



COMMUNITY SCHOOL, CLIFDEN

ASSESSMENT POLICY

BACKGROUND

This policy is presented in the context of our school mission “to provide a challenging educational environment in which all members of the school community, irrespective of ability level or background can realize individual and collective potential in a caring environment which values and strives for quality and creativity in all that it offers.” Our school believes that an effective assessment policy is central to this core objective. The policy is geared towards using assessment to inform planning and identify the needs of all students across the full spectrum of abilities so that adequate strategies are in place early enough to assist in meeting their needs. The core of this policy is that all children should experience success at school.

DEFINITION

Students need motivation for learning and information on their progress to inform their choices and opportunities and to reflect on their learning. We believe that assessment of learning and for learning can critically enhance student’s learning. We see assessment as the process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about students’ learning generated by teacher observation, classroom discussion and analysis of students work including homework and tests. It includes assessment of learning as well as assessment for learning.

Assessment of learning means 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 performances of their students with national norms. Information gained from this kind of assessment will be used in school reports to motivate students and to report meaningfully to parents.

Teachers require good quality assessment information to help them improve the teaching and the learning environment in their classrooms generally. The information gained from assessments can be used by teachers to adapt their teaching strategies and learning outcomes to meet students’ needs, to set goals and targets for their teaching. This form of assessment - assessment for learning - will occur as a regular part of teaching and learning.

Assessments are also a key tool and information source for parents. Parents require meaningful information about the well being of their children, their progress and achievements as well the difficulties they are encountering, how they can assist them, and how they are in relation to others of their cohort. Parents are the primary educators of their children.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary aims and objectives of the policy are:

- To facilitate improved teaching for teachers and improved learning for learners.
- To create procedures for monitoring achievement for teachers, learners and parents.
- To track learning processes which assist the long and short term planning done by teachers.
- To involve parents and pupils in managing strengths and weaknesses and supporting learning.
- To motivate students and enable and encourage them to achieve to the best of their ability.
- To plan the assessment of learning outcomes and informing future teaching
- To diagnose and evaluate difficulties in learning in order to provide suitable intervention strategies

- To identify gifted and able or talented students who require additional or more challenging activities
- To give positive feedback to the student along with clear ways forward
- To encourage increasing skills of self assessment by both learner and teacher.
- To keep records of attainment that will inform the reporting process
- To use validated assessment data to inform target setting and to raise expectations and standards
- To ensure consistency and the appropriate standards in school work
- To analyse performance to ensure that appropriate interventions are taken

These strategies may include student self-assessment, two-way communication between parents and teachers, modification of teacher programmes and Individual Education Plans for particular learners.

FORMS OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment will be both formal and informal. The assessment methods used may include a variety of:

- Written Work
- Oral Work
- Practical and Group Work
- Research and project work
- Homework
- Standardised Tests.

These strategies may include student self-assessment, two-way communication between parents and teachers, modification of teacher programmes and Individual Education Plans.

Teachers are expected build up a record of assessment data for each of their class groups, use assessment data to inform their lesson planning, and to monitor the progress made by specific students, to modify their programmes if necessary and to become involved with individual education plans for particular students. Teachers are asked to mark students work regularly and promptly, to set targets and monitor progress towards the objectives set for their courses, alert Year Heads and parents of underachievement through initiating a two-way communication between parents and teachers. Year Heads are expected to monitor the results both specific and general achieved by the students in the year group in formal in-school examinations and to monitor achievement in the state examinations against expected outcomes and national standards.

These strategies can benefit from the insights of multiple intelligence theory and practice, brain research, differentiated learning.

FORMAL IN-SCHOOL ASSESSMENT:

Two formal in-school examinations are held in the school each year. For non-examination classes these take place at Christmas and Summer. Two school reports are issued to parents each year: Christmas and Summer. These reports will show grades achieved and will include comments from teachers along with a general comment from the student's Year Head. Subject teachers will record results and comments in the report book. The respective Year Head will be responsible for the completion of the reports for his/her Year Group.

