Bishop O’Brien National School

**Assessment Policy**

**Introduction**

This policy was originally drafted by staff in 2016 during Croke Park hours. The policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 26/01/17.

**Policy Rationale**

The core of the policy is that all children should experience success at school. This policy seeks to identify at the earliest possible opportunity, children who may have learning difficulties or needs and put in place a whole school response to their needs. An effective assessment policy is central to this core objective. The staff acknowledge that a whole school approach to assessment is necessary to ensure good practice across the school and to ensure an emphasis on both assessment of and assessment for learning.

**Relationship to School Ethos**

The school adopts a holistic approach to the education and development of each child which seeks to develop them academically, socially and spiritually. 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. An effective Assessment Policy will ensure that each child achieves his/her potential.

**Aims and Objectives**

The primary aims / objectives of the policy are to;

* facilitate improved pupil learning
* generate baseline data that can be used to monitor achievement over time
* involve parents and pupils in identifying and managing learning strengths and difficulties
* co-ordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis involving parents and pupils in managing strengths and weaknesses
* facilitate teacher’s short and long term planning
* ensure that relevant assessment data is available to teachers, parents, children and other professionals

**Principles underlying this policy**

1. Careful thought is given to the purpose of assessment, adopting a wide range of methods to reflect learning opportunities across the whole Curriculum. The main purpose of assessment must be to facilitate progress in a pupil's learning.
2. Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process, a valuable formative tool as it should feed back into the planning, teaching and learning process.
3. The range of opportunities for carrying out continuous assessment is increased by good classroom organisation, which is conscious of the multi-class context of Bishop O’Brien N.S.
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 for assessment in developing a positive self-image in the pupil from positive and constructive feedback and the feeling of success, which encourages further study.
6. We seek to create in the children a sense of responsibility for their own learning by encouraging them to self- assess their work and evaluate it on a regular basis.
7. In addition to normal assessment, informal teacher observation is seen as a very useful assessment tool. Opportunities are taken to observe and reflect upon significant points in a child's development, such as:

* a moment of 'breakthrough' in understanding
* surprises and unusual reactions
* Interesting examples of strategies for mental calculation difficulties encountered and possible reasons for them.

Teachers are encouraged to record significant observations to help build up a profile of the child over time

1. Results of assessment are reported in a way useful for pupils, teachers, parents and other professionals e.g. when the sten result for standardised test results is given in report cards and explanation to interpret it and put it into context accompanies it.
2. Assessment records must be easy to interpret, useful, manageable and should not be administratively burdensome.

**Policy Content**

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. (See also SEN Policy)

**1. Informal Assessment**

Homework and class work are marked and comments are made as appropriate.  
Marks and comments are given as appropriate to task and class level. Work is ticked to  
indicate that the teacher has looked at it and a written comment to indicate sources of error; good points etc. may be made. Spelling mistakes are corrected as appropriate.  
An agreed editing symbol is used to mark incorrect spelling in English writing activities from second to sixth class. Weekly tests which are given from first to sixth class are sent home to sign.

**2. Class work**

Obviously, 'informal' assessment is ongoing during all lessons in response to oral work, team work, skill development, project work etc. Questioning is an assessment tool  
used on a constant basis throughout each day and teachers are conscious to use a variety of lower and higher order questioning types.

Reading is assessed informally each day by the teacher. An effort should be made to ensure that children are given an opportunity to read aloud daily.

**3. Self- assessment**

Children are encouraged to self- assess their work from infants to sixth class. Getting children to evaluate their work and say what is good or needs improvement, encourages in them a sense of responsibility for their own work. Self- assessment is carried out regularly in a number of ways including oral evaluation, comparing two or more pieces of work, use of smiley faces, check lists, identifying in copies a piece of good work where a breakthrough was achieved etc. Children from second to sixth class use editing checklists and various other checklists to prompt them in effective self assessment of their work.

**4. Homework**

Homework is checked both formally and informally in a routine way. Spellings are to be examined regularly and an effort must be made to examine them in a written format. Spellings from previous weeks along with high frequency/ core words are given regularly. Children are given homework according to their class level and ability. Homework is given every evening from Monday to Thursday for all classes. Homework is given every evening from Monday to Thursday for all classes.

**5. Standardised Testing**

The school administers Drumcondra English, Maths and Spelling or Micra and Sigma T annually to Senior Infants to 6th class. The tests are administered in the last term as per D.E.S. guidelines. The aggregated results from 2nd, 4th and 6th class are forwarded to the D.E.S. and reported to the Board of Management on a yearly basis. Following DES guidelines all standardised 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. The end of year report is posted to parents in mid-June, two weeks prior to the Summer holidays and parents are given the opportunity to make an appointment with the school to discuss the reports and standardized tests. Standardised test results are entered onto Aladdin where staff members can access them. The staff analyse the results in June for allocation of resources to pupils in September. Teachers note children who have made improvements or who have fallen behind over the year. Certain children may be highlighted for diagnostic testing.

