

Assessment and Evaluation Policy

In developing this school assessment policy, St. Mary's Junior School was guided by various legislative requirements. (See appendix C Legislative requirements of schools in relation to assessment policy, assessment in The Primary School Curriculum, p. 95 and 96). These are enshrined in:

- The Education Act (1998)
- The Data Protection (Amendment) Act (2003)
- The Equal Status Act (2000)
- The Education (Welfare) Act (2000)
- The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)
- The Freedom of Information Acts (1997, 2003)

Introduction:

Definition:

'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'

Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for Schools' (NCCA)

Assessment forms an integral part of the teaching and learning process. It relates to all curricular areas and to the social, personal and physical development of the children.

Assessment involves gathering information to understand better how each child is progressing at school, his/her readiness for learning, and using that information to further the child's learning. Assessment therefore goes beyond testing

Assessment is about building a picture over time of a child's progress and/or achievement in learning across the Primary School Curriculum. Information about *how* the child learns (the learning process) and *what* the child learns (the products of learning) shapes this picture.

The curriculum describes assessment as having four functions – formative, summative, evaluative and diagnostic. However this policy, in line with NCCA Assessment Guidelines, focuses on two principal approaches to assessment:

Assessment for Learning (AfL) – (the teacher uses evidence on an ongoing basis to inform teaching and learning)

Assessment of Learning (AoL) – (the teacher periodically records children's progress and achievement for the purpose of reporting to parents, teachers and other relevant persons)

AfL helps teachers focus on three key questions:

- Where are the children now in their learning?

- Where are the children going in their learning?
- How will children get to the next point in their learning?

Aims:

- To build a picture over time of a child's progress and/or achievement in learning across the Primary School Curriculum.
- To contribute to teaching and learning by evaluating the efficacy of learning objectives, content and methodologies in use.
- To inform and involve children and parents in the assessment and learning process.
- To identify and address learning needs through the continuum of support model.

Principles of Good Assessment:

- Clearly specifying what is to be assessed has priority in the assessment process. The teacher needs to clearly specify the intended outcome(s) before selecting the assessment approaches to use.
 - An assessment approach or mode is selected because of its relevance to the characteristics or performance to be measured.
 - Comprehensive assessment requires a variety of approaches. No single type of instrument or approach can assess all areas of learning and development.
 - Proper use of assessment approaches requires an awareness of their limitations. A healthy awareness of the limitations of assessment approaches and instruments makes it possible to use them more effectively.
 - Assessment is a means to an end, not an end in itself. The information gleaned as a result of assessment should benefit the student by informing teaching.
- Linn, R.,L.& Gronlund, N.E./ (2000), Measurement and Assessment in Teaching (8th ed) Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.

Guidelines for teachers:

Assessment as part of Classroom Practice (NCCA)



The NCCA's guidelines on assessment focus on two principal approaches to assessment – assessment for learning (AfL – formative assessment) and assessment of learning (AoL – summative assessment). The renewed focus on assessment recognizes the growing confidence “that assessment can be used as a means of increasing student achievement and not simply as a means of measuring it” (O’Leary, 2006).

AfL is child centered. It takes place during the process of learning and involves using a range of methods. Formative assessment occurs when the teacher together with the pupil, reflect in a formal or informal way using methods ranging from self-assessment, conferencing, portfolios, concept mapping, questioning, teacher observation and teacher designed tasks and tests.

