



Assessment & Recording Policy

St Brendans BNS

Introductory Statement

This policy is a record of practice in St Brendans BNS regarding assessment and record keeping in the different areas of the curriculum by individual teachers in their various roles, and by the educational services we access. It was formulated by the school staff following in-service meetings and planning sessions. It is informed by the Curriculum Statements, Curriculum Guidelines of the Department of Education and Skills, NCCA Assessment in the Primary School, Circular 56/2011- Initial steps in the Implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and by the completed policies in various curricular areas.

Rationale

“Assessment is an essential element of the teaching & learning process” (Curr. Guidelines)

The core of our policy is that all children should experience success at school. This policy endeavours to identify at the earliest possible opportunity, children who may have learning difficulties and put in place a whole school response to their needs. An effective assessment policy is central to these core objectives. The purpose of assessment in St Brendans BNS is to provide continuous detailed information about pupils’ development, their knowledge, their grasp of concepts and their mastery of skills. This will in turn inform, guide and direct teaching & learning in our school. We acknowledge that assessment is an essential component of a successful teaching and learning environment.

Our aims are:

- To have in place coordinated approaches to assessment in St Brendans BNS that will best facilitate the learning process, and will provide the most relevant information about the progress of individual children.
- To examine each curricular area and outline the different assessment procedures that can be used
- To have in place a coordinated method of recording assessment.
- To continue to develop an effective system of assessment that provides us with the means of identifying the needs of individual children, and enables us to plan and modify our teaching strategies to facilitate effective learning.
- To inform planning for all areas of the curriculum
- To contribute to the school’s strategy for the prevention of learning difficulties
- To monitor pupil’s progress by comparison with their own previous attainments, with the attainments of their current class peers and with nationally standardised norms.

This policy is geared towards using assessment to inform planning and identify the needs of all pupils, including the exceptionally gifted, so that adequate strategies are in place early enough to facilitate remediation. These strategies may include pupil self-assessment, pupil profiling, two-way communication between parents and teachers, modification of teacher programmes, Individual Pupil Learning Profiles and Individual Education Plans as used in Learning Support and Resource rooms.

Assessment Planning –

1. Ongoing Assessment in the curricular areas – Class teachers
2. Standardised Testing and Screening – the whole-school approach.
3. Educational Assessment from Support Services
4. Assessment for children with different needs

1. Ongoing Assessment in the curricular areas – Class Teachers

All teachers at each class level engage in continuous assessment throughout the year. Individual curricular areas will require teachers to choose the most appropriate tools of assessment. These will be determined by the aims and objectives of the teaching and learning programme. Teachers in St Brendans BNS use a wide range of assessment modes & techniques which may include the following:

Teacher observation
Teacher designed tasks and tests*
Self-assessment
Questioning
Work samples/ Portfolios.
Pupil profiles.
Projects.
Concept mapping.
Checklists.
Curricular profiles.
Standardised testing.
Screening tests.
Diagnostic tests.
End-of-year reports.
Parental feedback and observation.

*Any of the above approaches may be utilised by individual teachers as part of their continuous assessment of individual curricular areas. St Brendans BNS recognises the importance of Assessment for Learning(AFL). Teachers gather information for AFL as part of the general classroom routine. AFL also involves the learner actively and offers ways of involving the child in reflecting on and assessing his/her work.

As a school we have decided the following specific approaches to teacher testing:

Formal teacher testing will begin in 2nd class.

During the first and second term subject-based formal tests in English, Gaeilge and Maths will be administered by the class teacher

The testing of History, Geography, and Science is to be at the individual teacher's discretion

Teachers at the same level should consult when formulating class tests, but may devise their own tests; samples of tests are retained in a school file for future reference

A variety of test-formats will be employed

Tests should be completed within a given timeframe.

Children will be familiarised with different test-taking formats and skills

Children should be instructed in utilising time productively during tests.

Results of these tests will be recorded in a class summary sheet and may be sent home as part of the Christmas report.

As such, these tests are Assessment of learning (AOL) and they aid the ongoing planning of teaching and learning approaches. (End-of-year testing would be summative assessment, i.e. it tells us what the pupil has attained at the end of a programme of instruction).

