

Introduction

This Policy was originally drafted in order to develop assessment procedures, which will provide an accurate account of children's progress and achievement in the ASD Class. Please also see our school Assessment policy.

Policy rationale

Assessment is the process of gathering, recording, interpreting, using, and reporting information about a child's progress and achievement in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes.

The Primary Curriculum emphasises in general terms, the importance of assessment in enabling the teacher to extend and enrich pupils' learning across all curriculum areas.

Research has highlighted more specifically how teachers can use assessment to make learning more enjoyable, more motivating and more successful for each child. The renewed focus on assessment recognises the growing confidence "that assessment can be used as a means of increasing child achievement and not simply as a means of measuring it" (O'Leary, 2006)

The core of the policy is that all pupils should experience success at school. It endeavours to identify at the earliest possible opportunity, pupils' specific learning difficulties that emanate from their diagnosis of autism and complex needs, putting in place a whole school response to their needs.

Relationship to the School Ethos.

Our ultimate goal would be to improve learning through effective assessment practices, ensuring that each pupil is enabled to reach their full potential.

Aims and objectives:

The primary aims/ objectives of the policy are:

1. Assessment should improve learning
2. Assessment methods should enable progress in all important learning goals to be facilitated and reported.
3. Assessment methods should promote the active engagement of the child in their learning and its assessment, when possible.
4. To create a procedure for monitoring achievement
5. To track learning processes which assist the long and short term planning of teachers.
6. To coordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis involving parents and pupils.

Principles

The following principles should guide the assessment process for children with a diagnosis of ASD:

- Assessment should involve careful attention to the signs and symptoms consistent with ASD as well as other coexisting needs.
- When a child has a diagnosis of ASD, a review of his or her developmental history in areas such as speech, communication, social and play skills is an important first step in the assessment process.
- Evaluation of academic achievement should be included in assessment and intervention planning to address learning and behavioural concerns in the child's overall school functioning.
- Assessment procedures should be designed to assist in the development of instructional objectives and intervention strategies based on the child's unique pattern of strengths and weaknesses.
- Because impairment in communication and social reciprocity are core features of ASD, a comprehensive developmental assessment should include both domains.
- Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process and a valuable formative tool.
- The outcomes of assessment modify our teaching methods, provide feedback on the Curriculum as well as indicate pupils' progress.
- Results of assessment are communicated in a way useful for pupils, teachers, parents and their interested parties.

The Assessment Process in School.

Assessment is an on-going process throughout the child's education. Therefore, it is important that all members of the teaching staff in the ASD classes are involved in developing, implementing, and reviewing the assessment policy. Parents should be also involved in the assessment policy, which helps in creating a sense of ownership and allows for a more effective implementation.

Assessment and planning are interrelated; please see below the School Development Planning model obtained from the NCCA .



The purpose of the Policy

There is a legislative requirement for schools to have an assessment policy and the guidelines set out the relevant implications for recording and reporting about children's progress and achievement. The implications of the Education Act (1998), Data Protection (Amendment) Act (2003), the Equal Status Act (2000), Education (Welfare) Act (2000), the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) and the Freedom of Information Acts (1997 & 2003) are outlined. The guidelines also include some useful information on the roles of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) in supporting children's learning.

The NCCA refers to the purposes of assessment as;

- An integral part of the teaching and learning process;
- To facilitate pupil performance by providing information;
- The skilled and judicious use for a variety of assessment techniques which can have a positive effect on classroom practice;
- A formative and diagnostic process;
- The teacher as professional with a central role in the assessment of pupils.

While specific activities of the assessment process will vary and depend on the child's age, history, referral questions, and any previous evaluations and assessments, the following components should be included in a best practice assessment and evaluation of ASD in school-age children:

- Record review
- Developmental and medical history
- Medical screening and/or evaluation
- Parent/caregiver interview
- Parent/teacher ratings of social competence
- Direct child observation
- Cognitive assessment
- Academic assessment
- Adaptive behaviour assessment
- Communication and language assessment

Children with ASD often demonstrate additional problems beyond those associated with the core domains. Therefore, other areas should be included in the assessment battery depending on the referral question, history, and core evaluation results.

These may include:

- Sensory processing
- Executive function and attention
- Motor skills
- Family system
- Coexisting behavioural/emotional problems

Assessment of Learning (AoL)

This includes reporting on the child's progress and achievements to parents and others relevant people such as the SENO, the principal or the school's psychologist.

Assessment for Learning (AfL).

This is also called formative assessment; it involves both, teachers and children using assessment to improve learning. Self and peer assessment are important aspects of assessment for learning practice. Assessing their own work or that of others can help pupils develop their understanding of learning objectives and success criteria. Research has shown that pupils make more progress when they are actively involved in their own learning and assessment.

Assessment for Learning is about assessing progress and analysing and feeding back the outcomes of that assessment positively and constructively to:

1. Agree actions to help the child improve
2. Adapt teaching methods to meet the child's identified needs.

In St. Anne's ASD class, our Assessment for Learning follows on from initial and diagnostic assessment and continues throughout a child's course of learning. It is our intention that teachers will assess each child in Term 1, using one of the diagnostic tools below. Teachers will then follow up this assessment in Term 3 of the same academic year, for the purpose of having an up-to-date assessment for the beginning of the following school year. Scores will be recorded and stored in the ASD class (in the assessment folder) and accessed by the class teacher as needed. The results will be analysed by the Principal, Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator, and Class Teacher.

