St. Mura's National School

St. Mary's Road
Buncrana,
Co. Donegal

Tel. No. 074 9362309
Roll No.16854V
e-mail stmurasbuncrana@gmail.com

Assessment Policy, St. Mura's N.S.

Introductory Statement and Rationale

The Education Act requires schools "to regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to the students and their parents." The policy is based on advice and information provided in the Primary Curriculum, the NCCA Website, the NCCA booklet *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for Schools* and Circular 0138/2006. In line with the NCCA, our staff believe that assessment is integral to teaching and learning and is concerned with children's progress and achievement. It involves gathering information to understand how each child is progressing at school and using that information to further a child's learning. We concur with their definition of classroom assessment as "the process of gathering, recording, interpreting, using and reporting information about a child's progress and achievement in developing knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes." Assessment, therefore, involves much more than testing. It is an ongoing process that concerns the daily interactions between the teacher and the child that includes moment-by-moment conversations, observations and actions. This policy was formulated by the staff of St. Mura's N.S. and was drafted to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and other relevant persons on the provision of effective assessment procedures in our school.

Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school

Assessment activities used in this school will contribute to pupil learning and development by gathering relevant information to guide each pupil's further learning (assessment for learning) and by providing information on each pupils achievement at a particular point in time (assessment of learning).

Aims of our Assessment Policy

- To benefit pupil learning
- To monitor learning processes
- To generate baseline data that can be used to monitor achievement over time
- To involve parents and pupils in identifying and managing learning strengths or difficulties
- To assist teachers' long and short term planning
- To coordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis.

Purposes of assessment:

- To inform planning for all areas of the curriculum
- To gather and interpret data at class/whole school level and in relation to national norms
- To identify the particular leaning needs of pupils/groups of pupils including the exceptionally able
- To enable teachers to modify their programmes and their teaching methodologies in order to ensure that the particular learning needs of individual pupils/groups are being addressed
- To compile records of individual pupils' progress and attainment
- To facilitate communication between parents and teacher about pupils' development, progress and learning needs
- To facilitate the active involvement of pupils in the assessment of their own work.

Range of Assessment Methods used Throughout the School:

Both *assessment of learning and assessment for learning* will be used by teachers to make professional judgements about pupil achievement/progress. Deciding what to assess will be based on the curriculum objectives in each curriculum area/subject and on what the teacher intends to help the children to learn. Each teacher will use the most appropriate assessment method to measure the extent to which children have achieved these objectives. The range of assessment methods to be used throughout the school is outlined in Appendix 1.

Assessment for each subject is mentioned in the relevant curriculum plans. Accordingly, the assessment policy will present a comprehensive over view of the strategies for assessment engaged throughout the school.

ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

At its heart, assessment for learning is a way of informing and involving the learners themselves in the process of assessment.

The following methods of Assessment for Learning (AFL) are used in the school:

- Teacher observation
- Teacher designed tasks and tests
- Portfolios/Completed assignments by pupils
- Success and Improvement Strategy (also referred to as 'two stars and a wish')
- Pupil Self/Peer Assessment
- Effective teacher questioning
- Conferencing
- Parental, pupil feedback or observation
- Standardised tests

- Screening tests
- Diagnostic tests
- Assessment by psychologist

Details of each of these methods are available in Appendix 2.

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

Standardised test (Guidelines pp 60-69)