Teachers are advised to refer to the curriculum guidelines and to our school policies in subject areas for guidance when selecting the most appropriate assessment modes & techniques.

2. Standardised Testing and Screening: the whole-school approach

A formal whole school approach to assessment will co-exist with individual teacher assessment. This will help identify pupils with greater needs and be instrumental in pupil selection for supplementary teaching. The whole school approach will also identify learning areas that need focus or modification at both class and school level and will have implications for ongoing curricular review.

Non-Reading Intelligence Test (N.R.I.T.) is administered to pupils in the final term of 1st class in their previous school. These results are forwarded to St Brendans to assist in assessment of pupils for Learning Support purposes. Selection of pupils for English Learning Support in the first term of Second Class is decided by the LS teacher, based on results of formal assessment using the Micra-T/Drumcondra Reading tests during the final term in 1st class in their previous schools.

The following whole school decisions have been made in relation to standardized testing:

- Drumcondra tests are used for measuring standards in Reading
- Sigma- T tests are used to measure standards in Mathematics.
- All classes from Second class upwards are tested.
- The tests are usually administered in the last week of May or first week of June by the class teacher.
- The staff analyse the results in June for allocation of resources to pupils in September.
- Standard and Percentile Rankings scores are recorded on the class Record template and stored centrally in the strong room with a copy held in the learning support office.
- The Learning Support / Resource teacher will administer the test to those pupils who were absent on the day the test was administered. The Learning Support and Resource teachers are responsible for marking the tests, and recording the outcomes.

- New pupils joining the school at the beginning or during the school year are tested if results are not available from previous schools.
- In accordance with the National Literacy and Numeracy strategy arrangements are put in place for aggregated results of standardised tests in St Brendans BNS to be reported once annually to the Board of Management and the Department of Education.
- Analysis of these results will inform the implementation of programmes to address areas of further improvement. Each pupil in the school is tracked using these scores from 2nd to 6th class
- Results are given in writing in school report at the end of the school year using a Sten score and descriptor, and are discussed at the parent teacher meetings in October where relevant.
- Pupils at or below the 10th percentile will receive learning support.

Diagnostic Assessment

If after initial screening further intervention is required for diagnostic testing/ supplementary teaching, the parents approval is sought. Tests are administered by the Learning Support and Resource Teachers following referral by the class teachers in consultation with parents / guardians. The administration of such tests is in keeping with the approach recommended by Circular 02/05 where a staged approach is used by the individual class teachers before recourse to diagnostic testing /psychological assessment. Parents are provided with test results and if a psychological assessment is warranted, parental permission is sought and a consent form is completed. The Principal will facilitate such an assessment happening.

The diagnostic tests used in the school include –

- Single Word Spelling Test
- Single Word Reading Test
- Dolch Word List
- NEPS Phonics skills Check
- NEPS First 100 word Checklist
- NEPS Second 100 word Checklist
- Free Sample of pupil's writing
- Analysis of language samples
- Oral language checklists
- Reading Running Records
- Mathemagic End of year Assessments
- Ballard West Timed Arithmetic Number Fact Test
- LASS Junior dyslexia screening
- Behavioural check lists & Assessments from NEPS Behavioural, Emotional & Social Difficulties: A Continuum of Support, Guidelines for teachers

3. Educational Assessment from Support Services

Psychological Assessment

Some pupils who continue to present with significant learning needs will require more intensive intervention. If stages 1 and 2 fail to deliver adequate intervention the class teacher / Principal will contact the parents for permission to secure a Psychological Assessment for their child. An assessment will determine the subsequent level of intervention, be it Learning Support, Resource hours or an Individual Education Plan. The most common forms of assessment used in our school are teacher observation, teacher designed tests, projects and homework (informal assessment). On receipt of the psychological assessment, a meeting will be arranged between (a) The L.S. / Resource teacher and the class teacher and (b) L.S. / Resource/ Class teacher and parents to discuss and evaluate the report. An Individual Education Plan will then be drawn up. St Brendans BNS is obliged to report assessment information when requested to other teachers, other schools and the children themselves where appropriate. The school is also obliged to share assessment information with other individuals who are involved in the child's education, including DES inspectors, NEPS Psychologists, SENOs, and Educational Welfare Officers as well as other professionals such as speech and language therapists and Occupational Therapists. Parents are informed when this information is to be shared. Psychological reports will be held in a locked filing cabinet in the office.