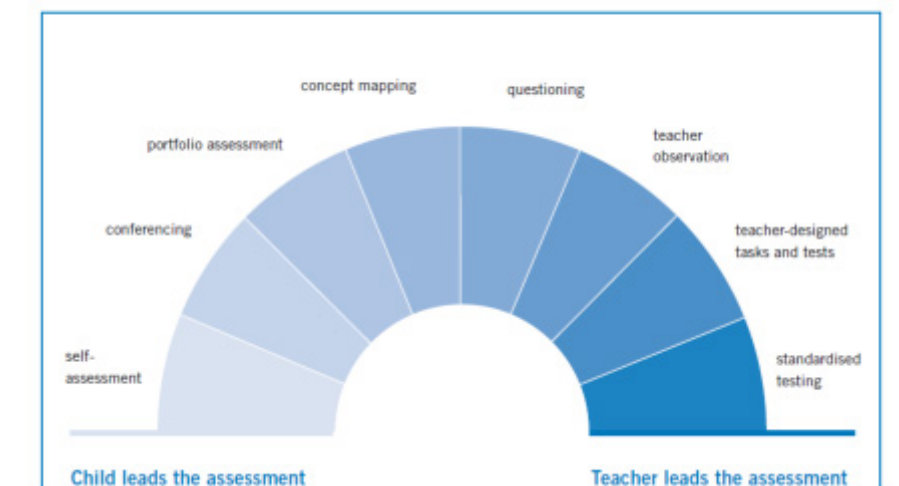
In particular teachers are encouraged to:

- Keep and maintain and records of assessments.
- Be explicit in terms of ‘what we are learning’ and desired outcomes ‘what I’m looking for’.
- Encourage self-assessment in children i.e. providing criteria and getting the children to look at their own work in a reflective way, identify aspects that are good and that could be improved, and then set personal targets for themselves.
- Talk and listen to the child (and parents) about the child’s work (e.g. in portfolio) to illicit ideas about strengths, achievements and how learning can be improved (Conferencing)
- Keep sample folders of children’s work – (actual work or using ICT to generate pictures/scans of same) – involve children in selecting work for portfolio.
- Use skills-books and samples of work in copies to evaluate progress.
- Engage in observation, spontaneous or planned to monitor skill development e.g. social skills, language skills, physical skills and listening skills.
- Liaise with parents regularly re child’s progress.

- Where appropriate, liaise with other specialist teachers on staff, and with outside professionals.
- Use teacher-designed tasks and tests for both AfL and AoL. These can be
 - Used throughout the school year as a basis for continuous assessment (AfL) or
 - Used at the end of a period of learning AoL
 - Tasks could include tests/tasks for maths and reading, spellings and tables, checklists, reading records, , participation / enjoyment, tests/tasks associated with particular schemes in use, tests/tasks to check mastery of particular learning objectives etc.
- Use Standardised Tests: Micra T and Sigma T. These are done during the third Term in First Class. Results used as basis for discussion at class group and whole school level and to inform learning support provision. A copy of standardised tests for each class is maintained in the school office and by the class teacher. These results may help inform curriculum decisions and differentiation. Results pertaining to an individual child are reported to his/her parents. The results of the standardised tests are given and explained at parent-teacher meetings. Trends may form the basis of discussion at staff meetings.
- Attendance, particularly where it impinges on progress is monitored and recorded.

A range of methods are available for assessing learning are given below .

Figure 2: A continuum of assessment methods



Standardised Tests:

These contain standardised procedures for administering, scoring and interpreting. They are Norm referenced i.e. the test allows the teacher to compare the child's performance with the performance of children at that class level and age in other Irish primary schools.

The following standardised tests are administered in St. Mary's Junior N.S:

Sigma T Mathematics Test

Micra T Reading Test.

Interpreting scores of Standardised tests.

