

### **Introduction/How the policy was developed?**

This policy document was originally composed following a whole-school planning day, which took place on October 17<sup>th</sup> 2006. This was part of the review towards the compilation of a Strategic Three Year Plan under the school's inclusion in the DEIS programme. It was then submitted to the Board of Management for discussion before ratification at its meeting in December 2006. It was reviewed and updated in December 2012 *and is in line with the NCCA Guidelines and the National Strategy for Literacy and Numeracy*. The policy was further reviewed in January 2017.

### **Policy Rationale/Purpose of Policy**

The core of the policy is that all children should experience success at school. It is of overriding importance that assessment at Our Lady of Lourdes National School should *be of relevance to all pupils, motivating, enabling and encouraging* them to achieve to the best of their ability. This policy also endeavours to identify at the earliest possible opportunity, children who may have learning difficulties and put in place a whole school response to their needs. Our school believes that an effective assessment policy is central to these core objectives. It is also important that it is accessible to parents/guardians and involves them in the process.

Our policy covers both **assessment of learning** and **assessment for learning**. What we understand this to mean is that assessment **of** learning is assessment for accountability purposes, to determine a student's level of performance on a specific task or at the conclusion of a unit of teaching and learning, and assessment to enable teachers to compare the reading and Maths performances of their pupils with reading and Maths standards nationally. The information gained from this kind of assessment will be used in reporting. Assessment **for** learning, on the other hand, acknowledges that assessment will occur as a regular part of teaching and learning and that the information gained from assessment activities will be used to shape the teaching and learning process in our school.

### **Relationship to School Ethos**

We aim to provide a well-ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of the pupils are identified and addressed. The school adopts a holistic approach to the education and development of each child and to the enhancement of teaching and learning processes. We believe that an effective Assessment Policy will help teachers to identify interventions that need to be put in place to ensure that enhancement, increased confidence and raised self-esteem is achieved.

### **Aims and Objectives**

The primary aims and objectives of the policy are:

1. To facilitate improved teaching and pupil learning.
2. To create a procedure for monitoring achievement.
3. To plan the assessment of learning outcomes that informs future teaching.
4. To co-ordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis involving parents/guardians and pupils in managing strengths and weaknesses.
5. To diagnose difficulties in learning in order to provide intervention strategies
6. To identify gifted and talented children who require extension activities
7. To give positive feedback to the learner with clear ways forward
8. To encourage increasing skills of self-assessment
9. To keep records of attainment that will inform the reporting process
10. To use assessment data to inform target setting and to raise expectations and standards
11. To analyse performance of different genders/population groups and ensure appropriate intervention is taken

### **Policy Content**

This policy is geared towards using assessment to inform planning and identify the needs of all pupils *from the most able to the least able* so that adequate strategies are in place early enough to facilitate meeting their needs. These strategies may include pupil self-assessment, two-way communication between parents/guardians and teachers, modification of teacher programmes, In-Class Learning Programmes and Individual Pupil Learning Profile.

### **The Assessment Process**

#### **Standardised Testing**

Having examined the available Irish standardised tests, the school has chosen to use the Micra T, Sigma T and Drumcondra Spelling for formal yearly assessment. Senior Infants do Term Tests in Maths, Vocabulary list Tests on completion of each reader and an end of year Reading Age & Phonics Test. Junior Infants do end of year tests in Maths & phonics and also vocabulary list tests on completion of each reader.

The tests are administered as per the "Screening Timetable" outlined in this policy.

The outcomes of testing in May are used to monitor pupils progress and inform classroom planning. Scores on standardised tests are analysed and discussed on a whole-school basis.

Standard and Percentile Rankings scores are recorded on the class Record template and stored by each individual teacher with a copy held by the Support Teaching Team and principal. The results are also recorded on the school's server and uploaded to Aladdin.com by the principal/secretary. The Support Teaching Team analyse the results in June for allocation of support to pupils the following September.

#### **Informal Assessment**

The most common form of assessment used in our school is teacher observation, teacher designed tests, projects, homework, *oral and non-written tasks*. These informal assessments are at the discretion of individual teachers. Records of teacher-designed tests are kept by the individual teachers and communicated to parents/guardians at the Parent-Teacher meeting each November and end of year report. Each teacher has discretion as to the format, administration and frequency of in-class testing. The most common types of informal teacher designed testing in our school are tests on the strands & strand units for each curricular area, spelling tests and tables tests. Informal assessment is interpreted in conjunction with other formal testing and used to inform planning.

## **Screening**

The screening methods used to identify learning strengths and weaknesses by class/support teachers in our school are:

- Teacher observation
- Use of homework, teacher-designed tests & projects
- Evolving Reader Stage of Development Check
- Vocabulary Checklists (Dolch)
- Term Maths Tests
- Reading Age at end of S.Infs
- Non Reading Intelligence Test
- CAT 4 Abilities Test
- Non Verbal Abilities Test
- Behaviour Checklists
- Standardised Tests

Screening results are interpreted in conjunction with other formal and informal test results and used for forward planning.