Our school is supported by the National Educational Psychological Service. Pupils are referred to this service when serious concerns arise regarding individual pupils with learning, behaviour, social and emotional development. Our N.E.P.S. psychologist will

- Engage in individual casework with students with special needs.
- Advise teachers and parents when devising and evaluating appropriate interventions for such students.
- Provide a consultancy service to teachers and parents of students with special needs.
- Contribute to whole school planning in relation to the inclusion of these children.
- Parents may also choose to have their children privately assessed.
- Parents of children with speech and language difficulties are referred to Speech and Language Unit HSE. The school may refer pupils to appropriate services e.g. Occupational Therapy
- Recommend counselling in consultation with parents.

4. Assessment for children with different needs

The resulting recommendations from these reports will assist teachers to plan effectively for individual special needs pupils. Due consideration must be given to the sensitive nature of these

educational reports. They are to be filed in the pupil's file in the principal's office. All reports must be returned to the child's individual file when he or she moves class.

Recording Procedures

All referrals for assessment must be recorded in June of each school year on the appropriate class sheet. These class record sheets are filed by the teacher with responsibility for assessment. This

resource will inform the class teacher of pupils in their class who have been assessed formally and alert them to pupils whose reports are outstanding.

Children with Different Needs

As outlined in the Special Education Needs policy, identification and selection for supplementary teaching are informed by

- (a) Formal educational assessment
- (b) Observation and judgement of the classroom teacher in consultation with the Learning Support teacher and parents.
- (c) Outcomes of standardised testing

Screening instruments include NRIT and Drumcondra Primary Reading Test and SIGMA - T tests. Additional specific testing instruments will be employed by individual teachers (Comprehensive list in resource section of this document).

Monitoring progress / ongoing assessment

As outlined in Special Educational Needs policy, ongoing monitoring of the pupil's progress will ensure that the supplementary teaching programme will be responsive to the pupil's need at all times.

- (a) Learning Support/ EAL

Pupil progress will be monitored using the following methods:

Daily observation of pupil's work by LS teacher and classroom teacher

Formal and informal assessment

Consultation with –class teacher, Resource teacher, Parents and other professionals

Review of learning objectives / targets in IPLP

Non English Speaking pupils are assessed according to English language proficiency Benchmarks (derived from Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)

- (b) Resource Teaching

Pupil progress will be monitored using the following methods:

Daily observation of pupil's work by Resource Teacher and classroom teacher

Termly IEP Reviews

Testing in consultation with class teachers and Learning Support teachers

Consultation with class teacher, Resource teacher, Parents and other professionals

Gifted Children

Screening for Giftedness occurs in Second class when the Learning Support teacher and Principal reviews the NRIT. Our school's standardised tests are also used to identify these pupils in conjunction with performance on class tests.

Recording of Assessment in St Brendans BNS

Teacher's Records

Teacher's keep his/her own day to day records of observations/remarks/incidents as they occur in the classroom and playground.

2nd – 6th

All written tests are recorded by the teacher. Worksheets, work samples, class test to be kept in an individual folder.

Recording of Standardised Tests

The results of Drumcondra English and Sigma – T tests are recorded in two places:

The class summary record sheet, copies of which are retained by the Learning Support Teacher and by the class teacher (kept in general class file).

The pupil's individual file on Databiz which is stored on the Principal's computer

Both sten score and percentile ranking is to be included in recording.

Completed test booklets are retained in the pupil's file for the period of 1 year.

A school file with all class summary sheets for standardised tests and screening tests will be maintained and kept by the Principal in English and Maths.

Recording of referrals and received written reports from outside agencies.

All referrals and received written reports are recorded on the inside cover of the pupil's file in the main office by the class teacher. A summary class sheet recording this information is circulated in June and filled in by the class teacher.

Pupil's File

Each pupil has an individual file which is stores digitally in the main office. This file may be accessed by the Principal and the Secretary. Psychological reports, reports from outside agencies and

exemptions from Irish are stored in the Principal's office. It is hoped that we can scan many of these reports and store them digitally in the near future.

