**Sacred Heart BNS**

**Policy on Assessment**

**2024-2027**

# **Overview**

While it is generally accepted that assessment has always been an integral part of primary school life in Ireland, it has been given statutory obligation in Section 22 (2) (b) of the Education Act 1998 which requires schools to “regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to the students and their parents.” Thus, in formulating this policy, Sacred Heart B.N.S. understands assessment to be “…the process of gathering, recording, interpreting, using and reporting information about a child’s progress and achievement in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes”. (Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for Schools NCCA).

# **Development**

This policy was developed by the teaching staff during the 2019 – 2020 school year. A subcommittee of postholders collaborated to draft the policy, while further input was sought from school staff and leadership.

# **Policy Rationale**

The core of the policy is that all children should experience success at school. The policy endeavors to identify, at the earliest possible opportunity, children who may have learning difficulties or significant potential and put in place a whole-school response to their needs. An effective assessment policy is central to this core objective.

# **Relationship to School Ethos**

The school adopts a holistic approach to the education and development of each child and the enhancement of teaching processes. We believe that an effective Assessment policy identifies early interventions that need to be put in place to ensure that relative success, increased confidence and raised self-esteem is achieved for all pupils.

# **Aims and Objectives**

The primary aims/objectives of the policy are to:

* facilitate improved pupil learning
* create a procedure for monitoring achievement
* Identify areas of concern
* track learning processes which assist the long- and short-term planning of teachers
* co-ordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis involving parents and pupils in managing strengths and weaknesses.

# **Principles**

1. Careful thought is given to the purpose of assessment, adopting a wide range of methods to reflect the whole Curriculum and learning opportunities. The main purpose of assessment is to facilitate progress in a pupil’s learning.
2. Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process, a valuable formative tool.
3. The range of opportunities for carrying out continuous assessment is increased by good classroom organisation, which encourages children to work independently while the teacher is concentrating on a small group.
4. The outcomes of assessment modify our teaching methods, provide feedback on the Curriculum as well as indicate pupil progress.
5. We recognise the potential assessment has in helping to develop a positive self-image in the pupil through positive and constructive feedback and the feeling of success, which encourages further study.
6. Results of assessment are reported in a way useful for pupils, teachers, parents and other interested parties.
7. Assessment records must be easy to interpret, useful, manageable and should not be administratively burdensome.

# **Policy Content**

This policy is aimed towards using assessment to inform planning and identify the needs of all pupils so that adequate strategies are in place early enough to facilitate remediation. These strategies may include pupil self-assessment, pupil profiling, two-way communication between parents and teachers, modification of teacher programmes, and Individual Education Plans via. the *Continuum of Support Framework*

# **Assessment Methods**

**How is learning assessed?**

As part of the assessment process, a selection of assessment tools, **chosen at the discretion of the teacher,** will be used to help gain a clearer picture of the success of the teaching and learning in our school. Apart from the specific tests named below, a variety of assessment methods are used throughout the school, depending on the age of the pupils and the specific curricular area. In general, the assessment methods used in this school are:

* Teacher observation
* Teacher-designed tasks and tests
* Pupil projects and portfolios
* Pupil profiles
* Samples of pupils’ work
* Record keeping
* Annual reports
* Checklists
* Conferencing

# **Assessment for Learning (AFL)**

Assessment for Learning emphasises the child’s active role in his/her own learning. This level of involvement, in shaping their own learning, can heighten children’s awareness of themselves as learners and encourage them to take more personal responsibility for, and pride in, their learning. By interacting with the children in such a way, the teacher can gain invaluable information as to how best to deliver the curriculum in their classroom. Every interaction has the potential to provide the teacher and children with a better idea of what they do or don’t understand or can and can’t do. Many of these interactions are informal and are a continuous part of everyday classroom activities, in all classes, across the full curriculum. They are used to identify what pupils have achieved, what might be affecting their progress and what strategies will best support their future learning. The information that such assessment provides will also enable teachers to evaluate their own practice, make changes and inform future planning.