Standard Score Range	Descriptor	Coverage
130 and above	Well above average/ extremely high	2% of pupils
120-129	Above average / high	7% of pupils
110-119	High average	16% of pupils
90-109	Average	50% of pupils
80-89	Low average	16% of pupils
70-79	Below average/ Low	7% of pupils
Below 70	Well below average/ extremely low	2% of pupils

Other tests used in the school include:

- Infants BPVS Test (First term in School)
- Bury Infant Test (Third term in Junior Infants).
- M.I.S.T in Senior Infants (Middle Term)
- Senior Infant Maths Screening Test
- Reading Recovery assessments
- NRIT Test (Administered by Learning Support/Resource Teacher first term in First class)
- Diagnostic testing as appropriate by Learning Support/ Resource Teacher
- Maths Recovery assessments

Record Keeping:

- Each class teacher keeps detailed records of assessments relating to his/her own class.
- A file established on each child on enrolment: Speech & Language Reports, Psychological Reports etc. are stored in this. This file kept is in retained in the school office.
- Class teachers send copies of test results, class support plans, IEP's etc. for filing in the child's file.
- Learning Support Teachers keep details of IEP's and other plans. These are added to the child's file in the main office when the period of instruction is complete.
- Class teachers maintain their own records of progress: aspects of which may be added to the main file as deemed appropriate.
- A single page Record is maintained on each child recording results of standardised tests. A Copy kept in the main office. These results are used to inform curriculum decisions

Assessment for Teaching English as an Additional Language (TEAL)

Criteria for Selection

Informal Assessment:

- Observation of new EAL student in class by class teacher and EAL teacher, focusing on language and listening skills
- Checklist by class teacher
- Interview of student by EAL teacher
- Parent –Teacher meetings with parents of EAL students.
- Class teacher gives progress feedback report to EAL teacher termly

Formal Assessment

- Placement Assessment Tests for new EAL students at beginning of school year (Primary School Assessment Kit)
- Assessment Test 2. All EAL students (not Junior Infants) in Dec and Jan
- Assessment Test 3. All EAL students (not junior infants) May
- Placement Assessment Tests for all students in Junior Infants to assess needs for following year. These tests are repeated in September.
- Junior Infant EAL students are not withdrawn. They receive in class support from class teacher and EAL teacher.

Intervention programmes under DEIS

Reading Recovery

Criteria for selection:

Senior Infants or First Class Children between the ages of 5.9 to 6.6. (4 children at a time for up to 20- weeks)

Assessments involve:

- Letter Identification
- Duncan Word Test
- Writing Vocabulary
- Hearing and Recording sounds in words
- Concepts about print
- Running records
- British Ability Scales

Maths Recovery

Criteria for selection:

9-12 first class children are selected for assessment (based on teacher observation and diagnostic testing)

Assessment test used is M.R. Assessment Interview Schedule 1.1 which assesses:

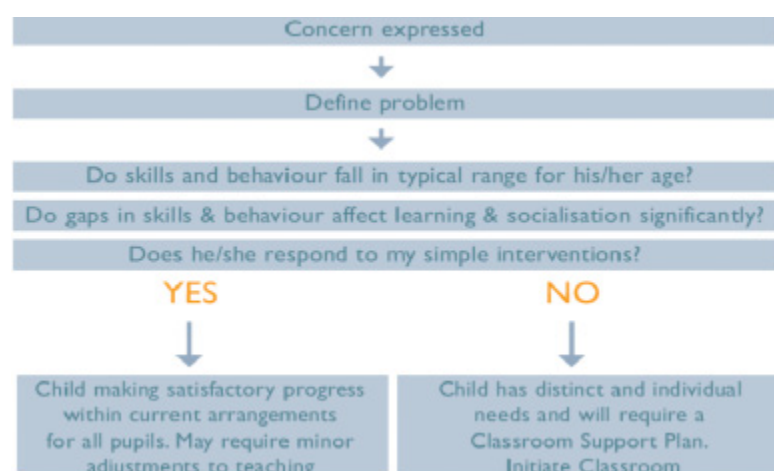
- Early arithmetical strategies
- Numerical knowledge
- Forward Number Word Sequence
- Backward Number word Sequence
- Number Identification

Based on the results, 1-2 individual children per term are selected for intensive daily one-to-one teaching. Also small group teaching using MR methods can take place in the learning support room.