- The following tests are used:
    - MIST – early in the second term in senior infants
    - Drumcondra Maths/Sigma-T – Final term in 1st -6th class
    - Drumcondra English/Micra-T – Final term in 1st-6th class
- The purpose of the standardised tests is to allow teachers to make placement and progress decisions based on assessment results and to develop appropriate interventions for certain children.
- The principal, in consultation with the class teacher, is responsible for purchase, distribution and co-ordination of testing.
- The class teacher administers the MIST, Micra-T, Sigma-T, Drumcondra English and Drumcondra Maths standardised tests. In the event that a pupil is absent on the day of the test the Learning Support teacher will administer the test as a later date. Pupils may be excluded from the tests if, in the view of the principal, they have a learning or physical disability which would prevent them taking the test or newcomer pupils, where their level of English is such that attempting the test would be inappropriate.
- Each child's raw score, standard score, percentile rank and STEN is recorded.
- The results will be analysed at whole school level, (using a data analysis grid) and at individual class level, and the information gathered from the tests will be used to inform teaching and learning.
- The results will determine the allocation of learning support/resource hours in the school and the nature of the support provided (in-class or withdrawal). (See Learning Support policy.)

REPORTING

Class Teacher to Parent

The annual Parent Teacher meetings take place in October/November of each academic year. .

The school's end of year report has been created in accordance with the Standard NCCA Reports. This is either typed or handwritten by the class teacher.These reports are written in early June and distributed in mid-June. A copy of the report is stored in the Pupil's Profile Form.

Recording the results of assessment (see guidelines p70, 71 and 79)

- In fulfilling the requirements of the Education Act (1998) St. Mura's N.S. creates and maintains individual records of children's learning while they are attending this school. We provide parents with assessment reports which contain accurate and clearly accessible information about their child's progress and achievements.
- Test results are recorded on class record sheets and these are stored in the office.
- Teachers have agreed terminology for reporting on children's progress and achievement. Comments and observations will be recorded in an objective and instructive manner.

PUPIL PROFILES

Each child will be allocated a Pupil Profile Folder on entrance to the school. The child's profile contains their Enrolment Form, Parent/Guardian Consent forms and various health and allergy information as well as each End of Year School Report. Contained within each profile is a progress tracking form indicating the child's standardised test scored. All files are stored securely in the office.

TEACHER OBSERVATION FILE

Each class teacher has an 'Observation Folder' with a section for each pupil in their class. This folder records significant observations of children's academic progress and social development as observed by the class teacher.   This process serves as a means to track a pupil academically, socially and emotionally throughout their schooling.

LEARNING SUPPORT/RESOURCE FILE

There is a separate file for information regarding each child who was/is attending Learning Support/Resource or who has been psychologically assessed. These folders are kept securely in the office.

LEARNING SUPPORT/SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

In all classes throughout the school, class teachers administer Standardised Tests (Belfield Infant, MIST, Micra-T, Sigma T, Drumcondra English and Drumcondra Maths). These serve as a screening purpose for Learning Support, to monitor progress and to enhance teaching and learning. If at any stage during the year, a problem or concern arises, the Learning Support Teacher administers screening checklists and profiles to the child with a parent/guardian's written permission. Teachers then proceed down the Staged Approach (Appendix 3) eventually resulting in a psychological assessment. Please see the Learning Support/Special Needs Policy in accordance with this policy.

The class teacher is expected to monitor and assess the performance of each pupil and teach to an appropriate level, based on his/her finding. Teachers are encouraged to:

- Review previous day's work.
- Present clearly new skills and concepts.
- Guide student practice through provision of feedback.
- Provided modified instruction.
- Use age and ability appropriate written and oral work.
- Adjust questioning to different ability levels.
- Present materials at the appropriate level of difficulty.

Success Criteria

- A range of informal and formal assessment modes are used to place assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning.
- Procedures run smoothly and efficiently because there is clarity about what is expected and who is responsible for different aspects.
- Transfer of information from class teacher to class teacher happens efficiently at the beginning/end of school year.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Class Teacher

- To record accurate and just observations in the Observation File. File needs to be kept updated and passed on to the next teacher.
- To report any concerns over a pupil to the Principal.
- To complete and correct the relevant standardised tests for their class each year.
- To fill in the Tracking Form, highlighting the standardised test scores.
- To engage the children in a variety of forms of assessment, including self and peer assessment and to accurately store necessary results.