### ***Current practice for reporting of screening results is as follows:***

- Behaviour Checklist: Parental contribution invited and outcomes discussed.
- Results of standardised tests are sent home as part of the end of year report in mid-June & may be discussed with parents/guardians at yearly P.T. meeting or other meetings with parents/guardians as they occur.
- Results of non-standardised may also be discussed with parents /guardians at yearly P.T. meeting or other meetings with parents/guardians as they occur.
- Standardised test results are available for parents to view on Aladdin.com.

## **Screening Timetable**

### **Class Test Time Administered**

(C) = Class Teacher (S) = Support Teacher (P) = Parents

Upon Enrolment      Milestones Checklist (completed by parents) before child starts school

Junior Infants	<p>Early Years Behaviour Checklist (if required) (C)/(S) As needed</p> <p>Evolving Reader Stage of Development Checklist (C)/(S) June</p> <p>Checklist from Jolly Phonics (C) /(S) June</p> <p><i>Reading Schemes Word Checklists (C)/(S) As needed</i></p> <p><i>Maths Scheme Assessment Tests (C)/(S) Termly</i></p>
Senior Infants	<p>Early Years Behaviour Checklist (C)/(S) As needed</p> <p>Checklist from Jolly Phonics (C)/(S) Halloween &amp; June</p> <p>Reading Schemes Word Checklists (C)/(S) As needed</p> <p><i>Maths Scheme Assessment Tests (C)/(S) Termly</i></p> <p><i>Reading Age (S) June</i></p>
First Class	<p>Dolch Sight Word Tests (C)/(S) Before Halloween &amp; Easter</p> <p>Standardised Maths (C) <i>May</i></p> <p>Standardised Reading (C) <i>May</i></p> <p>Non Reading I.Q. Test Level 1(6.4-8.3) (S) Second Term</p> <p><i>Non Verbal Abilities Test 6-10yrs (S) Second Term</i></p> <p><i>CAT Young Learners(as alternative to *2 above)</i></p> <p><i>Maths Scheme Assessment Tests (C) Termly</i></p>
Second Class	<p>Standardised Maths (C) <i>May</i></p> <p>Standardised Reading Test (C) <i>May</i></p> <p><i>Maths Scheme Assessment Tests (C)/(S) Termly</i></p> <p><i>Ballard/Westwood timed arithmetic test (C) As needed</i></p>
Third Class	<p>Standardised Maths (C) <i>May</i></p> <p>Standardised Reading Test (C) <i>May</i></p> <p><i>Maths Scheme Assessment Tests (C)/(S) Termly</i></p> <p><i>Ballard/Westwood timed arithmetic test (C) As needed</i></p>
Fourth Class	<p>Standardised Maths (C) <i>May</i></p> <p>Standardised Reading (C) <i>May</i></p> <p>Non Reading I.Q. Test Level 3(8.4-10.11) (S) Late First Term</p> <p><i>Non Verbal Abilities Test 8-13yrs(S) Late First Term</i></p> <p><i>CAT 4 Abilities Test(as alternative to *2 above)(S)</i></p> <p><i>Maths Scheme Assessment Tests (C)/(S) Termly</i></p>

*Ballard/Westwood timed arithmetic test (C) As needed*

Fifth Class  
Standardised Maths (C) *May*  
Standardised Reading (C) *May*  
*Maths Scheme Assessment Tests (C)/(S) Termly*  
*Ballard/Westwood timed arithmetic test (C) As needed*

Sixth Class  
Standardised Maths (C) *May*  
Standardised Reading (C) *May*  
*Maths Scheme Assessment Tests (C)/(S) Termly*  
Teacher designed Tables tests (C)  
CAT 4 Abilities Test (P)

### **Diagnostic Assessment**

Such tests are administered by a member of the school's Support Teaching Team following referral by the class teachers in consultation with parents / guardians. The administration of such tests is in keeping with the approach recommended by Circular 02/05 where a staged approach is used by the individual class teachers before recourse to diagnostic testing /psychological assessment. Parents/guardians will be provided with test results & these may be recorded on In-Class Programme/IPLP where appropriate. If a psychological assessment is deemed necessary, parental permission is sought and a consent form is completed. Permission is also sought for referral to any outside agencies.