For examination classes, two school reports are issued to parents per year: Christmas and Spring. These reports will show grades achieved and progress comments from teachers along with a general comment from the student's Year Head. The Spring report will be based on "mock" examination papers administered to examination students.

Reports will be completed for communication to parents at Christmas and in Spring or Summer as determined by the dates specified on the school calendar. In the case of the Christmas and the Summer reports, this will be the last day of the Christmas or Summer terms respectively. In the case of the Spring report, this date will be no later than three weeks from the date of the last paper. The outcome of these assessments will be recorded in the student's record.

Public examinations – Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate - are part of the formal assessment process and they will be used to monitor the performance of individual students and class groups and inform the planning for these classes as they progress through the school. The results achieved in the school are compared to the national averages.

Results will be reviewed, discussed by teachers in the subject department or year group and appropriate action taken after each formal assessment. Assessments (formal and informal) may be used to determine class placing and levels for students in particular subjects.

The school also uses Standardised testing. Scores on standardised tests will be analysed and the results on these tests and teacher-devised tests will be used to facilitate more effective approaches to curriculum differentiation by the subject teacher.

Teachers will use the results of standardised tests to set specific targets to cater for the individual needs of children who are experiencing difficulty with Literacy or Numeracy skills development and draw up action plans for the realisation of these specific targets. This information will also help in the development of individual educational plans for some students.

A limited amount of diagnostic assessment is done by the school counsellor and special needs team following referral by the class teachers. In consultation with parents / guardians this assessment can be used before recourse to full diagnostic testing /psychological assessment by a NEPS psychologist. Parents will be provided with test results and if a psychological assessment is warranted, parental permission is sought and a consent form is completed.

INFORMAL IN-SCHOOL ASSESSMENT:

The most common form of assessment used in the school is teacher observation, teacher designed class based testing at Halloween or at the end of a course module as appropriate, projects and homework. Notes on progress may be included in school journals by teachers. Records of teacher-designed tests should be kept by the individual teachers and communicated to parents at the Parent-Teacher meetings. This form of assessment provides opportunities to measure students' performance in relation to the teaching and learning objectives and should be seen as a positive part of the learning process.

Through both formal and informal assessment, students are encouraged to engage in a reflective review of the work they have done to enable them to plan their revision effectively, to use active revision techniques, and to prepare for examinations.

Homework should be seen as a central part of continuous assessment. Homework should take a variety of forms and should be set in line with the school *Homework Policy*. Feedback which is diagnostic and supportive should be given as soon as possible.

Assessment whether formal or informal is a positive part of the teaching process. In their assessments teachers set tasks to reveal their students' understanding of class material covered. These are set to reveal student's understanding and misunderstandings. Based on this information teachers can provide ongoing feedback to students on their progress. Teachers' comments on formal reports, in homework journals and on marked work will identify what has been done well and what still needs to be improved and will provide guidance on how improvement can be made. Teacher comments on student progress will be positive and supportive of student learning and achievements.

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

- The student's subject class teacher and Year Head
- A new teacher or Year Head to whom the student may be 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 psychologist currently Mr. Frank Kavanagh
- The Education Welfare Board and its officers if appropriate
- Parents and or guardians, who should have access to assessment information about their own children
- Another school, to which the child is transferring, subject to the written consent of the student's parent(s) or guardians(s).

Key Criteria for Success

This policy is considered successful if:

- Early identification and intervention is achieved for students
- Procedures are clear and roles and responsibilities are defined and carried through by the respective teachers and support staff where applicable.
- The Support Teaching Team have clearly defined roles and objectives
- There is efficient transfer of information between teachers

This policy will be communicated to the parents' association. The policy will be reviewed and amended by the Support Teaching Team regularly at their meetings. It will be reviewed by the whole school once annually at either the first or last staff meeting each year and amended as necessary, by means of a whole school collaborative process that takes account of parents' views.