

# CWETNS ASSESSMENT POLICY

## **INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE:**

The Introduction to the Primary School Curriculum (1999) identifies assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning, and emphasises the importance of assessing the process of learning as well as the product. The curriculum includes general guidelines on assessment for each subject and suggests a range of assessment tools that can be used for specific purposes. The school recognises its obligations under Article 22 of the Education Act “to regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to the students and their parents”. The school staff were all involved in drawing up this policy as the importance of a whole school approach to assessment was recognised by the staff.

The school has identified the following advantages associated with meaningful assessment in the primary school:

- Facilitates improved pupil learning.
- Creates a procedure for monitoring achievement.
- Tracks learning processes which assist long and short term planning.
- Identifies areas of difficulty.
- Indicates a course of action to overcome these.
- Highlights pupil needs.
- Informs future targets and learning outcomes.
- Helps to inform individual teacher plans as well as whole school planning.

If assessment is to be meaningful, it must be developed alongside learning activities so that it can reflect how pupils are learning, what pupils are learning and where the learning is taking them. Assessment is based on clearly defined skills or curricular activities.

# **The Focus of Assessment Approaches Utilised**

## **1. Assessment of learning**

Assessment of learning focuses more on medium and long term assessment. Assessment of learning generally involves assessing a child's learning at the end of a given period, such as the end of a unit of work, a week, a term or a year. The emphasis in assessment of learning is on measuring a child's cumulative progress towards curriculum objectives,

Examples:

- Teacher designed tests and tasks
- Weekly tests i.e., spellings and table checklists
- Standardised Tests
- Diagnostic Tests

## **2. Assessment for Learning**

Assessment for learning is an on-going process of recognising and responding to the child's learning in order to enhance it. This involves engaging children in their own learning through questioning, and discussion and involving children in peer and self-assessment. The child's response to rich questions and his/her dialogue with the teacher and peers provide evidence of the child's learning which can be used to direct future learning. The quality of a child's response to a question can, for example, suggest further questions which lead the child to a greater understanding of an idea or concept.

Central to the idea of the assessment for learning is the role of feedback in promoting children's awareness of and participation in their own learning. Feedback that is focused on the learning or task in hand, that indicates next steps and that points to achievement and challenges has been shown to be integral to children's classroom progress and confidence in learning.

Examples:

- Teacher Observations
- Teacher Questioning (lower and higher order)
- Discussion
- Work Samples
- Teacher designed tests and tasks
- Self-assessment
- KWL and Mind Maps
- Peer Assessment
- Standardised Test
- Diagnostic Test

## **Types of assessment that are utilised in the school**

### **1. Formative Assessment:**

This provides both teacher and learner with information on the progress made and the next steps needed for the learning. This is “ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING” and is used by teachers and pupils.

### **2. Summative Assessment:**

This assessment takes place at the end of teaching and helps to inform teachers’ planning for the future.

- Weekly spelling tests
- Weekly Mental Maths Assessment
- Text based or teacher designed termly tests – numeracy and literacy (sight words in English Policy, high frequency/Dolch words, Jolly Phonics sounds)

### **3. Self-Assessment:**

Pupils are encouraged to take an active role in their learning by self-evaluating and setting future targets. Self-assessment involves metacognition, the process of being aware of and reflecting on one’s own learning and learning style.

We encourage various Self-assessment methods including:

- Traffic Lighting
- Thumbs up/down
- Yearly student-parent conferencing
- Questionnaires

### **4. Peer Assessment:**

Throughout the school, pupils are encouraged to evaluate and assess each other’s work. This is done across curricular subjects and can consist of:

- Marking work
- Questioning
- Giving constructive feedback
- Cooperative learning
- Setting targets
- Shared reading activities

## **5. Teacher Assessment:**

Teacher assessment is carried out on a daily basis. Most assessment is done informally. The following strategies are used:

- Observations
- Discussions
- Teacher devised tests in literacy and numeracy
- Questioning
- Developmental checklists
- Portfolios
- Projects work
- Guided reading

## **6. Diagnostic and Screening Assessment:**

The use of standardised tests in literacy and numeracy enables the detailed diagnosis of specific areas of pupils' learning by identifying both how well students are doing in some curricular areas and where they require more support. These tests can also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of new curricula, teaching methodologies and resources. In doing so, the results from such tests should inform teachers' planning to ensure areas of the curricula, in need of development, are addressed.