The diagnostic assessments utilised in the ASD Class are as follows:

- The Psychoeducational Profile-Third Edition (**PEP-3**) to assess pupils who are under the age of 6 if appropriate.
- The Verbal Behaviour Milestones Assessment and Placement Program: The **VB-MAPP** to assess pupils who are at the ages from 4-14.
- Basic Behaviour Checklist

Please note, the assessment tools mentioned may vary in accordance with the child's needs and abilities. The school personnel involved in assessing will choose the most appropriate assessment tool. All assessments will be stored in a locked cabinet in the classroom and treated with the utmost confidence. They will only be shared with other professionals on a need to know basis. The results of these assessments will be discussed with parents at our termly Individual Educational Profile (IEP) meetings.

Psychological Assessment

On admission, every child will have a psychological assessment with a diagnosis of autism and multi-disciplinary team report (Please refer to Enrolment Policy). Each child's report is kept in a locked filing cabinet in the ASD classroom, and a copy is kept in their Assessment folder. The reports are available to teachers, the Co-Ordinator and the school Principal to study and analyse. They form the basis of each child's Individual Education Plan, along with other assessments conducted by the teachers. The assessments must remain in the school, they are not allowed to be photocopied and taken from the school premises.

A school leaver will take priority for a NEPS/HSE assessment, and therefore, the Principal/ Class teacher will contact the parents for permission to secure a Psychological Assessment for their child when a child is 5th class age.

Assessment Folder.

Each teacher should have an assessment folder in their class, this folder supports their assessment practice by providing a dedicated place to gather and record relevant information in the progress and achievement of the whole class and individual pupil learning. This information of evidence of learning is gathered using a variety of assessment methods during the year. How teachers use the information gathered is a key part of the assessment process.

The information gathered and recorded in the assessment folder serves two purposes:

1. Reporting on the child's learning progress and achievements to parents and other relevant people. This is Assessment of Learning (AoL)
2. Identifying the next steps to be taken to improve the child's learning. This process is called assessment for learning (AfL)

Suggestions of what to include in an Assessment folder: (See Appendix 1)

Section A: General Class Records

This section includes standardised tests results, class checklists, and/or whole-class diagnostic test results.

Section B: Children Profiles

This section can be subdivided into sections i.e. one per child. The following information may be included for each child:

(Teacher's may also decide to have individual assessment folders per child if they feel one folder is not sufficient)

1. Passport

Child's name, interests, strengths, needs, important notes from Parent- Teacher meetings

2. Psychological Assessment

3. Child's Diagnostic Assessment

This could include the individual child's VB-MAPP profile, PEP-3 profile etc.

4. Informal Assessment

The forms of assessment used in our school include all of the following

- Teacher observation and checklists
- Teacher designed task and tests,
- Childs' self- assessment whereby possible

Records of teacher-designed tests are kept in the Assessment folder and fortnightly plans are kept in each child's records folder.

5. Work Samples

Selected samples of the child's work. When selecting samples of children's work for inclusion in the assessment folder, teachers will have to consider how these samples will support their reporting learning progress to parents and others (AoL) and identifying the next steps needed to improve the child's learning (AfL).

Recording/Records Folder

Each child has a records folder which contains as follows:

- Fortnightly plans
- Behaviour support plans
- IEPs
- Speech and Language Therapist guidelines (if applicable)
- End of the year Report

Compulsory

Stored in the class

This file is passed from teacher to teacher as the child progresses through the school.

Documentation that each teacher needs to forward to the School's secretary is as follows:

- IEPS, and end of the year reports.
- Speech and language therapy, Occupational therapist and psychological reports, consent forms etc.

Staff Roles and responsibilities.

Teachers, and the Principal assume shared responsibility.

On admission the class teacher has responsibility to assess the pupil.

During the School year informal assessments are conducted by the class teacher and supported by classroom staff.

The classroom teacher, has the responsibility of assessing pupils on areas that are paramount to children with ASD:

- Social skills
- Attention skills
- Behaviour related issues

Principal/SENCO assumes a primary role when a Psychological Assessment may be required.

Parents have a role at all stages and the lines of communication must be kept open.

Success Criteria

This policy is considered successful if:

- Early identification and intervention is achieved.
- Procedures are clear and roles and responsibilities are defined.
- There is efficient transfer of information between teachers and relevant school professionals

Implementation

This policy is effective immediately.

Ratification & Communication

This policy was ratified by the Chairperson of the Board of Management on _____

Review Timetable.

This policy will be reviewed at the end of December 2016 and amended as necessary by means of a whole school collaborative process.

Evaluation

This policy is monitored on an ongoing basis.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Management:

Chairman: _____ Date :

Principal: _____ Date:

Appendix 1:

Assessment Policy – Folder Organisation

Filing Cabinet

Each child needs a **file** in the top drawer of the ASD class filing cabinet. Their school application, parent interview, all psychological assessments, and any related correspondence (copies of letters to the SENO/services etc) are to be stored here. The cabinet will be locked at all times.

Assessment Folder (Red)

This should be subdivided with one section per child and it should contain the following

- Child's passport
- Child's most up to date psychological assessment
- Child's Diagnostic Assessment (VB-MAPP, PEP-3)
- Informal Assessment (Preference Assessments, Life Skills Assessments, Individual Observation notes, Checklists/Tests)
- Work Samples

The teacher may also decide to have a **class assessment folder**. This could contain assessments from class groupings, class checklists, and any whole class test results.

Records/Planning Folder (Green)

Each teacher must have a **records/planning folder** per child. This should have

- Behaviour Support plans and related graphs/functional assessment information/data
- IEP's
- Fortnightly plans
- Speech and Language/Occupational Therapist guidelines/recommendations
- End of year report

(This records folder will move with the child from class to class and will be available for mainstream class teachers and substitute teachers who will be working with the children to view.)

