

Assessment Policy St. Louis Girls' School

Introductory Statement:

This policy was formulated in conjunction with the whole staff on May 30th, 2008. Final decisions were taken at the staff meeting on September 1st, 2008. It was circulated among staff in September 2008. The policy has been reviewed following the issuing of circular 56/11 to provide for the new literacy and numeracy guidelines. The review of the policy was completed in Feb 2012. It was reviewed further, updated and amended in June 2016.

Rationale:

This policy was reviewed to follow the guidelines of Circular 56/11 and the Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum Guidelines published by the NCCA in 2007.

Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school:

According to our school ethos, St. Louis GNS seeks to help the children to grow and develop into healthy, confident, mature adults, capable of realising their full potential as human beings. Assessment activities used in this school will contribute to pupil learning and development and teaching methodology, by understanding better how each child is progressing at the school. The assessment activities ensure better interaction between the class teachers, support teachers and each child which include moment-by-moment conversations, observations, testing, recording, analysing and collaborative action.

Aims:

- To benefit pupil learning
- To monitor the learning process
- To inform teaching methodologies
- To engage in a range of assessment approaches including assessment of learning and assessment for learning
- To generate baseline data that can be used to monitor achievement over time and to compare our results from year to year and with national assessment results
- To use aggregated standardised test results as a tool to improve teaching and learning and to inform the setting of learning targets
- To provide aggregated standardised test results for the BOM and the DES
- To use these results to inform the school's improvement plan and school self evaluation report
- To ensure that pupils' work, including non-written work is monitored and corrected regularly
- To ensure that pupils are provided with constructive oral and written feedback on their learning and guided to amend their learning in the light of this feedback
- To involve parents and pupils in identifying and managing learning strengths or difficulties, and to be regularly and formally informed of test results and progress
- To appropriately involve outside professionals to ensure optimum engagement with assessment and planning
- To assist teachers' long and short term planning.
- To co-ordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis.
- To identify pupils in need of supplementary teaching, to include those children who are challenged by the curriculum and those who are in need of further challenge

Content of Policy:

a) Purposes of assessment

- To inform planning for, and coverage of, all areas of the curriculum.
- To develop learning outcomes for classes, groups and individual children.
- To gather and interpret data at individual/class/whole school level and in relation to national norms.
- To identify the particular learning needs of all pupils/groups including the exceptionally able.
- To contribute to the school's strategy for suitable intervention for learning challenges and talents
- To monitor pupil progress and attainment.
- To enable teachers to modify their programmes in order to ensure that the particular learning needs of the individual pupils/groups are being addressed.
- To compile records of individual pupils' progress and attainment.
- To provide teachers with an overall picture of assessment results for the school, including aggregated assessment results.
- To facilitate communication between parents and teachers about pupils' development, progress and learning needs.
- To facilitate the involvement of pupils in assessment of their own work.
- To enable teachers to monitor their approaches and methodologies.

Assessment for learning

Teacher Observation

- This is ongoing on a daily basis, at every class level and in every curricular area.
- Assessment in certain subjects relies heavily on teacher observation, namely Visual Arts, Drama, Music and P.E.
- Much of what is observed is simply recorded informally by the teacher.
- However, in certain cases the teacher may deem it necessary to note her observation on paper. For example:
 1. Where a child is being referred for an assessment by an educational psychologist and is being closely observed in certain areas such as spelling, reading, written work or maths.
 2. Where a child is being referred to a clinical psychologist and the teacher is recording aspects of a child's behaviour and interaction with others.
 3. Where a teacher may have a concern about a specific aspect of a child's work, e.g. homework, she may wish to note a day-to-day progress in this area.
 4. Where there is concern for the child's social and/or personal development or in the area of Child Protection.

As a rule these observations are at the discretion of the individual teacher, working in consultation with support teachers, the principal and parents.

Teacher-designed tasks and tests and assessment methodologies

- All teachers in all classes use their own designed tests. Teachers may work on these alone or in collaboration with another member of staff who is teaching the same or another class level.
- Teachers take into account the various levels of ability in their classes when designing tests and differentiate accordingly, e.g. different tests may be required for newcomer pupils or pupils with various educational needs.
- Spelling, litriú, tables, Mental Maths and comhrá are tested on a daily/weekly basis in all classes.
- Other areas of the curriculum are tested as the individual teacher sees fit, e.g. weekly, monthly, at the end of a term or when a particular topic/strand unit has been taught.
- These tests may take various forms such as lists, questions, cloze procedures, matching, quizzes, map work etc. and may be oral or written.
- Teachers design tests for:

Maths: tables, other aspects of mental arithmetic, problem-solving and strand units.

“New Wave Mental Maths” is used as a means of testing mental arithmetic in all classes and “Maths Challenge” is also used in 5th and 6th

English: spelling, comprehension, reading (teacher observation is also important here), Running Records are kept as part of the Literacy Lift-Off Programme, grammar and writing.