Learning Support Teacher

- To meet with the class teacher on a regular basis.
- Regular and continuous assessment in line with the Learning Support/Special Education Needs Policy's Staged Approach.
- To administer any diagnostic tests where necessary.

Principal

- To securely store all Learning Support/Resource Files.
- To organise for any psychological assessments.
- To order all standardised tests and distribute to the class teachers.

RATIFICATION & COMMUNICATION

This assessment policy was officially ratified by the BOM on _____

Signed:_____(Chairman of B.O.M.)

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed yearly at the June Staff meeting. As we have decided to take on board a number of new procedures, these will be reviewed, and if necessary amended, in June 2013. The Principal will initiate and co-ordinate this review.

Reviewed_____

Reviewed_____

Reviewed_____

Reviewed_____

Appendix 1

(a) Assessment methods in our school:
A continuum of Methods

Method	Planning and Organising	Resources	Reporting Storage
1. Self-assessment	Clarify the purpose; decide what information will be recorded and where Agree criteria for success and **make it explicit** Develop children's self-reflective skills	Prompt questions and tools for children Time for children to reflect on their work	
2. Conferencing DISCUSSION WITH SET DISCUSSION WITH PARENTS With Children	Clarify the purpose; decide what information will be recorded and where Organise learning activities for the rest of the children Develop self-reflection skills Identify appropriate language	Samples of work Time to talk with child, parent, colleague	
3. Portfolio Assessment HOMEWORK COPIES Art Creative Writing	Clarify the purpose; decide what information will be recorded and where Develop children's self-assessment skills	Material/software to create portfolios Storage Space Time to talk to each child about his/her portfolio	
4. Concept mapping	Clarify the purpose; decide what information will be recorded and where	Materials/software to create concept maps Time to interpret maps	
5. Questioning	Clarify the purpose; decide what information will be recorded and where Formulate different types of questions Decide timing of questions	Questions which support higher order thinking Time to use different types of questions with different children Blooms	
6. Teacher observation CHECKLISTS ANECDOTAL EAL ASSESSMENT POSITIVE PROFILING	Clarify the purpose; decide what information will be recorded and where Plan different tasks for the children being observed Organise activities for children not being observed which minimise interruption to teacher	Observation templates Time during class to observe Checklists Drumcondra Profiles EAL Assessment Kit	
7. Teacher designed tasks and tests WEEKLY TESTS END OF YEAR TESTS KWL (What you know, want to know and Learned)	Clarify the purpose; decide what information will be recorded and where Prepare test questions and tasks which will demonstrate particular understanding or skills	Resources for teacher designed tests or tasks Time during class to observe tasks Graphic organisers?	
8. *Standardised Tests Administered in Autumn Term Drumcondra English Drumcondra Maths	Clarify the purpose; agree when during the year tests will be administered; decide what	Test booklet per child Test manual	

Administered in Summer Term Micra-T Sigma-T	information will be recorded and where Read the test manuals Choose the appropriate day and time and organise the class Plan activities for children not taking the test	Time to administer the test Time to mark and interpret the results	

Appendix 2: Assessment for Learning Strategies

The following methods of Assessment for Learning (AFL) are used in the school:

