

Policy on Assessment.

Introduction.

This policy was originally drafted following a whole-school planning day using the expertise of the School Development Planning Service facilitator. The policy was ratified by the Board of Management in The Mercy School.

Policy Rationale.

The core of the policy is that all children should experience success at school. This policy 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. 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. 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.

Aims and Objectives

The primary aims / objectives of the policy are to –

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

Policy Content (See also SEN Policy)

This policy is geared towards using assessment to inform planning and identify the needs of all pupils including the exceptionally gifted 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

Standardised Testing.

The school administers Micra T, Sigma T and the Drumcondra profiles. All classes from First class upwards are tested. **Following Circular 56/2011 the tests are administered during the third term by the class teacher.** Standard and Percentile Rankings scores are recorded on the class Record template and stored by each individual teacher with a copy held in the SEN Room and in the office. The SET analyse the results (also Neale Analysis and Education Profiles) in June for allocation of resources to pupils in September.

Pupils in Senior Infants are assessed using the MIST test and Junior Infants are assessed using the Belfield Infant Screening Test.

Following DES guidelines all standardized test scores will be orally given to parents/guardians at Parent/Teacher meetings and a STEN score will be written in the end of year reports, **with an accompanying explanation sheet.**

Results of standardized tests will also be monitored annually by the principal and BOM to ensure that the overall achievements of individual classes and children generally across the whole school remain at current levels, or if deemed necessary, improve by specific amounts as agreed at staff and BOM level.

Diagnostic Assessment.

The school policy on Psychological Assessments lists all diagnostic tests used by the school. Such tests are administered by the Learning Support and Resource Teachers 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 are advised of the outcome and if a psychological assessment is warranted, parental permission is sought and a consent form is completed. The Principal will facilitate such an assessment happening.

The diagnostic tests used in the school include –

- Neale Analysis
- Aston Index
- Profile of Maths Skills Diagnostic Test.(Norman France)

Screening

The screening tests used to identify learning strengths and weaknesses in our school are –

- ✓ Belfield Infant Assessment Programme
- ✓ Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST)
- ✓ Non Reading Intelligence Test (NRIT)
- ✓ Aston Index
- ✓ Sigma T (occasionally)

These tests are administered individually or on a whole class basis. The MIST and BIAP are administered on a whole class basis before Easter of each year, while the Neale Analysis is administered individually by the Learning Support teacher when deemed appropriate. Screening is used by the school to initiate the staged approach to intervention as per circulars 24/03 and 02/05. Children undertaking the “Follow-On” programme after MIST testing are retested by the SEN teacher upon completion of the programme.

Psychological Assessment

If stages 1 and 2 fail to deliver adequate intervention the class teacher / Principal will contact the parents for permission to secure a Psychological Assessment for their child (see Psychological Assessment policy). An assessment will determine the subsequent level of intervention, be it Learning Support Resource hours or an Individual Education Plan. The most common form of assessment used in our school is teacher observation, teacher designed tests, projects and homework (informal assessment). 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 at the Parent-teacher meeting / 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 Maths tests, spelling tests and quizzes.

Recording

Each pupil has a file which is stored in the administration office. Test scores are usually stored on a class record sheet with a copy in the office and one in the class of the teacher with overall responsibility for assessment in the school. Information is passed on from teacher to teacher on a need to know basis. Children receiving extra support in school have a separate file which contains their IPLP/GPLP. Procedures are in place to manage sensitive data (see Data Protection Policy). **From 2012 scores for individual children are passed on to the relevant secondary school (see Circular 56/2012) in the agreed format. Aggregated results are also annually reported to the BOM.**

Success Criteria

This policy is considered successful if –

- Early identification and intervention is achieved
- **Overall class results are maintained, or improved where necessary.**
- Clarity is achieved regarding procedures involved in staged approach
- Procedures are clear and roles and responsibilities are defined
- The Special Education team have clearly defined roles and objectives
- There is efficient transfer of information between teachers

Roles and Responsibilities

Special Education teachers and the Principal assume shared responsibility. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to set in train 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.

Implementation

This policy was implemented in 2009 and reviewed and amended in 2012.

Ratification & Communication

This amended policy was ratified by the Board of Management in Sept 2012.

Review Timetable

This policy will be reviewed in 2 years time and amended as necessary by means of a whole school collaborative process.

References D.E.S. Circular 02/05, 24/03, 56/12

D.E.S. Learning Support Guidelines 2000

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