### **Diagnostic and Screening Assessment:**

The following diagnostic assessments and screening processes are to be implemented within the school. The results of these assessments will be kept on file and will become part of the pupil's school record.

- Micra T and Sigma T are administered at the end of each academic year for 1st - 6th class. Results from these tests will help highlight pupils needing supplementary teaching.
- The MIST test will be administered in the second term of Senior Infants. Results from these tests will help highlight pupils needing supplementary teaching.
- Other screening tests such as the ones listed below will be administered to pupils with undiagnosed learning difficulties who are identified as being in need of learning support:
  - Dyslexia Screening Test
  - Basic Number Screening Test
- If a teacher feels screening tests available to the school staff are not sufficient to address the needs of an individual child then they together with the AEN Team, Principal and

parents will discuss the options available to support the child including possible referral to an outside agency or through AON.

## **Administration of Screening Tests:**

- The AEN Post Holder is responsible for purchase, distribution and co-ordination of testing
- The class teacher administers the standardised tests in coordination with the AEN Team
- Classes may be split in accordance with requirements of specific tests.
- Pupils who are not taking a test with their classmates complete the test in the AEN room under the supervision of the AEN Team where possible.
- The raw score, standard score, percentile rank, and STEN scores are recorded using Aladdin.
- There is a uniform approach across all classes.
- The AEN Team and class teacher are involved in the analysis of results for an individual class. The AEN Team and principal are involved in the analysis of results across a number of classes and at whole school level
- Information gathered from tests inform teaching and learning by showing pupils' areas of weakness and areas of strength in relation to national norms
- Results of the standardised tests from 1st-6th are communicated to parents in the end of year report card. The STEN score (Standard Ten) is used to communicate results. An explanatory note is enclosed with the end of year report. With regard to Micra-T results, the Age Based STEN will be communicated to parents.
- The results of these tests are used to inform the AEN Team of those who require further diagnostic testing. Furthermore, they have bearing on the allocation of learning support hours in the school. Those who score below the 10th percentile in either English or Maths are prioritised for learning support. After this children who score below 12th percentile get any more available learning support. For more information on prioritisation of AEN support, please read Canal Way's AEN policy.
- As per Learning Support Guidelines, English is given priority over Maths with regard to allocation of support hours.
- The Canal Way Designed Diagnostic Junior Infant Test will be used to assess children at the end of Junior Infants.
- In exceptional circumstances and in consultation with parents/guardians, a student will be offered the option to defer or refrain from participating in the Annual Standardised Testing. Exceptional Circumstances: Mental Health Problems e.g mood disorder, severe anxiety, school phobia, Change in Family Circumstances e.g Bereavement, Homelessness, Separation/Divorce

## Administration of Diagnostic Assessment:

Formal diagnostic tests are used to determine the appropriate learning support for individual pupils who present with learning difficulties.

- The class teacher and AEN Team are involved in selecting pupils for diagnostic assessment
- Parents are to be informed in advance of dates of Assessments to avoid low attendance
- The AEN Team administers the diagnostic tests
- The class teacher and AEN Team interpret the results
- If it is felt necessary to consult a psychologist (NEPS or other) about diagnostic test results the class teacher, AEN Team, principal and/or parents arrange for such consultation

## Timetable of Assessment:

Due to COVID19 all standardised testing was cancelled by DES for May 2020

Standardised Testing will take place in school year 2020/2021 in May and will be kept under review during COVID pandemic.

Class Level	Type of Assessment	Date
Junior Infants	Canal Way Designed Diagnostic Junior Infant Test.	End of Term 3
Senior Infants	MIST	End of Term 2
1 <sup>st</sup> Class	Micra T Sigma T	1 <sup>st</sup> week in May 2 <sup>nd</sup> week in May
2 <sup>nd</sup> class	Micra T Sigma T	1 <sup>st</sup> week in May 2 <sup>nd</sup> week in May
3 <sup>rd</sup> Class	Micra T NRIT Sigma T	1 <sup>st</sup> week in May 2 <sup>nd</sup> week in May 2 <sup>nd</sup> week in May
4 <sup>th</sup> Class	Micra T Sigma T	1 <sup>st</sup> week in May 2 <sup>nd</sup> week in May
5 <sup>th</sup> Class	Micra T	1 <sup>st</sup> week in May

