take the form of written or oral assessments or practical assignments developed by the teacher to assess children's learning. They can be used

throughout the school year as a basis for continuous assessment (AfL). Tasks and tests can also be used at the end of an academic year or at the end of a period of learning about a certain topic for the purpose of AoL. However, tasks and tests can serve both AoL and AfL at the same time, since teachers may firstly report the results of tasks and tests and then use the results to decide what they should teach and how they should approach each topic.

3. **Teacher observation:** Teacher observation, spontaneous or planned, can happen any time a teacher and child interact. Observations made by the teacher in the classroom provide some of the most immediate and accurate information about a child's learning. When teacher observation is compiled as a written record it allows the teacher to describe a child's learning in context. These records can make the planning of further work for an individual, group or whole class more focused and systematic. By recording details of what a child says, does or makes, and, more importantly, how the child says, does or makes things the teacher can gather important information about a child's learning. He/she can identify the child's learning needs and preferences and can gauge how effectively those needs are being met in class. Teacher observation provides the teacher with information about how the child interacts and works with others. It also helps the teacher to assess not only the child's ability to transfer skills and knowledge across the curriculum but also his/her ability to use learning materials and resources.
4. **Questioning:** Questioning underpins all classroom assessment methods. Teachers regularly ask children oral questions about their work to find out what they have done and why. Teachers use these questions to assess knowledge and understanding and to guide children in their learning. Children also use questions to help them to learn, for example they ask their teacher and their peers questions. Part of the teacher's work in using questioning as an assessment method is to model good questioning. This in turn helps children to become more skilful at asking good questions to aid their own learning.
5. **Portfolio assessment:** From an early age children can develop self-assessment skills, gradually taking more responsibility for the quality of their own work. Creating a portfolio is a useful way to promote these skills. A portfolio is a collection of the child's work, reflecting his/her learning and development over a period of time. It can provide evidence of progress in learning in a curriculum area, a subject, a strand, or across a number of these, using a topic or theme as the focus.
6. **Screening Tests:**
 - Early Screening tests are administered as part of Literacy Lift Off Programme in Senior Infants initially in September and are reviewed twice more over the course of the year. Screening tests are administered by Learning Support teachers and interpreted and analysed by class teachers and learning support teachers. Screening leads to grouping for reading at an appropriate level.
 - Early Years Screening Tests include:
 - Letter identification
 - Sight words
 - Running record of reading
 - Word writing test
 - Following screening tests and taking into account the class teachers' observations some children may be identified as requiring differentiated approaches to teaching and learning. This would be recorded in Cuntas Míósúil. Inclusion in The Reading Recovery intervention will also be considered.
 - Parents may be contacted by phone to discuss their child's progress or invited to meet in school
 - Other Screening Tests:
 - Group Reading Test
 - Dyslexia Early Screening Test
 - Number Sense (Pre Tests)

1. DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT:

Diagnostic tests are used to determine the appropriate learning support for individual pupils who present with learning difficulties. Pupils will be selected for diagnostic assessment by SET teacher and Class teacher. Diagnostic tests will be administered and interpreted by SETs and discussed with Class teachers.

The results of these assessments will inform subsequent learning plans for the child: Classroom support plan and/or individual or group support plans.

Diagnostic tests administered in Scoil Réalt na Mara include:

- YARC
- SWST
- Dyslexia Portfolio
- MALT (Maths Assessment for Learning and Teaching)

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT:

- The Principal liaises with parents if it is felt that a psychological assessment is required. A NEPs referral form is used with input from Class teacher, SET and Parents.
- The Principal in consultation with class teacher, SET and Parents is responsible for referring a child for an assessment from specialist (Speech & Language Therapist, Audiologist, Occupational Therapist, Psychiatrist, etc.)
- The Psychological Assessment report recommendations, from either private psychologist or school-based NEPs psychologist, will inform the plan for a pupil
- Psychological reports are stored in locked filing cabinets in the Principal's office and are not removed from the school. Class teachers and LS/RTs will make themselves familiar with their content and recommendations. Parents will also retain a copy of the Psychologist's Assessment/report.