Gaeilge: cómhrá, litriú, scríobhnóireacht, briathra, gramadach ginearálta agus tuiscint.

Assessment in SESE and SPHE is by teacher -designed tasks and tests and is more project and portfolio-based, with much emphasis being placed on teacher observation.

“My thoughts About School “ checklist is used as an assessment in SPHE and also Behavioural checklists taken from “Behavioural and Emotional Difficulties- A Continuum of Support”

In **PE**, teacher observation is used to assess ability to understand, participate in and complete a task/group activity. Teacher- designed tasks can also be used to assess progress. These tasks will be designed to provide opportunities for practising skills, encouraging creativity, gaining knowledge of activities and promoting questioning and group discussion.

Assessment in **drama** has a reflective focus when discussions and other activities take place after the drama lesson is complete. A child's progress in drama is assessed by their ability to recognise the relationship between story, theme and life experience, the insights they gain from the lesson and the conclusions they reach from it. Assessment tools here also include teacher observation, tasks and tests, work samples, portfolios and projects.

Assessment in **music** is individual to each strand of the music curriculum. In Listening and Responding, teachers can observe the sensitivity and openness of the child to the piece in the way they sing, speak or move as the music is played. In Performing, teachers will observe the emerging understanding of musical notation and how a child performs as part of a group or solo. In Composing, the teacher will observe the child's ability to illustrate new musical ideas.

Assessment in **Visual Arts** is based on a range of visual arts activities that have been carried out over a period of time, including those areas where there is integration with other subject areas. The focus is on the following:

- ❖ The child's experience in making art
- ❖ The child's understanding of and response to art works
- ❖ The quality of the child's engagement with art

The tools and methodologies used to assess in these areas are utilised by the staff and explained in detail on pages 81-83 of the Visual Arts Curriculum handbook.

- ICT resources are also used in all the subject areas to further assess the children's learning

Additional Information about pupil's work samples/portfolios/projects

- All pupil work samples, in all their copybooks/workbooks, serve as a basis of informal assessment. As teachers correct these written assignments, they are continually observing how a pupil is performing; whether they have grasped what has just been taught, whether further work in this area will be required etc.
- All pupils in all classes have a specific "Test Copy" where teacher-designed tests are carried out. This serves as a useful record of a pupils' progression in certain areas over the course of the academic year.
- Folders/portfolios of children's work are compiled as sample, e.g. stories, poetry, research work, mini-books etc. These folders are passed on from class to class and the pupil takes the folder home when leaving from 6th class. They serve to give each new class teacher an overview of the child's standard of work, and their gifts and talents in certain areas
- Learning/Language support teachers also compile samples of children's work.

- Project work is carried out at various times in all classes, particularly in the areas of S.E.S.E. This work can be grouped or individual-base.

Self – Assessment

At the discretion of the class teacher, pupils engage in the assessment of their own work by:

- Helping to edit a draft copy in the creative writing process
- Reading aloud their own written pieces and trying to give an honest critique of them, listening to suggestions from other children.
- Correcting the steps used in a Maths problem, as the teacher models the correct procedure on the blackboard. This enables pupils to identify for themselves where exactly they have gone wrong or to see where there can be more than one solution
- Appreciating their own work in Visual Arts, Drama and Music – saying what they like about it and what they could improve on. Teachers develop vocabulary lists to help the children in these areas
- Using various Self-Assessment Techniques such as:

W.A.L.T. – “WHAT WE ARE LEARNING THIS FORTNIGHT”. Teachers may do this orally at the beginning of each week or fortnight, and occasionally write it and display it

Traffic Lights – This is used by the children as a self-assessment tool at the end of a topic to evaluate what/how much they have learned.

Red means the children feel they have learned very little

Green means they feel they have learned a lot.

Amber means they feel they know more now than they did at the beginning of the topic but are still confused about some aspects of the lesson.

Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down/ Smiley Faces, Sad Faces indicating whether something is understood or not

KWL Charts: Used before and after a topic is taught- What we know, what we want to know and what we’ve learnt

Talk Buddies/Partners: Children confer in pairs to see what they understand about a topic/ what needs to be clarified / what more they need to know etc.