Assessment for Special Needs – Continuum of Support

All children are unique and special educational needs can occur on a continuum from mild to severe and from transitory to enduring. St. Mary's Junior School follows a graduated approach to identification and programme planning. 'Special educational Needs: a Continuum of Support', guidelines are implemented throughout the school. The continuum of support encompasses a graduated problem-solving model of assessment and intervention, which is comprised of three distinct school based procedures:

The problem solving process focussing on identifying and addressing the special education needs of individual children.

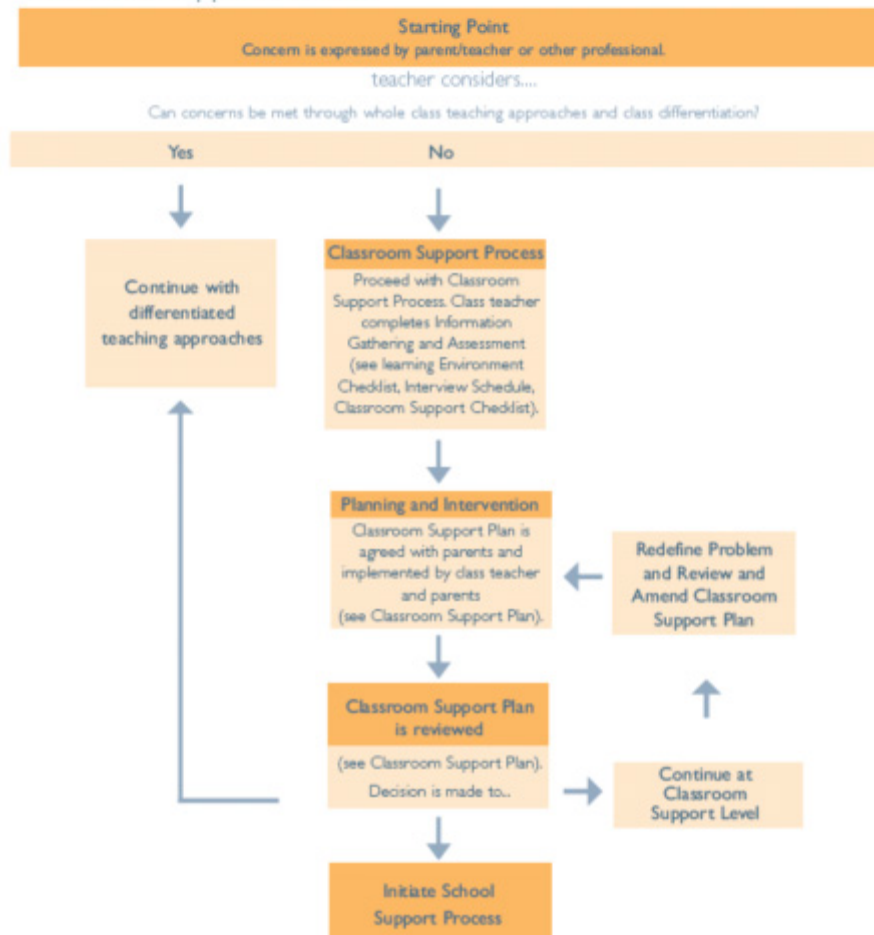


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Classroom Support: Stage 1

This is an intervention process coordinated by the class teacher and carried out within the regular classroom. Problem solving at this level typically begins when a parent or teacher has concerns about an individual child. The teacher and parents discuss the nature of the problem and consider strategies to address the concern. The various checklists (Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support; Resource Pack for Teachers) are completed and a copy placed in the child's file in the office.

Classroom Support Process



School Support: Stage 2

This involves a more intensive problem solving process, building on information gathered and interventions carried out under Classroom Support. While the Class teacher retains overall responsibility for the pupil's learning, the learning support/resource teacher will be involved at this stage. School Support involves a systematic gathering of information and the development and monitoring of a School Support Plan or an Individual Pupil Learning Profile.

