

Dalystown N.S.

Assessment Policy

This policy was formulated by the teaching staff so as to have a transparent and uniform approach to assessment throughout the school.

In order to ensure that all children in our school achieve to the best of their ability we believe it is imperative that any learning difficulties are identified at the earliest opportunity and that the school must put in place an appropriate response to their needs. An effective assessment policy ensures quality in education is central to this process of teaching and learning. Through assessment the teacher constructs a comprehensive picture of the short term and long term needs of the child and plans accordingly. Assessment assists communication to all parties involved in the child's education i.e. teacher and child, teacher and parent and teacher to teacher. It helps the child become more self-aware as a learner and develops powers of self-assessment. It is integral to all areas of the curriculum and to the child's growth in self-esteem and acquisition of a wide range of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.

Relationship To The Characteristic Spirit of The School

The school adopts a holistic approach to the education and development of each child and to the enhancement of teaching processes. An effective policy of assessment will identify the early interventions required to be put in place to ensure that enhancement, increased confidence and raised self-esteem is achieved.

Aims of the Policy

- To benefit pupil learning
- To monitor learning processes
- To involve parents and pupils in identifying and managing learning strengths or difficulties
- To assist teachers long and short term planning
- To co-ordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis and to establish a firm link between assessment and decision making with regard to future strategies, content and methodologies in the classroom
- To describe strategies for assessment of pupils over as many areas of development as possible
- To emphasise the importance of early identification of pupils with specific numeracy and literacy problems through establishing relevant baseline data which in turn can be used to monitor achievement over time.
- To ensure availability of finance to purchase texts and resources
- To outline specific strategies for monitoring the progress of all pupils with particular learning needs

As a school we are developing good practice in assessing learning. Results are used to select children for

- Selecting necessary interventions if required
- To measure the progress of the children's learning
- To evaluate for planning targets of class teachers and SEN teachers
- As a guide for professional development

- To guide the school to select target areas of various subjects for further school development planning
- To report to parents
- To highlight good practice and school strengths
- To keep a clear focus on good teaching and learning
- To inform the BOM and DES of levels attained in Numeracy & Literacy

SET co-ordinator's role in assessment

The SET of Dalystown National School shall undertake the following responsibilities, related to assessment:

Oversee the implementation of a whole-school assessment and screening programme to identify pupils with very low achievement and learning difficulties so that these pupils can be provided with the support they need. This typically involves several weeks of assessment at the beginning of the school year by the SET teacher in our school.

Co-ordinate the administration by Class Teachers of a whole-school screening programme to identify pupils with very low achievement and / or learning difficulties in English and Mathematics

Consult with Class Teachers on the identification of pupils who may need diagnostic assessment, taking into account:

1. The pupils' scores on an appropriate standardised screening measure;
2. Agreed criteria for identifying pupils;
3. Teachers' own views of the pupils' difficulties and needs;
4. Support Teacher caseload;
5. Co-ordinating comprehensive diagnostic assessment for each pupil who has been identified as experiencing low achievement and / or learning difficulties;
6. Keeping teachers informed about external assessment services that are available and the procedures to be followed for initial referrals, when requested. Researching current assessments for primary schools;
7. Maintaining assessment tests;
8. Ordering standardised assessment scripts each year;
9. Distributing standardised assessment scripts to Class Teachers each year;
10. Maintaining the results of standardised assessment each year and share the results with the Principal Teacher;
11. Advising Class Teachers about baseline and screening assessments in September each year, when requested;

Support with plans and planning:

1. Advising the Principal / Teacher on the construction of Support Plans;
2. Advising the Principal on current individualised planning best practice, when requested;
3. Advising Class teachers and Support Teachers about Support Plans;

Co-ordination Activities:

1. Maintaining a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching at each stage of support - Classroom Support / School Support / School Support Plus;
2. Advising Parents on procedures for availing of special needs services, when requested;

3. Advising Class Teachers on procedures for availing of special needs services, when requested;
4. Liaising with external agencies such as psychological services to arrange assessments and special provision for pupils with special needs;
5. Implementing a tracking system at whole-school level to monitor the progress of children with learning difficulties;
6. Advising the Principal Teacher about pupils who have been allocated SEN provision, when requested;
7. Completing application forms for outside agencies such as NCSE; NEPS; CAMHS etc., in collaboration with Class Teachers and the Principal Teacher, as required;

Standardised Testing:

These tests will be administered once a year and the results will be recorded on Aladdin, 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.