### **Psychological Assessment**

*With regard to psychological assessments, support teachers in consultation with class teachers compile a list on a yearly basis. Pupils who have been through the staged approach without success and those who present with a particular difficulty are considered. The NEPS/SCAPA psychologist associated with the school can offer only a limited number of places. Currently 4 places are available. There is a waiting list in operation. Parents/guardians of pupils on the waiting list are also informed of the possibility of a private assessment which can be arranged through the school.*

### **Diagnostic Testing**

The diagnostic tests used in the school include:

- Neale Analysis
- Schonell Word Reading Test/Individual Word Reading Test*
- Schonell Graded Spelling Test*
- Jackson Phonic Test
- Dolch Sight Vocabulary Lists*

- Domain Short Vowel & Long Vowel Tests*
- Dyslexia Screening Test; Junior/Senior*
- Dyslexia Profile*
- Aston Index
- YARC

Support team review diagnostic tests in use yearly.

### **Recording and Storage of results**

*Results of screening, diagnostic and standardised tests are stored in each individual child's file in the Pupil Records section on the school's server.*

*See school's policy on Record Keeping Procedures and Data Protection for further guidance on storage and accessibility.*

### **Access to assessment results**

Assessment records of individual children are confidential. Direct access to individual, group or class assessment information may be given to the following designated persons in appropriate circumstances as follows:

- the child's class teacher
- the class teacher to whom the child is transferring
- relevant support teachers, and other relevant professionals
- the principal
- the DES inspector
- personnel authorized by DES given the responsibility to review the SSP under the DEIS initiative
- the HSCL teacher
- the school secretary (for recording purposes only)
- the relevant NEPS/SCAPA psychologist
- The Education Welfare Board and its officers
- parents and or guardians, who should have access to assessment information about their own children
- another school, primary or post-primary, to which the child is transferring, subject to the written consent of the child's parent(s) or guardians(s).

**Success Criteria** :This policy is considered successful if:

- Early identification and intervention is achieved
- Clarity is achieved regarding procedures involved in staged approach
- Roles and responsibilities of all parties are clearly defined
- The Support Teaching Team have clearly defined objectives
- An accurate academic profile for each child is available

- There is efficient transfer of information between teachers, teachers and parents/guardians and teachers and other professionals.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

**Class Teacher:** Responsible for the administration, correction and recording of standardised tests as outlined for classes. Class teachers are responsible for passing a copy of results to the Support Team. Ongoing, continuous assessment and observation of individual pupil's work in all subjects. Class teachers are also responsible for giving Monthly Reports to secretary to scan for future planning. Administering tests as outlined in screening timetable.

Assistance with compilation of information for Psychological Assessments

### **Support Teacher:**

Responsible for the administration, correction and recording of diagnostic tests where a concern is expressed about a pupil's performance.

Dissemination of the test results to class teachers, parents/guardians and principal as part of the IPLP/In Class programme.

Discussing and analysing standardised test results with class teachers.

Administering tests as outlined in screening timetable.

Compilation of information for & organization of Psychological Assessments

**Post of Responsibility Holder:** Responsible for recording rate of progress of individual teachers in the subject area and for reviewing the outcomes of assessment to inform classroom planning

**Principal:** Overall responsibility

## **Translating Policy into Action**

### **Effective feedback to pupils needs to be managed:**

- (a) In the context of an on-going dialogue between pupil and teacher in a positive teaching environment.
- (b) In sensitive language appropriate to the pupil.
- (c) In a way that allows comments on strengths and weaknesses to motivate improved performance.

### **Effective reporting to parents/guardians needs to:**

- (a) Provide clear communication about the achievement and effort of pupils. This needs to comply with the school's mission statement.
- (b) Provide consistency across classes in order to give parents/guardians confidence that they have an objective picture of how their child is performing.
- (c) Be in concise appropriate and legible language, avoiding jargon.
- (d) Provide in Individual Pupil Learning Profiles, a diagnosis of pupils strengths and weaknesses and clear strategies for improvement.
- (e) Inform parents of test results on an on-going basis.

## **Curricular Areas**

Each teacher holding a post of responsibility has, with the cooperation of the school teaching staff, written an assessment policy for the curricular area(s) under their care. These assessment procedures cover the assessment of each of the strands of the individual subject areas. This assessment forms an integral part of the school's policies in each curricular area and are the basis for recording progress in the curricular area in question and in the compilation of the Monthly Reports. These Monthly Reports are stored in the class folder on the server.

### **Implication for Staff Training and Resources**

Whatever training and resources are deemed necessary to effectively implement this policy shall be sought.

### **Implementation**

Many elements of this draft policy are already current procedure in the school. This policy as a whole school policy was implemented when it was ratified by the BOM in December 2006.

### **Review and Evaluation Procedure**

This policy will continue to be reviewed by the Support Teaching Team. Amendments deemed necessary to reflect changing practices and new thinking will be brought before the staff for further discussion. It was reviewed again in December 2012 & January 2017.

### **Ratification & Communication**

This policy was initially ratified by the Board at its meeting on 5th December 2006. This policy can be accessed via the school website.