RECORDING AND STORING THE RESULTS OF ASSESSMENT:

General record keeping should comprise:

1. An Assessment Folder (may include, but not limited to):

- Work samples (all work MUST be dated)
- Checklists
- Rubrics
- Photographs of work or displays
- Teacher comments or observations
- Worksheets
- Test scores (including the tracking of scores)
- Test examples
- Standardised or Diagnostic test scores on Aladdin
- Continuum of Support documents (Student Support Files) on Aladdin
- AFL samples (KWLs, WALTs or WILFs)
- Samples of pupil's self-assessment, where appropriate
- Rating scales
- Records of comment-only feedback

2. A pupil portfolio (for each child):

- May contain the items listed as per Assessment Folder (above)
 - End of year report cards (or information provided at Parent-Teacher meetings, at teacher discretion)
 - Work samples (including copies that demonstrate work done and learning progression)
 - Standardised test scores (should be uploaded to Aladdin)
 - Diagnostic test scores (where appropriate, should be uploaded to Aladdin)
 - Teacher-designed tasks or tests
 - Ready Set Go Maths checklists or checklists from Maths books

- Aistear assessments

Record Keeping in SET team may comprise some of the following:

Pupils with EAL

- Primary School Assessment Kit
- Oral Language teacher-designed assessment checklists
- Checklists at the beginning and end of each theme (where possible)

Pupils with Additional Needs

- Up and Away assessment and checklists
- Letter Knowledge Assessment Records
- Dolch sight words
- PM Sight Words
- Running records of reading and comprehension
- Phonological Assessment Battery – to assess reading
- Belfield Infant Assessment Profile – measures perceptual development; motor development, learning styles, language and communication, social and emotional development.
- Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire – to be completed by parents
- Early Start child profile sheets

- Time to Talk checklists and assessments
- Sounds linkage assessment
- Smart Moves (Movement ability profile)
- My Thoughts about school questionnaires
- First 100 words in writing
- Schonell Reading Test and word spelling test
- Handwriting assessment

Catering for pupils with Exceptional Ability:

Pupils who meet the criteria for exceptionally able will be catered for within the classroom based on a differentiated programme of work or if deemed possible by the Principal/SEN Coordinator. He/she may be offered extension classes on a withdrawal basis, subject to the approval of the pupil and their parents. Any pupil who scores over the 90th percentile in standardised tests is referred to CYTI.

Success Criteria:

Practical indicators of the success of the policy will include:

1. A range of AfL and AoL assessment approaches are used to position assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning;
2. Procedures run smoothly and efficiently because there is clarity about what is expected and who is responsible for different aspects of assessment;
3. Transfer of information from class teacher to class teacher happens efficiently at the beginning and end of the school year;
4. Parent and teacher feedback on the effectiveness of this policy is satisfactory;
5. Efficient and timely reporting of assessment results to parents and to the Department of Education is facilitated and is possible.
6. The pupils teaching and learning is enhanced.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Principal and Coordinator of Special Needs have responsibility for overall implementation of the policy. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to use correct and appropriate assessment practices, as per this policy, and to ensure that a staged intervention, differentiated or learning support approach is provided for in line with NEPS (Continuum of Support) guidelines and the school SEN Policy

All teachers have responsibility for the implementation of informal and formal assessment and recording of their own pupils' data.

Timetable for Review:

- The implementation of the new procedures will be reviewed in June 2022 and, if necessary, amended.
- Principal/ Special Needs Coordinator will initiate and co-ordinate this review

Reference Section

- Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for Schools, NCCA, 2007
- <https://www.pdst.ie/pp/literacynumeracy/aflresources>
- Special Educational Needs – a Continuum of Support, Guidelines for Teachers and Resource Pack for Teachers, NEPS, 2007
- <https://www.into.ie/2019/05/20/dcu-into-study-looks-at-the-use-of-standardised-tests-in-primary-schools/>
- 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
- Common-sense 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
- Draft Report Cards Templates. www.ncca.ie