- **Teacher observation –**
  - o Each teacher will have a teacher observation file with a section for each child where significant observations of children's progress will be recorded. This may be as a result of target child observation, event samples and/or anecdotal observation. New Guidelines for Schools p.46-52
  - o Where appropriate, teachers will use/develop rubrics or checklists to assist with teacher observation.
- **Teacher-designed tasks and tests.** Teachers will refer to the Guidelines pp.54-59 for suggestions. Also pp. 89-90 where an excellent range of sample test questions are outlined.
- **Portfolios** See Guidelines p. 30-33
  - o Each child will assemble a portfolio of best/improved work. They may select five to eight pieces of work per term they are proud of or feel represents significant improvement. Children from second up will record why they are proud of the work/why they have included this is their portfolio. Portfolios will be introduced in September 2010. Each child will have an A3 manilla folder for this purpose. Children may incorporate samples of work in 3D using a digital camera.
- **Success and Improvement Strategy (also referred to as 'two stars and a wish').**
  - o This involves children reflecting on their work and identifying two 'best bits/parts they like and one area where their work can be improved. Children can highlight the 'best bits' or put a star or smiley face beside it. Children can also highlight one area where they could improve/ do differently the next time. If possible, the children should have time to make the improvement. This process is particularly useful for children's writing. Initially, teachers will model this process using exemplars. This strategy can be used orally in junior classes. This strategy may also be used when marking children's work.
- **Sharing the learning intention/objective and devising success criteria.**
  - o Telling children what they are going to learn... and agreeing the criteria for judging to what extent the outcomes have been achieved (Guidelines pp. 9 70 and 77)
  - o We are learning to ....We will know when we've achieved this because...
  - o The learning objective(s) and the success criteria may be displayed on a chart/whiteboard/post it's etc.
  - o Teacher/peer/self evaluation in terms of these by identifying successes and improvement needs against the criteria. (see Appendix 1)
- **Effective teacher questioning –** teachers use higher order questioning to provoke fruitful discussion. Strategies for turning recall questions into formative questions include –

- o Giving a range of answers. You need to give two definite 'yes' answers, two definite 'no' answers and one or two 'maybe' answers. E.g. which of these activities are in themselves aerobic? golf; swimming; darts; table tennis; sky diving; cycling.
  - o A statement (e.g. instead of asking 'what drugs are bad for you?', state 'All drugs are bad for you'. <u>Do you agree or disagree and why?)</u>
  - o Right and wring – two examples/pictures, one 'right' (e.g. a healthy meal on a plate) and one 'wrong' (a junk food meal) and asking children to discuss.
  - o Give the answer – and ask how it was arrived at.
  - o An opposing standpoint – e.g. what would a mother whose children were starving think of shoplifting?
- Examples of Higher Order Questions may be found in the Guidelines for schools pp.86-88. Other issues relating to questioning are outlined on pages 42-44.
- Individual oral feedback – to enable children identify the next steps in their learning.
- Quality marking by teacher – occasional pieces or work marked thoroughly focusing on pointing out *success* and *improvement* rather than to mark every error in existence. On occasion 'test' marking will be undertaken whereby all aspects of the work will be marked e.g. a story where comments are made re. spelling, grammar, punctuation, handwriting and the overall quality of the work.
- Quality marking by children. Children gradually trained to identify their own successes and improvement needs, with control gradually handed over from the teacher to the child.
- Oral responses of pupils.
- **PUPIL SELF ASSESSMENT –**
  - o Self-assessment is the means by which the pupils take responsibility for their own learning. However, we need to train pupils to self-assess. It does not just happen!
- **Teachers can refer to Guidelines for School pp. 14-23**
- **Teachers will select from the following strategies to aid self-assessment as appropriate –**
  - o **KWL/KWHL charts** (Guidelines p. 20,21 and 92).
    - ▪ What do you know about ....? Assessment of current knowledge to inform teaching activities and learning goals).
    - ▪ What would you like to know about ....?
    - ▪ How could we find out about .....?
    - ▪ What have you learned about ....? How did you learn this? (Assessment of what has been learned and skills developed)
  - o **Concept maps** – Guidelines pp 36-41
  - o **Rubrics** – Guidelines pp 52 and 54
  - o **Evaluation sheets** – Guidelines pp 19 and 93
    - ▪ What have you been learning about in ....?
    - ▪ List three things you learned about this topic.
    - ▪ Were you a good team member? Give a reason for your answer.

- What could your team do better next time?
- Teacher comment....
  - **Self Evaluation Questions to facilitate reflection –**
    - Where did you get stuck? What helped you out? Have you learned anything new? Do you have any questions? What are you most pleased with? What did you need more help with? What did you find easy? What did you find difficult?
    - Am I learning the best way for me? How will I know if my work is good? What can I remember and understand about.... What do I need to improve?