Pupils in Senior Infants are assessed using the Test 2R in the first term, beginning 2017, and Drumcondra Early Literacy and Numeracy in May. Junior Infants are assessed using the Jolly Phonics Reading Assessments at the end of the year and the Bellfield Assessment Profile. Following the screening tests, pupils from the Infant classes may be selected for further diagnostic testing using the diagnostic element of Test 2R, Drumcondra Maths and Literacy or the York Assessment of Early Reading.

It is important to note that standardised test results do not tell the whole story in terms of a child’s progress in school. They do provide a valuable tool to be used in context with other forms of assessment such as teacher observation and teacher designed tests and tasks.

1. **Screening and Diagnostic Assessment**

The S.E.N policy, which was reviewed in 2016 and may need further review in the coming year due to announcements by the D.E.S. indicating changes to how S.E.N. resources are allocated to schools, lists all screening diagnostic tests used by the school.

Screening is used by the school to initiate the staged approach to intervention as per circulars 24/03 and 02/05. Standardised test results and teacher observation are used as the main screening tools in the school. All classes receive a minimum of six weeks station teaching per year (Power Hour). Screening assessments are carried out in advance of Power Hour so that the children can be grouped according to their instructional level. Post instructional assessment is carried out using the same assessments, after the six week block of Power Hour has been completed. The screening tests the school may use are as follows;

* Sigma T
* Micra T
* Drumcondra Spelling
* Drumcondra Reading
* Drumcondra Maths
* Drumcondra Early Literacy
* Drumcondra Early Numeracy
* New Non-Reading Intelligence Test (NNRIT)
* Test 2R
* Schonell Reading and Spelling
* RAIN sentence reading test
* Ernest Dern most common spelling words test

Diagnostic tests are administered by the Learning Support/ Resource Teacher following referral by the class teachers. The administration of such tests is in keeping with the approach recommended by Circular 02/05 where the 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 S.E.N postholder in collaboration with the Principal will facilitate such an assessment happening.

The diagnostic tests the school may use include;

* Test 2R (Diagnostic element)
* Drumcondra Early Numeracy (Diagnostic element)
* Drumcondra Early Literacy (Diagnostic element)
* York Assessment of Reading Comprehension (YARC)
* York Assessment of Early Reading
* Hatcher test of phonological awareness
* Bellfield Assessment Profile

These tests are administered individually or in a small group.

**6. 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. An assessment will determine the subsequent level of intervention, be it Learning Support or Resource hours with 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, English writing samples, Geography/History/Science tests.

**7. Transfer to another school and transition to secondary school.**

For pupils leaving the school, up to date records are passed on by the principal to the new school. These records will include the child’s latest report card, results from standardised tests, psychological assessments and reports from other professionals if any exist. If the child has been receiving resource teaching their latest I.E.P. will also be forwarded.

**8. Recording**

Each pupil has a file which is stored in the filing cabinet in the main office. Standardised test scores are stored on Aladdin. Children receiving extra support in school have their IPLP or I.E.P stored in their S.E.N. file with the relevant resource, learning Support teacher and is also stored electronically on Aladdin. All psychological assessments are scanned and stored on Aladdin as well as in the child’s S.E.N. file. Class Teachers keep record of class test results and observations.

**Success Criteria**

This policy is considered successful if ;

* Early identification and intervention is achieved
* Clarity is achieved regarding procedures involved in the Staged Approach are clear and roles and responsibilities are defined
* The learning support /resource teacher has a clearly defined role
* There is efficient transfer of information between teachers, parents and other Professionals

**Roles and Responsibilities**

The principal has overall responsibility for assessment in the school. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to set in train staged interventions at class level in collaboration with the S.E.N. team if they have concerns regarding pupils. At Stage 2, the responsibilities are shared with the Learning support/resource teacher and the principal must be informed. The Principal and S.E.N co-coordinator 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 will be implemented in March 2017

**Ratification & Communication**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 26-01-17 and communicated to parents thereafter.

**Review Timetable**

This policy will be reviewed in 2021 and amended as necessary by means of a whole school collaborative process.

**References**

DES Circular 02/05 – 24/03  
DES Learning Support Guidelines 2000  
www.sess.ie  
Working together to make a difference for children - NEPs

Chairperson: Helen Arnold

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Principal: Joanne O’Brien Kennelly

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