	NRIT Sigma T	2 <sup>nd</sup> week in May 2 <sup>nd</sup> week in May
6 <sup>th</sup> Class	Micra T Sigma T	1 <sup>st</sup> week in May 2 <sup>nd</sup> week in May

## Record Keeping:

Under the Education Act (1998), parents have a right to be informed of their child's progress. Schools will at times need to share assessment information with a range of people including parents, teachers in other schools and other professionals associated with the education of the child. It is important, therefore, that assessment information is readily communicable to such a varied audience.

Standardised Test scores will be stored centrally on Aladdin. A hard copy will be kept on file and stored in a secure location.

Standardised test papers will be kept in the school until the child is 21 years of age. We agree to comply with current GDPR regulations.

## Reporting:

Schools are obliged, under Part 7 of DES Circular 0056/2011: 'Reporting and Using the Results of Assessments to Improve Pupil Learning', to report information from standardised tests to parents, the school Board of Management, the Department of Education and Skills and to another school if a pupil moves there.

## Communication to Parents About Standardised Testing:

Parents will be informed of testing dates, to request that they make every effort to get to school on the day of testing. Parents will be guided to this policy for information on assessment. There will also be a link on the newsletter item and any relevant emails to the [NCCA's Information Leaflet](#) (Appendix A).

## Communication Results of Standardised Testing:

Parents are formally informed of their children's progress in the following ways:

- Annual Parent-Teacher meetings
- Written end of year report
- Other meetings may be arranged throughout the year, should the need arise

Ref other policies and procedures in the school Record keeping, Data protection and Reports to parents.

## Ratification and Communication

This policy will be in operation in the school year \_\_\_\_\_, having been ratified by Staff and BoM. Every teacher will be provided with a copy of this policy for their files.

Date of next policy review:

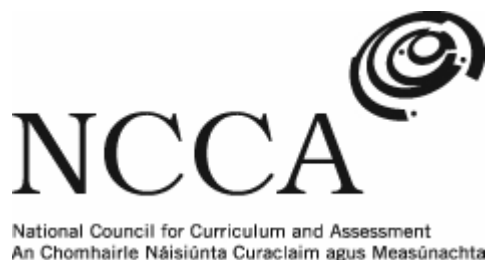
Signed on Behalf of the Board of Management:

Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix A



### **Your child and standardised testing**

#### **Information leaflet for parents**

During your child's time in primary school he/she will complete standardised tests in English reading and in maths. Most primary schools in the Republic of Ireland have been using these tests for many years. From 2007 schools must use the tests at certain times and share the results with you. This leaflet explains what standardised tests are and how they can help your child's learning.

#### **What is a standardised test?**

We are all familiar with the idea of tests in school. Your child probably tells you how he/she did in a spelling or tables test prepared by the teacher. A standardised test is another kind of test. It is used to measure a child's achievement in **English reading** and **maths** compared to other children throughout the country **at the same class level** or **age level**. The English reading test gives information about how well your child can understand what he/she has read. This test does not gather information on your child's written or spoken English. The maths test finds out how well your child can use numbers for different purposes and solve maths problems.

Schools can choose from a number of standardised tests which have been developed for use in primary schools in Ireland. These tests are based on the curriculum. There are different levels of the tests so, for example, the test your child does in first/second class will relate to your child's age and the curriculum for that class level.

#### **Are standardised tests the same as intelligence tests?**

No. Standardised tests are not intelligence tests. The main purposes of using standardised tests are to help the teacher plan your child's learning, and to inform you about how well your child is doing in English reading and maths. When the test scores are used alongside other information gathered by the teacher through observing your child at work, talking with him/her and looking at his/her work, they show how your child is getting on in English reading and maths, and help the teacher to identify your child's strengths and needs.

### **What are standardised tests used for?**

Standardised tests are used to

- report to you as a parent on your child's achievement in English reading and maths
- help to find out if your child has learning difficulties in English reading and maths so that the school can put appropriate supports in place
- help to find out if your child is a high achiever in English reading and maths so that appropriate learning experiences can be provided for him/her
- help your child's teacher plan for further learning across the curriculum because your child's achievement in English reading and maths is important for all his/her learning.