Pupils also have a file in the main office which is used to store documents filed by the class teacher principal and the S.E.N. team.

The file contains

- Enrolment data
- Medical history
- Previous school information
- Christmas & Summer test information
- Incident sheets
- Copies of reports
- All teachers have unlimited access to these files.
- Pupil's files are retained by the school until the pupil reaches the age of twenty one.

Equality of Participation and Access

It is policy in our school that all children have equal access to education. Assessment is a prerequisite for effective learning. Therefore, St Brendans BNS will ensure that all pupils can benefit from the school's assessment policy, resulting in the optimum learning environment.

Consideration may be given to alternative assessment settings / arrangements when administering tests to

- (a) Some pupils with learning difficulties
- (b) Pupils exempted from Irish
- (c) Newly arrived pupils to Ireland whose standard of English might invalidate results
- (d) Pupils with speech and language disorder

Resources and ICT

Assessment instruments available in St Brendans BNS are listed on Appendix B.

Staff Development

Staff development in assessment will be facilitated through the following:

- Access to professional development courses (BOM-supported)
- Access to current research, reference books and resource materials
- Allocated time at staff meetings for discussion and review of assessment techniques.
- Support from PPDS Primary Professional Development Services, NEPS representatives and organisations such as ILSA

Parental Involvement

In St Brendans BNS, parental involvement is at all times welcomed and encouraged. Effective communication in regards to pupil's progress is critically important. The following facilitates this:

- Ensuring parents are aware of outcomes of class testing and Standardised Tests. Results of standardised tests are communicated verbally at parent-teacher meetings and in written form at the end of the year. Sten scores to be used when reporting to parents.
- Tests are signed regularly by parents.
- Formal parent / teacher meetings are held annually for all pupils.
- End-of-year reports are issued to every pupil in St Brendans BNS in time to query the report before end of school year
- Informal meetings / correspondence. Parents are encouraged to make contact as soon as possible if concerns arise over progress.
- IEP s are devised in collaboration with parents and signed by them
- NEPS meetings facilitated by the school
- Information meetings
- Permission is sought share information when transferring to second level.

Success Criteria

The success of this plan will be judged by its impact on planning, teaching and learning in our school. Various criteria will be employed as indicators of that success including the following:

- The policy works, i.e. is manageable and in proportion, in terms of its administration and recording
- The assessment work done produces reliable, valid information on strengths and weakness in learning of individual pupils, and across the class levels; it also indicates strengths and weakness within subject areas
- Assessment results are used to inform the school's curriculum policies, and they aid planning by individual teachers
- Assessment information is communicated to the relevant stakeholders
- Teachers and parents have confidence in the school's assessment policy

Balanced Approach

Assessment must not become "the tail that wags the curriculum dog". While assessment is essential in evaluating the learning that has gone on and is going on in the classroom, it should not be allowed to dictate the curriculum content or teacher's methodologies, when it could have a narrowing effect on both. Rather the modes and techniques of assessment utilised should be influenced by the nature of the learning that has gone on and the content of it. This implies a balance of formal and informal assessment, a blend of formative and summative testing, a mix of practical and written tasks.

Balance is also required in the weight attached to formal and informal types of assessment. Teachers are advised that subjective kinds of assessment need to be moderated by reference to the opinions and evaluations of other teachers:

A great proportion of the teacher's assessment will involve the use of less structured methods and will be an integral part of the teaching process. Assessment techniques like observation, teacher-designed tasks and tests and the use of work samples and/or portfolios are, by their nature, subjective. It is important therefore, that teachers moderate their standards and criteria against a broader base of teacher experience.

(English Curriculum, p.66-7).

Implementation and Review

Roles and Responsibilities: In order to ensure optimum implementation of this Assessment Plan it will be reviewed by the Principal and Assessment Co-ordinator following consultation with all teachers.

Timeframe: This plan will be subject to ongoing review.

Ratification and Communication

This Policy was reviewed and approved by the Parents Association at a special Meeting of the PTA on the The policy was subsequently reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management at its Meeting on the

A copy of this Policy was made available to all members of Staff. Parents were made aware of the existence and availability of the policy by means of a letter home and this Policy is also included on the St Brendans BNS website at www.stbrendansprimaryschool.org