

## **ASSESSMENT**

### **Policy**

The Board of Management (BOM) recognises that appropriate assessment lies at the heart of successful teaching and learning. It understands assessment as the process of gathering, recording, interpreting, using and reporting information about a child's progress and achievement in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes. The BOM supports its staff fully in implementing the school's agreed assessment strategy within a collaborative environment. This enables teachers to extend and enrich children's learning across all curriculum areas, as well as their ongoing personal development. The BOM also recognises the important contribution that parents and guardians can make to the process of school assessment.

### **Procedures**

#### **1 Responsibilities**

##### **1.1 BOM**

The BOM is responsible for ensuring that this policy is in place and up-to-date, and has been formulated with the full input of teachers. It is also responsible for supporting the Principal in the execution of the school's agreed assessment strategy.

##### **1.2 Principal**

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that these procedures are enacted and that an agreed assessment strategy is in place. In doing so, she will be supported by the Deputy Principal.

##### **1.3 Teachers**

Class teachers are best placed to assess their pupils on a day-to-day basis and therefore have primary responsibility for their routine assessment. Other staff will support class teachers as appropriate. The special educational needs (SEN) team has specific responsibility for coordinating standardised screening and diagnostic testing.

#### **1.4 Parents and guardians**

Parents and guardians also have a key role to play in supporting their children's learning by providing the school with relevant information about their children and by cooperating with any individualised strategies put in place to optimise their children's learning and integration in the school community.

## **2 Purpose of assessment**

Assessment aids short-term and long-term planning at individual, class and whole-school level. Some forms of assessment allow comparison with national norms. With good record-keeping, assessment facilitates the monitoring of children's progress over time. It assists in the identification of children who have SEN, as well as the exceptionally able.

Assessment provides teachers with information to make decisions about what and how children are learning. This enables them to identify the next steps in progressing the children's development and to adapt their teaching strategies and/or learning activities as appropriate. In this way, learning can become a more enjoyable and challenging experience for children, in turn leading to a more enriching and rewarding professional experience for teachers. Assessment also allows the involvement of pupils and their parents/guardians in identifying and managing children's strengths and weaknesses.

## **3 Approaches to assessment**

All aspects of the school curriculum are assessed and procedures are in accordance with those outlined for each curricular area in the Primary School Curriculum. Assessment is ongoing and appropriate to children's needs and available resources. The varying learning styles of children are explicitly acknowledged within the school. Particular attention is paid to early intervention. Methods range from the informal (such as teacher observation) to the formal (such as diagnostic screening for learning difficulties). Tests are never interpreted in isolation, and are instead understood in the wider context of the child.

### **3.1 Routine assessment**

The most commonly used and crucial form of assessment is that done on a day-to-day basis by staff. At point of entry to the school, teachers check for children's existing knowledge. They then assess their ongoing progress by observing the children, talking with them and appraising the work they have produced. They devise and use checklists, tasks and simple tests as necessary (for example, blending of letter sounds, dictation and tables) and measure whether the work targets they have set for them have been achieved. Self assessment and peer assessment are encouraged, especially in the classes where children are older. Assessment of project work is an important feature of the assessment process in the senior classes. A system of creating personal portfolios of work throughout a child's time at the school has been initiated, commencing with samples of written work. Children are also afforded opportunities to present work/projects in a variety of different ways (for example, models, PowerPoint presentations, oral presentations, written work). All of the above are used to plan further learning targets.

### **3.2 Standardised assessment tests**

All children are formally screened from senior infants until sixth class. If the school deems that the standard test is not appropriate for an individual child (for example, one for whom English is an additional language), other forms of assessment and screening are used. In such cases, suitable arrangements are put in place for those not taking the test with their classmates.

The Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST) is administered during a child's fifth term of schooling. If early literacy needs are identified, parents and guardians are informed as soon as is practicable. School and home then work as partners through the Forward Together Programme. On completion of the programme, children are re-tested. This identifies those children who are eligible for continued early intervention support.

The Drumcondra primary tests are used for screening children in the areas of maths, reading and spelling. Assessment takes place at the end of each school year for children from first to sixth class. The class teachers administer the tests, with the support of the SEN team where necessary. The tests are then marked and the results collated. These results are used to identify if there are any significant changes in a child's performance and are also a means of identifying children eligible for additional support. In the case of a significant decline in a child's performance, parents/guardians are notified as soon as is practicable to discuss the implications of the results.

Furthermore, the Non-Reading Intelligence Test (NRIT) is administered to pupils during the first term of second class. If specific needs are identified, parents and guardians are informed as soon as is practicable.

### **3.3 Further tests and diagnostic assessment**

Where a child is continuing to cause concern, the school can use a range of further tests to gain a clearer picture of the child (for example, a dyslexia screening test). External tests by professionals such as psychologists or speech and language therapists may also be necessary. A staged process for referral is used, which is detailed in the school's SEN policy and procedures.

## **4 Management of records**

Staff work in partnership at all times to share relevant information about children. The school maintains an individual file for each pupil, including infant records for the child's first two years in school and screening test results for later years. These files are passed to the child's school teacher each subsequent year. SEN teachers keep additional records as necessary on the children with whom they work. Reports from outside agencies are stored centrally by the Principal and Deputy Principal (who heads the SEN team). All children's files are locked in filing cabinets. Teachers are made aware of the need to make and record comments about children in an objective and instructive manner at all times.

## **5 Reporting and using the results of assessments**

### **5.1 Reporting to children**

Teachers give appropriate assessment feedback to pupils on an ongoing and informal basis.

### **5.2 Reporting to parents and guardians**

The school can strengthen the capacity of parents/guardians to support their children's learning by sharing meaningful information about their progress, which draws from the full range of evidence used by teachers. Teachers communicate with parents/guardians on an ongoing basis around assessment issues as the need and opportunity to do so arise. Furthermore, formal progress meetings for parents/guardians of all children are held each November and written report cards are issued for all children each June. The results of standardised tests for reading and maths are given as STen scores and are included with the report card. STen scores are a ten-point scale derived from standard scores, with 1 representing the lowest category and 10 the highest. Report cards are issued to give any parents/guardians who may have concerns sufficient time to seek meetings with teachers before the summer vacation if necessary.

### **5.3 Reporting at school level**

The Principal maintains a whole school assessment profile, which aggregates assessment information for all classes. This is used to track the general achievement of all students, but also the achievement of particular groups and to identify trends over time. In this way, assessment data can be used to highlight priorities for development; for example, changes to teaching approaches, needs for staff training, or acquisition of resources. These are then incorporated into the school development plan as areas for improvement.

### **5.4 Reporting to the BOM**

At the beginning of the new school year, the Principal reports to the BOM the aggregated assessment data from standardised tests. The BOM will allow sufficient time to reflect on any issues arising out of this, with a view to supporting the staff to maximise positive learning outcomes for all children.

### **5.5 Reporting to the Department of Education and Skills**

The school will report aggregated standardised test results to the Department of Education and Skills in line with guidelines issued by the Department.

### **5.6 Reporting to other schools**

Parents/guardians of children due to leave the school are asked in writing if the school may pass on information about their children to the new schools at which they will be enrolling. From 1 June 2012, Principals are legally required to send a copy of the most recent report card, including information from standardised tests, to the primary or secondary school to which the child transfers. This information will be transferred to the new school only following the pupil's enrolment in that school.

## **5 Review**

This policy and these procedures will be amended as a result of changed circumstances, and shall in any case undergo full review in 2015.

Approved by the BOM on 28 May 2013