Assessment for Learning may consist of, among others, the following:

1. Teachers observing the child in the classroom and whole school environment, through listening, observations, reflections, and reactions to classroom problems, so that a picture of the child can be built up. Various checklists can be compiled e.g. vocabulary, behaviour, skills, samples of pupils’ work (e.g. writing, art) etc. An important part of recording the progress of the child is the periodic recording of strengths and weaknesses of the child.
2. Class work
3. Homework
4. Pupil – teacher discussion
5. Projects in the Senior classes
6. Teacher designed assessments
7. The use of digital platforms

# **Assessment of Learning (AOL)**

Assessment of Learning generally involves assessing a child’s learning at the end of a given period, such as the end of a unit of work, a week, a term, or a year. Assessment of Learning is more about measuring a child’s cumulative progress towards objectives, often in the form of a grade or score. Assessment of Learning also helps the teacher to plan future work, to set new targets, and to provide feedback and information for end-of-year assessment.

# **Self-Assessment by Students and Teachers**

Children are involved in self-assessment when they look at their own work in a reflective way, identify aspects of it that are good and that could be improved, and then set personal learning targets for themselves. Self-assessment skills include effective questioning, reflection, problem solving, comparative analysis, and the ability to share thoughts in a variety of ways. Self- assessment can be used by children of all ability levels and in all areas of learning. In age-appropriate ways, it can be used throughout the primary school and across all subjects. Whole class discussions, group situations or one-to-one conferencing are all platforms for self-assessment. These everyday activities place assessments at the very heart of teaching and learning. It enables the child to take greater responsibility for his/her own learning. A learning log and/or reflective report cards can be used to document the child’s self-assessment and reflection on his/her work samples or collections.

Teachers in turn can also use self-assessment to evaluate how they deliver the curriculum content to the children and by reflecting on how a unit of work was delivered. This reflective practice, coupled with the AfL and AOL mentioned earlier, will help to inform them as to what was successful and if any adjustments may improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom.

We will use a variety of ways of involving pupils in assessing their own learning, these may include:

1. Self-Assessment for Learning– Each child in the school engages with the process of SALF. This process involves the child contributing to his own *Seesaw Profile,* or similar resource, each year by selecting pieces of work *he* has chosen for inclusion. The child will select work samples for various curricular areas studied that he feels merits inclusion based on criteria already discussed at whole class level. The process of SALF involves the process of self-reflection at every stage of the learning process.
2. Questioning
3. WALT (We are learning to) WILF (What I’m looking for)
4. Feedback-individual and/or group feedback
5. Dialogue and Discussion
6. Focused Correction of Work
7. Visual Aids in Juniors, Seniors and First Classes
8. Traffic Light System
9. KWL grid – This can be used orally and/or written, by group and/or class and/or individual
10. Reflective report cards
11. Scaling

# **Early Intervention and Supplementary Teaching**

There is an emphasis in our school on early intervention in Literacy and Numeracy from the Infant classes upwards. If a child begins to show signs of difficulty or a discrepancy becomes apparent between the chronological age of the child and their level of attainment, the SEN teacher and the Class Teacher will communicate this to the parents/guardians. At this point the parents/guardians will be asked to sign a consent form allowing their child to receive additional support. Programmes can then be devised, based on the needs of the child, in order to give him/her specific help. If there is still cause for concern, after Learning Support intervention, the child may receive more specific, individualised supports or subsequently may be placed on a priority list for referral to the school NEPS psychologist. Children will only be put forward for an educational psychological assessment on receipt of written consent from the child’s parents/guardians.

In the case where a child is selected for supplementary teaching, but the parents do not wish for the child to receive such support, they will indicate on their learning support permission slip that they do not wish the child to avail of this support.

# **Screening/Diagnostic Assessment**

**Junior Infants**

All children in Junior Infants are screened in order to identify children experiencing difficulties in learning. Some or all of the following screening measures may be used

* Input from parents
* Input from preschool setting
* Teacher observation
* Teacher designed tasks and tests
* Checklists
* BIAP (Belfield Infant Assessment Profile) for specific pupils (third term)
* Resource Teaching

**Senior Infants**

The same assessment methods are used as in Junior Infants, excluding the BIAP test, which will be replaced by the MIST (Middle Infant Screening Test) or Drumcondra Early Reading Test. Such tests are administered during the third term of Senior Infants to screen for literacy difficulties. The Drumcondra Early Numeracy Test is also administered in the final term of the school year. The aim is to identify pupils displaying difficulties with literacy and numeracy, who may benefit from additional support with the learning support teacher.

