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St. Mary's National School, Cobh Assessment Policy

Purpose of the Policy

The overarching purpose of this Assessment Policy is to outline clearly all aspects of assessment practice in St. Mary's National School, Cobh, including classroom-based assessment and the administration of psychometric and standardised assessments.

The policy supports effective communication with all stakeholders—pupils, parents, staff, the Board of Management and external agencies and ensures that assessment practices are fair, inclusive, ethical, and compliant with relevant legislation and national guidance.

Introduction & Rationale

At St. Mary's National School, Cobh, an all-girls school with three dedicated autism classes, assessment is understood as:

"...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)

This policy is developed in line with the Education Act (1998), Data Protection legislation, the Primary Curriculum Framework (2023), Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum (NCCA, 2007), and relevant DES Circulars, including Circular 0058/2019.

The core of this policy reflects the school's ethos and mission statement: wellbeing is at the heart of St. Mary's. We build resilience, foster a love of learning, develop a sense of belonging, nurture confidence, celebrate inclusion, grow friendship and value respect. Assessment practices are designed to ensure that every child experiences success, feels valued and is supported in reaching her full potential.

Definition of Assessment

Assessment encompasses all activities undertaken by teachers and pupils, including self-assessment and peer assessment, which provide information to guide teaching and learning. The school is committed to best practice in both:

- **Assessment for Learning (AFL)** – formative assessment that supports ongoing learning
- **Assessment of Learning (AoL)** – summative assessment that records achievement at specific points in time

Assessment supports academic progress, learner agency, wellbeing and the development of key competencies for all pupils.

Definition of Assessment Instruments (Circular 0058/2019)

For the purposes of this policy, assessment instruments include:

- **Standardised ability assessments:** curriculum-independent assessments that measure potential and longer-term learning traits (e.g. NRIT)
- **Standardised attainment/achievement assessments:** assessments of knowledge and skills in areas such as literacy and numeracy (e.g. Drumcondra tests)
- **Diagnostic assessments:** assessments used following screening or classroom observation to identify specific learning strengths and needs

St. Mary's National School uses assessment instruments appropriate to a primary school context.

Relationship to School Ethos

St. Mary's National School provides a caring, inclusive and secure environment. Assessment supports a holistic approach to education, valuing academic progress alongside confidence, self-esteem, social development and wellbeing. Assessment information is used sensitively to promote success, inform early intervention and support positive self-worth.

Aims and Objectives of Assessment

Assessment in St. Mary's National School aims to:

- Assess, record, and report pupil attainment and progress in line with the Primary Curriculum Framework (2023)
- Support the development of key competencies and learner agency
- Support the National Strategy for Literacy and Numeracy
- Facilitate reflective teaching and improved learning outcomes
- Identify learning needs early and provide timely intervention
- Inform planning, differentiation, and support provision

- Identify pupils requiring additional support or extension
- Maintain accurate and meaningful records
- Communicate clearly with parents and relevant stakeholders
- Use assessment data to set targets and improve standards across the school

Principles of Assessment

Assessment practices in the school are guided by the following principles:

- Alignment with curriculum aims, learning outcomes, and key competencies
- Balance between AfL and AoL
- Inclusion of self-assessment and peer assessment
- Assessment of knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies
- Promotion of confidence, motivation and learner voice
- Use of assessment to inform teaching and learning
- Clear, sensitive communication of assessment information
- Compliance with data protection and GDPR requirements

Assessment Methods

A broad range of assessment methods is used, including:

- Teacher observation and questioning
- Teacher-designed tasks and tests
- Oral work, presentations, drama and discussion
- Pupil projects, portfolios, maths journals and assessment folders
- Samples of written and non-written work
- Checklists and rubrics
- Pupil self-assessment and peer assessment
- Collaborative strategies such as Think–Pair–Share

Assessment for Learning (AfL)

AfL is central to classroom practice. Strategies include:

- Clear learning intentions and success criteria (WALT/WILF)
- Oral and written feedback
- Conferencing with pupils
- Self-assessment strategies (Traffic Lights, Two Stars and a Wish, checklists)
- Peer assessment and collaborative reflection
- Concept mapping and KWL charts

Feedback focuses on strengths and next steps and supports pupils in becoming reflective, independent learners.

Assessment of Learning (AoL)

AoL provides a summary of learning and includes:

- Teacher-designed tests
- Standardised tests
- End-of-year assessments
- Review of pupil work and portfolios

AoL data is used alongside formative assessment to inform planning and reporting.

Standardised and Screening Assessments

Standardised and screening assessments are administered annually in line with DES and NCCA guidance.

Assessments used include:

- Belfield Infant Assessment Profile (BIAP)
- Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST)
- Non-Reading Intelligence Test (NRIT)
- Drumcondra Reading, Maths and Primary Spelling Test
- Drumcondra Early Numeracy

Results are one source of information only and are interpreted in conjunction with classroom-based assessment.

Diagnostic Assessment

Diagnostic assessments (e.g. Jackson Phonics, YARC, Sound Linkage, PSAK) are used to inform targeted intervention. Parents are informed of outcomes and results inform Student Support Plans.

Use and Purpose of Assessment Instruments

Assessment instruments are used to:

- Identify strengths and learning needs
- Inform teaching, intervention and support planning
- Monitor progress over time

Assessments are only administered when there is a clear educational purpose. Some pupils may not undertake certain assessments where it is deemed inappropriate, following professional judgement and consultation with parents.

Informed Consent

Parents are informed of the purpose and nature of assessments. Written consent is obtained for (NEPS) psychological assessments. Consent procedures comply with data protection legislation.

Administration of Assessments

Assessments are administered by appropriately qualified staff in suitable environments. NEPS and DES guidelines are followed at all times.

Provision and Interpretation of Feedback

Feedback is provided sensitively and accurately by qualified staff. Parents and pupils are informed that assessment results are only one part of a broader picture and should not be interpreted in isolation.

Recording, Storage, and Protection of Assessment Data

Assessment data is stored securely in hard copy and electronically (Aladdin). Access is restricted to authorised personnel. Data is stored and shared in compliance with GDPR and school data protection policy.

Reporting to Pupils and Parents

Reporting occurs through:

- Ongoing feedback to pupils
- Parent–Teacher meetings
- End-of-year reports
- Standardised test reports with explanatory notes

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Board of Management:** Ratification and oversight
- **Principal:** Implementation and review
- **Deputy Principal:** Coordination of standardised testing
- **SENCo / SET Team:** Diagnostic assessment and interventions
- **Class Teachers:** Ongoing assessment and communication
- **Pupils:** Active engagement, self-assessment, peer assessment
- **Parents/Guardians:** Partnership in supporting learning

Implementation Date

This policy applies from **February 2026**.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

Ratification

Date ratified by Board of Management: _____

Chairperson's Signature: _____