Introduction

This policy was formulated by the teaching staff in Mercy Primary School so as to have a transparent and uniform approach to assessment throughout the school. The P.D.S.T guidelines were used to assist in the drafting of this policy.

Rationale

In order to ensure that all children in our school achieve to the best of their ability we believe it is imperative that any learning difficulties are identified at the earliest opportunity and that the school must put in place an appropriate response to their needs. An effective assessment policy ensures quality in education is central to this process of teaching and learning. Through assessment the teacher constructs a comprehensive picture of the short term and long term needs of the child and plans accordingly. Assessment assists communication to all parties involved in the child's education i.e. teacher and child, teacher and parents/guardians and teacher to teacher. It will help the child become more self-aware as a learner and develops powers of self-assessment. It is integral to all areas of the curriculum and to the child's growth in self-esteem and acquisition of a wide range of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School
- Mercy Primary School seeks to provide an appropriate education for all pupils in accordance with our mission statement.
- Each child in our school can enrich our whole school community.
- The school endeavours to involve all pupils in all school activities.
- The school also endeavours to cater for children with exceptional ability.

<u>Aims:</u>

- To benefit pupil learning
- To monitor learning processes
- To involve parents/guardians and pupils in identifying and managing learning strengths or difficulties
- To assist teachers long and short term planning
- To co-ordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis and to establish a firm link between assessment and decision making with regard to future strategies, content and methodologies in the classroom.
- To describe strategies for assessment of pupils over as many areas of development as possible.
- To emphasise the importance of early identification of pupils with specific numeracy and literacy problems through establishing relevant baseline data which in turn can be used to monitor achievement over time.
- To ensure availability of finance to purchase texts and resources.
- To outline specific strategies for monitoring the progress of all pupils with particular learning needs.

Policy Content

Purpose of Assessment

- To inform planning for, and coverage of 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 learning needs of pupils/groups including the exceptionally able if applicable
- To monitor pupils progress and attainment
- To enable teachers to modify their programmes in order to ensure that the particular learning needs of individual pupils/groups are being addressed
- To compile records or individual pupil's progress and attainment
- To facilitate the involvement of pupils in assessment of their own work where

feasible

- To enable teachers to monitor their own approaches and methodologies.

Standardised Testing

All classes from First class upwards are tested. The tests are usually administered in May by the class teachers and the SEN team. Standard and percentile ranking scores are recorded on the class record template on Aladdin. The SEN team analyse the results in June for allocation of resources to pupils in September. (e.g. Lift Off to Literacy, Maths Recovery Stations, Individual and small group intervention.)

Results of standardised tests are reported to parents/guardians using the end of year report card and at parent/teacher meetings. The STEN score is used to explain results to parents/guardians.

Screening

First step in identifying pupils who may need support in Literacy or Numeracy is for the class teacher to follow the Continuum of Support process and administer screening tests.

The particular screening measures that are administered will depend on the age and stage of development of the pupils.

At the end of Junior Infants Jolly Phonics Testing is administered by the SEN team. Also the Bellfield Test is administered in Term 2 of Junior Infants.

At the end of second term of Senior Infants the Mist Infant Screening Test is administered.

From the end of First Class onwards Standardised Norm Referenced Tests are used.

From first to sixth class the Drumcondra Maths and Drumcondra Reading Tests are administered.

The New NRIT is administered to 1st and 4th classes.

The Principal, in conjunction with all staff, analyses the results of these tests. The SEN team will then include the children in the SEN timetable. The results of end of year testing are included in end of year reports.

All parents/guardians sign a consent form to allow their child receive SEN support and to allow any testing deemed necessary by the SEN team.

Diagnostic Testing

Diagnostic tests have an important role to play in identifying children with learning difficulties. The administration of such tests from Senior Infants is in keeping with the approach recommended by Circular 02/05 and 13/17 where a staged approach is used by individual class teachers before recourse to diagnostic testing. Tests such as GL Assessments, Maths Recovery Assessment, The New Group Reading Test and Dyslexia Screener are used in this school.