Sten scores will be reported and we have agreed standard language descriptors to be utilised throughout the school (see table below)

Standard score range	Sten score range	Descriptor	Coverage
115 and above	8-10	Well above average	Top one sixth of pupils
108-114	7	High Average	One-sixth of pupils
93-107	5-6	Average	Middle one third of pupils
85-92	4	Low average	One sixth of pupils
84 and below	1-3	Well below average	Bottom one sixth of pupils

Psychological Assessments:

In Dalstown National School, the criteria used in the selection of pupils for learning support is greatest need. The class teacher and relevant support teachers will discuss the results of interventions in place, diagnostic testing, screening and informal testing. The staff members involved will adhere to and follow the guidelines provided in the 'Continuum of Support'. Following discussion, the staff members will decide whether intervention from a psychologist is required. If deemed appropriate, the relevant staff members will discuss the case with the NEPS psychologist assigned to the school.

Class teacher/principal will contact the parents for permission to secure a psychological assessment for their child. Class teacher/principal will arrange consultation with specialised professionals to organise an assessment. The outcomes of the assessment will inform an individual educational plan for the child and this plan will incorporate recommendations made by the psychologist or other specialised professional(s). The reports are stored in the individual pupil's files in a filing cabinet the support teacher's classroom.

Psychological Assessment may be conducted by the following organisations:

- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- Health Service Executive (HSE), Early Intervention Team
- Private psychological assessment e.g. Dyslexia Association of Ireland, private practitioner,

If the class teacher has concerns regarding a child, the class teacher will refer child to support teacher(s) in consultation with parents/guardians for diagnostic testing. Results are communicated at parent-teacher meetings or at specific meeting if required.

Recording Results Of Assessment:

Each pupil has a file in a locked cabinet in classroom. Test booklets, end of year reports, copies of assessments etc. are kept here.

All data is sensitive to each child and therefore the cabinet must be locked at all times.

In line with the National Strategy to improve Literacy & Numeracy and once guidelines are in place standardised test results will be given to the relevant second level school on transfer from Primary to Second Level.

End of year assessment results will determine who will receive LS for the following year.

The standardised test results will be given to the BOM to review overall school standards in Literacy / Numeracy. (No individual results will be identifiable)

Assessment of Learning And Assessment For Learning

Assessment of Learning

The following are among some of the methods of informal assessment that are used in the school

- Teacher observation
- Teacher designed tasks and tests
- Work samples, portfolios & projects
- Checklists

The above assessment methods are used across the whole school, at the discretion of individual teachers, depending on the requirements of individual pupils, class level or subject and parents are given feedback on a regular basis.

Depending on the subject and the class level and the needs of individual pupils, teachers may assemble portfolios of pupil assignments, work samples, projects etc.

The school's plan for each curriculum subject addresses the issue of assessment

Examples of teacher designed tasks / tests

- Weekly spelling test
- Weekly table test
- Weekly SESE review (senior classes)
- Termly assessment in Maths
- Assessments in Irish / English / Maths designed by teachers

Teacher designed tasks and tests will be corrected and sent home for the attention of parents/guardians.

Pupils are encouraged to become involved in the assessment of their own work / progress. Examples include the use of

- Self-editing / drafting / redrafting
- Commenting on their own work
- Self-Assessment
- Self-Evaluation
- Pupils to set and subsequently review their own targets for development

During the Summer the school will purchase an Assessment Folder for each child. All assessment data generated through the above will be stored in the Assessment Folders. The Assessment Folders will be kept by the class teacher and will follow the child as they progress through the school. The Assessment folder will include, but not limited to

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

Assessment For Learning

At Dalystown National School 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.
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Assessment for Learning will be successful when a teacher employs the following strategies:

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
- 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
- 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
- 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
- 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.

D. Using self and peer assessment:

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
- 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.

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 .

Roles and Responsibilities:

Mainstream, Special Education Teachers and the Principal assume shares responsibility. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to introduce 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.

Review

This Policy will be reviewed in 2 years times and amended as necessary.