Checklists Children use Teacher-designed checklists to assess their own learning

Annual/ Monthly Review Sheet used to assess children’s attitudes and opinions on what they’ve learned and what they would like to have learned better

Concept Mapping This is used in the Support Teaching rooms to reinforce/ pre-teach topics taught in the classroom e.g. SESE topics

Standardised Tests

- The school uses the following standardised tests
 - Drumcondra Reading
 - Sigma T
 - Drumcondra Spelling
 - Schonell Spelling

- N.R.I.T.
 - Each class 2nd- 6th are tested each year during the last week of May
 - Carmel Gallagher, Support Teacher, is responsible for purchasing, distributing and co-ordinating the tests.
 - Class teachers administer the tests to their own classes and correct them.
 - Children who are not taking the test, due to insufficient language skills, will remain in their classroom while tests are administered. Normally, EAL children who have been in the country for less than one year are excluded from testing. The testing of children with diagnosed syndromes and other physical and/or mental challenges is at the discretion of the class teacher in consultation with the Special Education Team
 - The raw scores are input on Aladdin, the School's Management System, and are automatically converted to standard score, percentile rank and sten.
 - Aladdin then generates graphs and charts which can be used for the purpose of results analysis
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- The results of the 6th classes are sent as part of the Education Passport (See Appendix 1) to the schools in which they have enrolled (as per Circular 27/2015) The passport, which is also sent home to parents, shows the results in STEN format that the child received for 2nd, 4th and 6th class.
 - The results of the standardised tests are provided in writing to all parents as part of the summer report recommended by the NCCA. These results appear in Standard Score format and there is a short descriptor for parents (See Appendix 2)
 - The class teacher and learning support teacher are involved in the analysis of results in consultation with the principal
 - The information gathered from the tests helps inform the class teacher of grouping systems. It also helps the learning support teacher to decide if pupils need further diagnostic testing and informs teachers of those who are achieving very high results.
 - The results further inform the school's Self -Evaluation process and determine which areas of the curriculum are in need of further development. They also provide base-line scores from which % improvements can be targeted.
 - The results when analysed ensure that additional teaching resources are allocated differentially to pupils in accordance with their levels of learning need. Additional teaching support for Literacy and Numeracy can be provided in small group situations within the classroom or by withdrawal to another room. Aggregated results will be examined at a staff meeting to study trends of teaching and learning.
 - Aggregated results will be presented at the June meeting of the BOM and uploaded to the DES via the Esinet Portal before the summer holidays each year.

The Continuum of Support (Staged Approach)

Screening

- 2nd – 6th class use NRIT, Sigma T and Drumcondra Reading and Spelling as screening tests.

Teacher observation and checklists are also used to screen pupils.

Results of Sigma T and Micra T from the Infant School screening are used to identify children in 2nd class.

- Screening for emotional and/or behavioural difficulties (EBD) is carried out through a process of teacher observation and checklists(Normally taken from" BESD- Continuum of Support")

- When are screening tests administered?

NRIT – 2nd class (Term 1)

Non-Verbal Nfer Nelson-2nd class (Term1)

Sigma – T and Drumcondra Tests (May of each year)

Infant School use Quest and Mist in Senior Infants

Sigma and Micra T are used in 1st class

- Children from 2nd and 3rd class are given priority in literacy first and then numeracy when selecting for early intervention programmes.
- Children in 2nd class with reading difficulties are screened for suitability to participate in the reading Recovery Programme.

- **Criteria used to refer pupils for supplementary teaching**

The caseload for learning support is filled in as follows

1. Children in 2nd class scoring at or below the 10th percentile in Literacy
 2. Children in 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th classes at or below the 10th percentile in literacy
 3. Children in 2nd class at or below 10th percentile in numeracy
 4. Children in 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th classes at or below the 10th percentile in numeracy
 - Children presenting with EBD receive support as required.
- Results from standardised tests, if at 10% or below, are used to decide if diagnostic testing is needed. Sometimes pupils up to the 12% are included. (Pupils in 2nd will be considered for diagnostic testing up to the 20th percentile). .

- **Diagnostic Assessment**

- Teachers administer diagnostic tests where results of screening tests/ EBD checklists show that a child has a difficulty.

- **Diagnostic tests used**

Jackson Phonics

R.A.I.N.

Schonell Spelling (class teacher only)

Independent Writing

Sample Comprehension

Sequencing of sentences

Keywords (Easylearn Lists)

Phab test

Neale Analysis

Nfer Nelson Non-verbal Reasoning Test

Running Records for Reading

Social/Emotional Checklists/Questionnaires

Behavioural Checklists/Questionnaires

- If the child has had no previous support teaching, the class teacher administers diagnostic tests and draws up a **Classroom Support Plan**. Parents are made aware of this process. Parental permission to administer diagnostic tests is included on the school's enrolment form.
- If the Classroom Support Plan does not sufficiently address the needs of the child, a follow-up **School Support Plan** is devised. The class teacher and Support Teachers are involved in the drafting of this plan, in consultation with the parents.
- If after receiving Support Teaching, the child is still not making progress or reaching their targets, **Teachers will compare NRIT scores to standard scores from standardised tests to check for significant discrepancies.** At this stage the child may need to be referred to an outside agency for further assessment e.g. NEPS Psychologist, Child Development Team, Primary Care
- **Professional Assessment**
- Who liaises with parents if it is felt that a psychological assessment or other professional assessment is required?
 - Class Teacher
 - Support Teacher
 - Principal
- A consent form is completed by parents in consultation with the professional if an assessment is deemed necessary.
- Who is responsible for requesting and arranging an assessment from specialist(s)?
 - Principal in consultation with class teacher, support teacher, psychologists.
- What part does the assessment play in drafting a School Support Plus Plan for the pupil?
 - Recommendations from the professional's assessment report inform the drafting of the School Support Plus Plan i.e. setting the learning targets for the pupil over the course of the school year.