**First and Second Class**

Assessment will continue as in the Infant classes, except that Standardised Testing begins in First Class in both English and Maths. Teacher testing, in areas such as Spelling, and Maths Tables, will also commence. Standardised testing using the New Drumcondra Primary Reading Test (DPRT) for literacy and the Sigma T for numeracy will be administered during the final term, usually in the month of May. The Non-Verbal Reasoning Test (NVRT) will be administered to all pupils during the first term of Second Class to aid in the detection of general language and learning difficulties.

**Third and Fourth Class**

Assessment will continue as per previous classes. Results will be analysed in relation to Standardised Test results.

**Fifth and Sixth Class**

Assessment will continue as per previous classes. The NVRT will be administered again in Fifth Class and results will be analysed in relation to Standardised Test results.

**List of Screening/Diagnostic methods which may be used by our school**

* MIST
* Dolch Lists
* Frys Phrases Lists
* NNRIT
* NVRT
* MICRA T
* WIIAT screening programme for literacy difficulties
* BIAP
* New Drumcondra English Reading Test (DPRT)
* Drumcondra Early Reading Test
* SIGMA T
* SPAR
* Drumcondra Early Numeracy Test
* Drumcondra Maths Test
* Teacher Designed Tests
* Teacher Observation
* Neale Analysis

# **Standardised Assessment**

Standardised Assessments are conducted by SETs during the months of May/June in accordance with circular 0056/2011. It may, on occasion, be deemed appropriate by the school to administer alternative standardised tests at the beginning of the school year, to help gain a clearer picture as to any learning needs of a particular child/class. However, it should be noted that this is not required and if carried out will be in addition to the May/June testing.

The results of tests are scrutinised by the Class Teacher, the SET and Deputy Principal. Where results indicate a learning difficulty i.e. where there is a marked difference between the child’s chronological and reading/mathematical age and/or whose classroom performance signify some level of difficulty, the pupil is, with written parental approval, a candidate for learning support intervention. Generally, children who score under the 12th percentile in either literacy or numeracy will qualify as candidates for learning support. Maths results are collated under the various strands which enables teachers to interpret class performance trends across the strands of the maths curriculum.

In line with Circular 0056/2011 results are communicated to parents. These results are accompanied by a standard school report from school. Under the circular, these results are also reported to the BOM. Results for Second, Fourth and Sixth Class are reported to the Department of Education and Skills in aggregated form. The STEN and/or Standard Score is communicated to parents. The parents of all children in the school, whose results give cause for concern, will be given ample time to come into school and discuss their child’s progress and attainment with the class teacher.

The standardised test booklets are kept until the following year when the new test results are collated. Thereafter, only the results section will be stored. The records are stored in a secure filling cabinet. The results are also stored in electronic copy form on the Aladdin Student Management System. These records are kept until the child has reached twenty-five years of age.

# **Assessment for pupils attending Learning Support/Resource**

Student Support files

All pupils who attend learning support/resource will have a student support file documenting their time receiving additional learning support or resource intervention. The Student Support File allows teachers to track the student’s pathway through the Continuum of Support – right from the start of the support process, and onwards, if necessary, through to the School Support (for Some) and School Support Plus (for a Few) levels. The Student Support File allows teachers to document progress and needs over time and keeps together all the information about the support of the student: information gathered, plans and interventions, consultations and reviews. It will also encourage parental collaboration and parental engagement in the student’s learning.

Learning Support Assessment Folders

Assessment Folders for learning support will follow each class as they progress through the school. Work samples and assessment information will be included each year and passed on to the next SET who will be co-coordinating learning support for the class the following year. Work samples for resource pupils will be retained in their Student Support Files.

Essential documents uploaded to Aladdin profiles

PPPs, IEPs and Learning support/ Resource end of year reports will be uploaded to each child’s Aladdin profile.

# **Assessment Procedure for granting Exemptions from the study of Irish**

An exemption should be granted only in exceptional circumstances. The decision to exempt a pupil from the study of Irish is an important decision that has implications for his access to the curriculum and his future learning.

The decision to grant an exemption from the study of Irish is made by the principal teacher, but it must be made following detailed discussion with the pupil’s parent(s)/guardian(s), the class teacher, special education teachers, and the pupil.

The school has a full policy on the exemption from the study of Irish, which should be read in conjunction with this policy.