The Process (p.22, Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support)

Starting Point

This process is initiated when interventions are needed which are different and/or additional to those provided by the Classroom Support Plan

Information Gathering and Assessment

1. Information gathering from class teacher including Classroom Support Checklists, Plans and Reviews
2. Results from Screening Tests
3. Individual assessments carried out by Learning Support/ Resource Teacher can include the following tests:

- English Literacy Test
- Early Numeracy Test
- Jackson Phonics
- Hodder Oral Reading Test
- York Assessment
- Sight vocabulary tests based on Dolch Lists

4. Information gathered from the Parents

5. Information gathered from the pupil

Planning and Intervention

A School support Plan or an IPLP is put in place. This could include:

A description of the child's learning/social, emotional and behavioural strengths and difficulties.

Targets to be achieved within a given time frame

Actions to support the pupil in achieving these targets. (within class and/or within school).

All Junior Infant children receive school support in class.

Materials and equipment needed

Parental involvement and support at home, agreed with parents

Medical, speech and language therapy

Monitoring arrangements

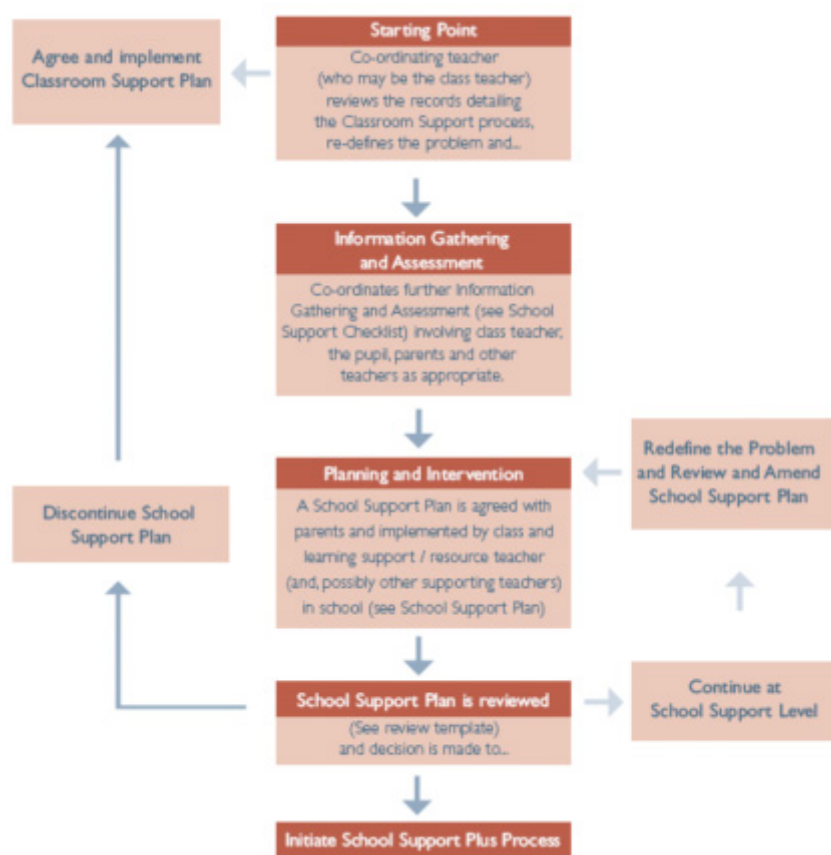
Review Date

The Review Process

The outcome of the process may be:

1. The pupil continues to have a School Support Plan
2. Intervention reverts to a Classroom Support Plan
3. The School Support Plan Plus Process is initiated

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School Support Plus: Stage 3

School Support Plus applies to those pupils whose needs are enduring and/or severe and complex and whose progress is considered inadequate despite interventions carried out in Classroom support and/or School Support plans. This group may include pupils with High Incident and Low Incident Disabilities as defined by the DES in Circular 02/05.