    These questions also empower children to identify next steps in their learning. They may be presented on flashcards/charts and children pick one or more at the end of the lesson to reflect on. (In groups/pairs/as individuals/in conferencing with teacher)

  - **Graphic Organisers** – include KWL charts, Rubrics and Concept maps mentioned above. Also include: PMI charts (Plus, Minus, Interesting); Ladders; Thumbs up/Thumbs down, Traffic Lights and Talking Partners. (See guidelines pp. 84-85)
  - **Reflection; Representation; Reporting.** Children think about what they have been learning. They then represent what they have learned (by – drawing, concept map, brainstorm, questions, map, paragraph etc.) Children then report on their learning – to teacher; class; group; parent; partner, etc.
- **Conferencing** (Guidelines pp. 24-27
- **Completed assignments by pupils –** projects, copybooks, activities, work samples, homework.
- **Parental, pupil feedback or observation**
- **Standardised tests**
- **Diagnostic tests**
- **Assessment by psychologist**

Appendix 3

Screening: *(Refer to Learning Support Guidelines and Circular 02/05)*

- What screening tests are used to facilitate the early identification of pupils' learning strengths/difficulties?
- When are screening tests administered?
- Who administers them?
- Who is involved in interpreting results?
- What emphasis is placed on early intervention programmes? Does screening lead to specific intervention by the class teacher? (Stage 1 Circular 02/05)
- What criteria indicate that diagnostic testing is needed?
- How are results communicated to parents?
- How are parents consulted if diagnostic testing is considered necessary?

Diagnostic Assessment *(Refer to Learning Support Guidelines, Chapter 4)*

- What formal diagnostic tests are used to determine the appropriate learning support for individual pupils who present with learning difficulties?
- Who is involved in selecting children for diagnostic assessment?
- How are parents consulted in advance? Is there a standard form to record parents' consent? Who makes the necessary arrangements?
- Who administer the diagnostic tests?
- Who interprets the results?
- How does the school ensure that the results of the assessments inform subsequent learning plans?
- Following testing, what procedures are used for sharing information between teachers, parents and relevant agencies (if appropriate)?
- What criteria are used when deciding which pupils should be referred for supplementary teaching (Stage 2, Circular 02/05)
- If it is felt necessary to consult a psychologist (NEPS or other) about diagnostic test results, who arranges for such consultation?
- Are the procedures for conducting diagnostic assessments communicated to teachers and parents?

Psychological Assessment: *(Refer to Circular 02/05)*

- Who liaises with the parents if it is felt that a psychological assessment or other assessment is required (Stage 3, Circular 02/05)? Are standard letters and consent forms used?
- Who is responsible for requesting and arranging an assessment from specialist(s)? (Psychologist, Speech & Language Therapist, Audiologist, other ...)
- What part does the assessment play in drafting an educational plan for a pupil?
- Where are psychological reports stored and who controls access to them?

Formal Assessment Schedule

Month	Class	Test	Administered by	Records Kept	Purpose
September					
October					
November					
December					
January					
March					
February					
April					
May					
June					

Reference Section

- Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for Schools, NCCA, 2007
- Special Education Needs – a Continuum of Support, Guidelines for Teachers and Resource Pack for Teachers, NEPS 2007
- Learning Support Guidelines, DES, 2000
- Circular 0138/2006 Supporting Assessment in Primary Schools
- 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
- Working together to Make a Difference for Children, NEPS
- Drumcondra English Profiles. G. Shiel & R. Murphy, ERC, 2000
- Commonsense Methods for Children with Special Needs, Peter Westwood, Routledge Falmer, 1997
- A range of assessment tests are listed on the SESS website www.sess.ie
- Draft Report Card Templates. www.ncca.ie
- info@ncca, September 2005, Issue 1 p. 8 Assessment for Learning