# **School Self Evaluation**

Through engaging with the process of SSE, the school will retain documentary evidence of engaging with the School Improvement Plan over a three-year cycle. Examples of this include:

* Samples of teacher/pupil and parent questionnaires
* Pre and post assessment information in class assessment folders to demonstrate effectiveness of new interventions in subject areas, based on the school improvement plan
* Copies of school Improvement Plan
* Copies of end of year SSE report from co-ordinators

# **Educational Psychological Assessment**

When a child is prioritised for an educational psychologist assessment, with NEPS or external educational psychologist, a meeting will be held with the parents to discuss this procedure. The SEN team in conjunction with the Deputy Principal will organise the assessment. The assessment will inform the drafting of an IEP (Individual Educational Plan) for the child. The psychological reports can only be accessed by personnel as outlined on page 95 of the NCCA Guidelines. These reports are stored securely in locked filing cabinets.

# **Recording and Storage of Assessment Information**

* **How is assessment information recorded?**

Assessment information in this school is recorded through marks, grades, checklists and narrative comment, both oral and written. Comments are phrased in a positive manner and, if appropriate, with recommendations for improvement in specific areas of learning.

* **Where is assessment information stored?**

The records of report cards and standardised assessments are stored in a secure filing cabinet. The results are also stored in electronic copy form on the pupils restricted access Aladdin profiles.

**Assessment Folders**

Class teachers and SETS will retain work samples and checklists in assessment folders. These folders will follow the class as they progress through the school. There will be an assessment folder for each two-year school cycle.

**Writing Sample Folders**

Class teachers will retain two writing samples for each pupil at every class level. These folders will follow the class as they progress through the school.

* **With whom is information shared?**

The Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003 entitles the parents/guardians of all primary school children to have access to all personal data relating to their children, whether stored in electronic form or hard copy. This school complies with this legislation.

Where appropriate, the school also shares information with other teachers, other primary schools and secondary schools when children transfer, and the children themselves. Assessment information on an individual child will be provided to another school, primary or post-primary, to which the child is transferring. This will only be done upon receipt of written enrolment confirmation. If a school requests our school to forward the educational psychological assessment, this request will be conveyed to the parent.

The school also shares information with other relevant individuals and agencies such as the Inspectorate of the Dept. of Education and Skills, Special Education Needs Organisers (SENOs), Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs) of Tusla and other professionals such as speech and language and occupational therapists. Where assessment information is shared, confidentiality is maintained between the school and the receiver of the information. All requests from outside agencies for assessment information on individual pupils must be made through the Principal.

* **How is assessment information shared with parents/guardians?**

Assessment information is formally shared with parents twice a year.

Parent/teacher meetings take place once a year, usually in the month of February. Each child’s parents are invited to attend a ten-minute meeting. If either the teacher or the parents believe that a follow-up meeting should take place, it will be arranged for a mutually convenient time.

A comprehensive written report is given to parents at the end of the school year. This report covers both academic and social progress. This report includes the results of the Drumcondra and Sigma- T tests and a short explanation of the results.

Results of diagnostic tests are shared with the parents and teacher of the child concerned.

Copies of the end of year reports are passed on to the child’s new teacher at the beginning of the following school year via the Aladdin Student Management System.

* **How are assessment results used?**

Assessment results are used to communicate a child’s progress to his/her parents (Assessment of Learning).

Results are also used to enable teachers to plan lessons in a specific way, both for the class in general and to differentiate the learning experience for particular pupils (Assessment for Learning).

# **Success Criteria**

We will know this policy has succeeded when:

1. A range of informal and formal assessment modes are used to place 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 the different aspects.
3. Transfer of information from teacher to teacher happens efficiently at the beginning and end of the school year.

# **Implementation Date**

While most of the elements of this policy have been in operation within the school for many years, this amended Assessment Policy will formally apply from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

# **Ratification**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signed by Chairperson \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signed by Principal \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

To be reviewed in September 2027 or it will be reviewed and amended as required within this timeframe.

**Bibliography**

Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for School NCCA 2007

Special educational Needs – a Continuum of Support, Guidelines for Teachers and Learning Support Guidelines (DES 2007)

DES Circular 0056/2011 Numeracy and Literacy Strategy

DES Circular 0138/2006 Supporting Assessment in Primary Schools

DES 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

Drumcondra English Profiles, G Shiel & R.Murphy ERC 2000

Commonsense Methods for Children with Special Needs, Peter Westwood, Routledge