Pupils over 6 who fail to respond to the classroom support stage and school support stage of the intervention procedures outlined in the Continuum of Support and Circular 13/17 are referred to an Education Psychologist. (See Special Education Needs Policy). A record of each child's performance in formal tests is maintained by the SEN Co-ordinator in a locked filing cabinet in Room 19. Each pupil has a file which is kept in the office with their personal details, results and reports. All data is sensitive to each child and therefore the cabinet must be locked at all times. (psychological reports, speech and language assessments, OT assessments/any sensitive data/reports.)

The Principal will ensure that details of student's psychological assessments are transferred with their Educational Passports to Secondary School.

Assessment of Learning and Assessment for Learning

As a school we are developing good practice in assessing learning. Results are used to select children for:

- Selecting necessary interventions if required
- To measure the progress of the children's learning

- To evaluate for planning targets of class teachers and SEN teachers

- As a guide for professional development

- To guide the school to select target areas of various subjects for further school development planning

- To report to parents/guardians

- To highlight good practice and school strengths

- To keep a clear focus on good teaching and learning

- To inform the BOM and DES of levels attained in Numeracy & Literacy

Assessment of Learning

(1) The following are among some of the methods of informal assessment that are used in the school

  ➢ Teacher observation

  ➢ Teacher designed tasks and tests

  ➢ Work samples, portfolios & projects

  ➢ Checklists

(2) The above assessment methods are used across the whole school, at the discretion of individual teachers, depending on the requirements of individual pupils, class level or subject and parents/guardians are given feedback on a regular basis.

(3) Depending on the subject and the class level and the needs of individual pupils, teachers may assemble portfolios of pupil assignments, work samples, projects.

(4) The school's plan for each curriculum subject addresses the issue of assessment

(5) Examples of teacher designed tasks/tests

  ➢ Weekly spelling test / Weekly table test

  ➢ Termly assessment in maths

  ➢ Assessments in Irish/English/maths designed by teachers

(6) We encourage children to use some of the following:

- WALT & WILF /TRAFFIC LIGHTS/THUMBS UP ETC.,
- Self-editing/drafting/redrafting
- Comments good/needs improvement
- Self-evaluation symbol ☺ ☹
- This data will be stored in assessment folders/children's copies

Assessment for Learning

Following professional reflection, we realise that our major emphasis to date has been on Assessment of Learning and that it is important that children reflect on and be aware of their own learning. (Assessment for Learning) We plan to ultimately teach children how to self-assess by using rubrics (age and genre specific). The children will be explicitly taught to use these.

Rubrics will be designed to:

a) Set clear learning targets/outcomes

b) Set criteria to make judgments before the child commences their work

c) Enable children to assess their own work according to the agreed criteria. See appendix A. (Sample Rubrics)

We intend to start with English Rubrics in 2022/2023 and expand this practice into other subjects over time.

We will also continue to use the following:

- WALT & WILF /TRAFFIC LIGHTS/THUMBS UP ETC.,
- Self-editing/drafting/redrafting
- Comments good/needs improvement
- Self-evaluation symbol ☺ ☹
- Selected samples of annotated work will be kept in Assessment folders /copies.

Success Criteria

This policy is considered successful if;

- Early identification and intervention is achieved
- Clarity is achieved regarding procedures involved in a staged approach
- Procedures are clear, with roles and responsibilities defined
- The Special Education team have clearly defined roles and objectives
- There is efficient transfer of information between teachers
- There is good communication between teachers and parents/guardians.

Roles and Responsibilities

Mainstream, 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 SEN Team assumes a primary role at Stage 3 when a Psychological Assessment may be required. Parents/guardians have a role at all stages and the lines of communication must be always kept open.

Ratification & Communication

This policy is now ready to be presented to the Board of Management for ratification by the Board of Management in October 2022.

Signed: *Brian T. Kennedy*

      Chairperson, Board of Management