Where are professional reports stored and who controls access to them?

- **Where:** Stored in a locked filing cabinet in the learning support teacher's room with a copy for the class teacher
- **Who:** Only the principal, anyone who teaches the child, parents and the inspector, NEPS and SENO have access to these files, and only with written permission from parents.

Recording the results of assessment

- What is the school's format for the recording of assessment results?
 - Standardised Test Results: one copy is kept at office level, on the Aladdin Management System, one in the Support Teacher Co-ordinator's room and another copy is kept in a filing cabinet in each class teacher's room.

- Aggregated data is stored in the Support Teaching area and in the principal's office
- Test Booklets/Report Cards: Test booklets are stored in each child's class folder until the child leaves 6th class. Only the recording page of the results is kept. The last page of the test booklets are kept in the pupil's file until their 21st birthday. Report cards are on the School Aladdin System.
- If a School Support Plan is drawn up for a child, the Support Teacher opens a file for the child. All Support Plans and reviews are filed.
- What procedures have the school in place to manage sensitive data?
 - Access to sensitive data is limited to the following personnel: the School Principal, the class teacher, the Learning Support Teacher, Resource Teacher, Language Teacher, parents, NEPS, SENO and the Inspectorate.
- What arrangements are in place for the transfer of appropriate information based on assessments?
 - Teacher to pupil: Results of weekly/termly/topic-based teacher designed tests given to pupils and discussion of same.
 - Teacher to teacher:
 - At the end of each school year, every pupil's file and results are passed on to next teacher
 - At the end of 6th class the standardised test results are passed on to the school via the Education Passport.
 - Class teachers and support teachers review Support Plans together, as needed during the academic year
 - Teacher to parent:
 - Parent/teacher meeting
 - If necessary, parents are consulted on any other relevant assessments.
 - Standardised test results are sent home on school reports annually.
- What are the implications for other policies and procedures the school may have, e.g. special needs, record keeping, data protection, and reports to parents?
 - Our school's policy on assessment is in keeping with legislative requirements of schools in relation to assessment. (NCCA pg 95 Assessment Guidelines).

Assessment of EAL pupils

We use the Nfer Nelson Non-Verbal Reasoning tests with all second class pupils in order to cater for pupils presenting with poor English language. Scores on this test will give an indication of how easily pupils will acquire new concepts and master new materials in a wide range of school subjects, based on their current levels of functioning. Since it involves no reading, it is a valuable means of assessing EAL pupils.

All pupils who may be in need of EAL support are tested using the packs compiled by Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT) to determine their level of need if any. These tests are structured with reference to three proficiency levels (1, 2 and 3). Level 1 pertains to students with very poor comprehension of English and very limited spoken English. Level 2 pertains to students who understand some English and speak the language well enough for basic communication. Level 3 pertains to students who have competent communication skills in English.

Language Support teachers record the results of the tests, maintain samples of the students' work and use the tests to plan programmes of work for the students, in consultation with the class teacher, other support teachers and parents.

Success Criteria

- That a range of informal and formal assessment modes is used to place assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning and that this data informs the teaching and learning of individual children
- That teachers successfully transfer information from class teacher to class teacher and that this happens efficiently at the beginning/end of school year
- That second level schools express satisfaction at the transfer of information
- That parental feed -back is positive in relation to reporting information
- That the assessment data successfully drives the school self-evaluation process

Roles and Responsibility

School Support Teaching Team: Irene Flynn, Carmel Gallagher, Carole Gilliland/ Anne Healy (job-sharing), Margaret Hannon and Tina McKenna.

Bernie Farrell, Acting Principal

- Review of Policy
- Aggregation of results
- Passing of results to the DES and the BOM
- Consultation with teachers, parents and educational professionals
- Secure storage results and associated paperwork.

Implementation Date

September 2016

Timetable for review

To be reviewed at a staff meeting in 2019 .Principal will initiate review and the Support Teachers will co-ordinate review and amendments.

Ratification and Communication

This assessment policy was ratified at the B.O.M. meeting on Wednesday, 22nd June 2016 .

Policy ratified

Mr. Packie Mc Adam

Chairperson B.O.M