The co-ordinating teacher will support the class teacher and any other supporting teachers including the H.S.C.L teacher in gathering further information to inform the assessment process. Following the gathering of information, the co-ordinating teacher may with parental consent, request the involvement of appropriate external professionals. These can include:

- Visiting Teachers
- Educational Psychologists
- Clinical Psychologists
- Psychiatrists
- Occupational Therapists
- Speech and Language Therapists
- Play and Art Therapists
- Outside School Facilities (Breakfast clubs, Fun Clubs, Get Ahead Club, Spideog)

Pupils needing support at this level will have their needs and interventions detailed and monitored through an Individual education Plan (IEP). Learning Support/Resource Teachers/Support Teachers are responsible for the development and delivery of individualised or small group programmes in support of the targets identified in the IEP. The class teacher remains responsible for:

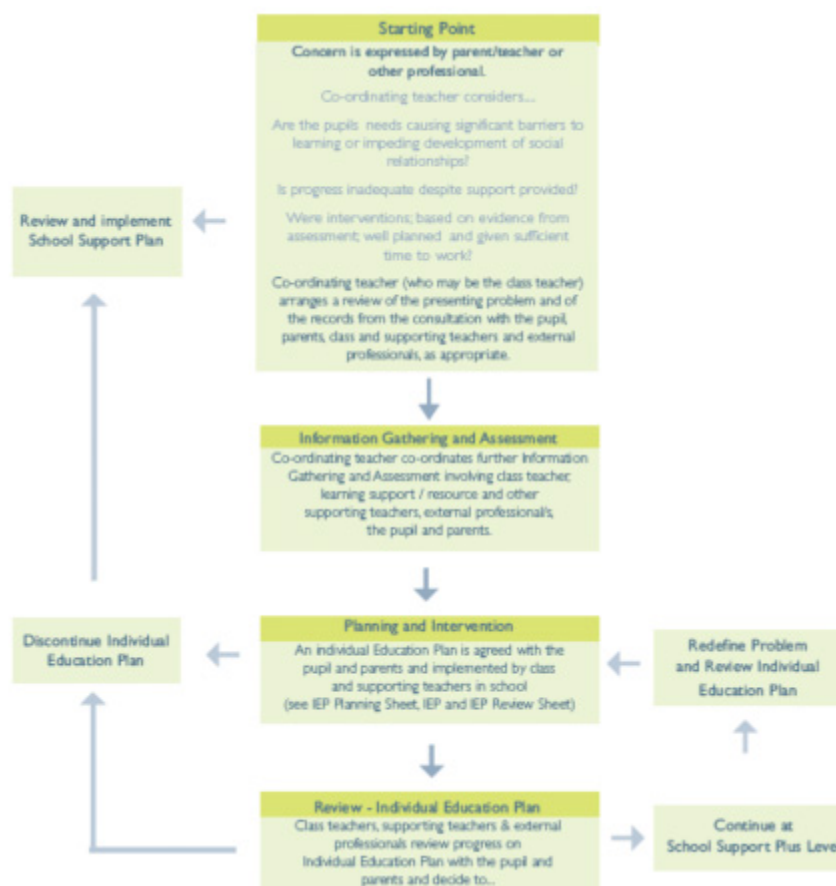
- Working with the pupil on a daily basis
- Implementing any classroom based accommodations and delivering some of the differentiated individualised or group interventions/programmes identified in the IEP.
- Contributes to the review process.

The School Support Plus will generally involve external professionals and support services in a more detailed problem solving process to help the pupil. The plan is reviewed regularly with parents and pupil.

Some pupils may qualify for resource hours (Circular 02/05) and some benefit from access to a Special Needs Assistant but this is dependant on recommendations from a SENO. (Special Educational Needs Organiser)

School Support Plus Process

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Evaluation of the policy:

This policy was reviewed during November / December 2010.