### **When are standardised tests carried out?**

Schools are required to use standardised tests twice during your child's time at primary school:

- at the **end of first class OR at the beginning of second class**
- **AND at the end of fourth class OR at the beginning of fifth class.**

Some schools use the tests in other classes too.

### **Do all children take standardised tests?**

A small number of children might not take the tests. For example, if your child's first language is not English, the teacher may decide that he/she should not take the English reading test. Your child may, however, take the maths test. If your child has a learning or physical disability, the teacher may decide not to give the test but to use a different way to check on your child's progress. In all cases, the teacher will use the information he/she has about your child to decide whether or not your child should take the English reading test and the maths test.

### **Should I help my child prepare for standardised tests?**

No. Standardised tests are one source of information about your child's achievement in English reading and maths. The teacher gathers information about your child's learning all the time. Your child will take the standardised tests on a regular school day as part of his/her daily work in the classroom. Indeed, your child may not even realise he/she has taken the tests!

### **How will I know how my child has done on the standardised tests?**

Your child's class teacher will share the test results with you, typically at a parent/teacher meeting or in a school report. You will see the results of the tests on your child's school report in first or second class and again in fourth or fifth class depending on when your child takes the tests.

### **How will I know what the test scores mean?**

You will be familiar with hearing your child say he/she got 62% in a maths test or 9 out of 15 in a spelling test. Standardised tests generally use other types of scores. Your child's teacher may tell you how your child did in the test using a **STen (standard ten) score**.

### **Understanding STen scores**

**STen scores** go from 1 to 10. The table below describes what the different STen scores tell you about your child's achievement in English reading and maths.

<b>STen score</b>	<b>What the score means</b>	<b>Proportion of children who get this score</b>
8-10	Well above average	1/6
7	High average	1/6
5-6	Average	1/3
4	Low average	1/6
1-3	Well below average	1/6

If your child's STen score is 5 or 6, you will know that his/her performance on the test is average. About one third of children in Ireland have STen scores in this band. You can see from the table that there are also STen scores above and below the average.

As with other tests your child does in school, his/her result on a standardised test can be affected by how he/she feels on the test day or by worry or excitement about a home or school event. This means that each test result is **an indication** of your child's achievement in English reading and maths. You play an important role in encouraging and supporting your child no matter what he/she scores on the test.

#### **If my child's score is low, what does this tell me?**

A STen score of 1, 2 or 3 suggests that your child may have difficulties in English reading or in maths. One test score by itself does not give a complete picture of your child's learning in English reading or maths. The teacher might decide to gather more information about your child from other tests, as well as his/her observations in class. You too will have additional information from helping your child with homework, and hearing him/her talking about school work. The teacher may ask a colleague called the *learning support* teacher to look at your child's test scores and other assessment information. They may decide that your child would benefit from extra support with reading or maths. This extra support may be given by the learning support teacher. Your child's teacher will talk to you about this.

You may find the DVD for parents, *The What, Why and How of children's learning in primary school* helpful in talking to your child about working with the learning support teacher. Courtney, a

girl in second class, and her mum talk on the DVD about their experience in getting extra help with Courtney's English reading. If you don't have a copy of the DVD, you can view an internet video of it from the NCCA website homepage at: [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie). (Click on the button for Primary School Curriculum: Information for parents.)

**If my child's score is high, what does this tell me?**

A high score on the test may suggest that your child is a high achiever in English reading or maths. As with low scores, one high score is not enough to confirm this. Your child's teacher will use information from other classroom assessments to understand more clearly how well your child is doing in English reading and maths.

**Should I share the score with my child?**

You know your child best. No matter what the score is, you play an important role in encouraging your child to do his/her best, and in helping your child with English reading and maths. If the score is low and your child needs extra help with English reading or maths, it may be helpful to talk to him/her about this and to see the help in a positive way.

**Helping my child to enjoy school and to succeed in learning**

Using standardised tests at least twice during primary school to gather information on your child's achievement in English reading and maths can play a vital part in supporting your child's learning. Ultimately, this support can help your child enjoy school and make the most of the many opportunities to learn created by you and by your child's teachers.