



## Assessment Policy

**What is Assessment?** *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, 2007, p.7).

Assessment monitors and evaluates the pupil's learning. Self-assessment through reflection is used by teachers to monitor teaching and learning in their classrooms and practice (effective or not) shared with colleagues. **Assessment of Learning (AoL)** and **Assessment For Learning (AfL)** are an integral part of the teaching and learning process. AoL is summative assessment typically done at the end of an instructional unit. Formative assessment is used to feedback to the teaching/learning process and looks forward, informing what will be done next. Teachers in St Paul's observe and discuss weekly with colleagues both work in progress and completed work at scheduled meetings with learning support teacher.

### Defining assessment

The term *assessment* derives from the Latin word *assidere* which means *to sit beside*. That simple phrase tells us a lot about the essence of assessment in the context of the primary school classroom. Its tone is non-threatening and affirming, and it suggests a partnership between participants in the teaching/learning relationship based on mutual trust and understanding. It reminds us that there should be a positive rather than a negative association between assessment and the process of teaching and learning in schools. In the broadest sense assessment is concerned with children's progress and achievement. Classroom assessment may be defined as "*the process of gathering, recording, interpreting, using, and communicating information about a child's progress and achievement during the development of knowledge, concepts, skills, and attitudes.*" Assessment, therefore, involves much more than testing. It is an ongoing process that encompasses many formal and informal activities designed to monitor and improve teaching and learning in all areas of the curriculum.

### Assessment for learning

Assessment *for* learning is an ongoing 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.

Assessment *for* learning includes formative assessment, as well as diagnostic and evaluative assessment. Although the term evaluative assessment is usually associated with the evaluation of schools and of educational systems, the teacher can also use assessment information to evaluate the effectiveness with which he/she is enacting the curriculum and make changes in his/her planning and teaching. A brief description of how assessment methods and tools can be used for the purpose of assessment *for* learning,



is provided below. The list of assessment methods and tools is by no means exhaustive, but further illustrates the practice of assessment *for* learning.

**Teacher observation**

**Questioning and discussion**

**Samples of children's work**

**Self-assessment**

**Standardised tests**

**Diagnostic tests**

**Assessment of learning**

Assessment *for* learning and assessment *of* learning differ in the purposes for which assessment is used. The teacher's purpose in assessment *for* learning is to use assessment information to provide feedback to the child and to plan learning experiences which meet the child's learning needs. In contrast, assessment *of* learning provides a record of the child's progress and attainment, whether at class or school level, at the end of a given period of learning (at the end of a unit of work, at the end of a term, or at the end of a year). Examples of activities for the purpose of assessment *of* learning include:

- reviewing a child's written work for a term, making an overall judgement according to agreed and specified criteria, and assigning a grade
- administering a group-administered standardised test of reading, and generating a standard score and percentile rank for each pupil
- reviewing a child's portfolio of work for a year, making an overall judgement, and after discussion with the child, assigning a grade.

These and other activities which the teacher engages in for the purpose of assessment *of* learning, form the basis for reporting on children's progress and attainment throughout their primary education:

**Standardised tests**

**Diagnostic tests**

**Recording and reporting assessment information**

**Why assess learning and teaching?**



Our reasons for assessment are as follows:

- To inform teachers' setting of learning targets and activities for individual pupils, groups and the whole class
- To inform the school improvement plan and to revise and update whole school improvement targets.
- To assist planning, evaluate and modify teaching strategies based on the outcomes of assessment
- To inform class groupings and differentiation of work
- To identify pupils with learning difficulties
- To use assessment outcomes to assist and improve the effectiveness of the teaching and learning programmes used in St Paul's
- To effectively and sensitively use assessment outcomes to assist pupils to reflect on their own learning
- To be able to provide accurate information about pupil's progress to relevant parties particularly parents
- To evaluate pupil achievement in curriculum areas in comparison with national norms

### **ISP (Individual Student Profile)**

In St Paul's ISP is devised based on agreed template. The ISP is a key element in supporting effective teaching and learning rather than an end in itself. Gathering information about a child's learning is important, but of central importance is **how** this information is used to improve learning. This is a living document and continues throughout the pupil's time in school added to by each relevant teacher. The weekly plans and monthly learning support plans are directly linked to the learning targets stated in the ISP and are constantly updated on the school network for all teachers to access. While ultimately the class teacher has primary responsibility for setting educational targets. There is a requirement for collaborative communication between all teachers, class teachers/ learning support prior to setting targets to facilitate preparation for teaching and evaluation and on an on-going daily basis.

### **How do we assess learning and teaching?**

A broad range of assessment approaches/strategies/tools are used in St Paul's in all subjects, to cater for a wide spectrum of needs among the pupils, taking into account their individual learning styles and needs.



The pupils may be assessed with their class or individually out of the classroom, whichever is deemed the most appropriate for the pupil, at the time. Alternative assessment tools will be designed altered or sourced by class teachers and learning support teacher should the standardised assessments be deemed inappropriate to the pupil's level of ability.

Teachers use many different tools to assess children's learning and teaching effectiveness in all subjects including:

- Teacher observation
- Teacher reflection
- Teacher-designed tasks
- Work samples
- Portfolio and project assessment
- JCSP statements
- Conferencing: teacher/pupil, teacher/teacher, teacher/parent
- Diagnostic and Standardised Tests
- Tracking of reading material

### **Bank of Standardised Tests and school based Tests**

This list is not exhaustive and may be added to as appropriate following discussion on the young persons' needs between teacher and learning support:

DRA (Diagnostic Reading Assessment)

NGRT (New Group Reading Test)

JCSP Basic Skills Maths Assessment

School based adapted France Test

NRIT (Non Reading Intelligence Test)

NARA II (Neale Analysis Reading Assessment)

### **JCSP. Work samples, portfolio and project assessment**

A file/portfolio containing information, samples of work, test results etc. are kept by the class teacher in each child's classroom. This folder on each child supports the teacher in reporting on a child's learning progress and achievement to parents and others (AoL) while also helping the teacher identify the next steps to be taken to build on and develop the child's learning (AfL). An on-going record of student progress is also maintained on the JCSP website and submitted after final profiling.



## **RECORD KEEPING:**

Pupils' files: These are compiled by the principal and community worker and contain information gathered at referral stage and throughout the pupil's career in St. Paul's. These are stored in the office and are available for staff perusal when needed.

ISPs: Through collaborative work with the principal, community worker, the parent, the teacher, the learning support teacher and all other staff involved with the education of the child, the ISP is formulated. This is a working document that is available on the Teachers' network. It is developed and added to throughout the pupil's school life by relevant class teacher. While primary responsibility for the devising of ISP lies with the class teacher, on-going communication between all staff involved is essential, prior to learning targets being set by the class teacher. Any amendments to the ISP requires consultation and agreement with the relevant class teacher and is then ratified by the principal.

## **School Reports**

The school template report card is available on the teachers' network. A report is prepared and issued at end of first and third term annually. The overall responsibility to prepare the reports lies with the class teacher, however reports should include input from other relevant teachers in consultation and in agreement with the class teacher.

These reports are issued to parents and are also available to be discussed with the pupils.

## **STORAGE OF ASSESSMENTS AND RESULTS**

Completed assessments are retained by the class teacher for the duration that the pupil is with the class teacher. The results are entered and included in the ISP. The documentation is stored in the office and transferred to the strong room on the pupil's completion of the school programme.