



LUCAN EDUCATE TOGETHER

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). In short, assessment monitors and evaluates all aspects of teaching and learning. This can be done both formally (through testing, marking of work tasks etc.) and informally (questioning, observation, keeping portfolios of work, pupil self-assessment etc.). Self-assessment through professional reflection is used by teachers to monitor teaching and learning in their classrooms and in the context of shared practice with other colleagues.

Assessment of Learning (AoL) and **Assessment For Learning (AfL)** are both integral elements of the teaching and learning process. AoL refers to summative / formal assessment typically done at the end of an instructional unit. AfL, a more formative / informal approach to assessment, is used to provide feedback to the teaching / learning process and also looks forward, informing future planning. In Lucan Educate Together N.S. regular (weekly) testing takes place, class work is carefully monitored and Standardised Tests are administered in the final school term. Alongside this, teacher reflection on practice and learning is on-going, including written reflections submitted at the end of every month (Cuntas Míosiúl) for review by the principal.

Why assess learning and teaching?

In the context of LETNS, our reasons for assessment are as follows:

- To inform the setting of learning targets and activities for individual pupils, groups and the whole class.
- 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 and monitor the progress of pupils already receiving additional support.
- To use assessment outcomes to assist and improve the effectiveness of the teaching and learning programmes used in the school.
- 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.

How do we assess learning and teaching?

A broad range of assessment approaches / strategies/tools are used in LETNS in all curriculum areas, 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 the Special Education Support (SES) and class teachers should any proposed assessments be deemed inappropriate to the pupil's level of ability.

Teachers use many different strategies to assess children's learning and teaching effectiveness including:

- Teacher observation
- Teacher reflection
- Teacher-designed tasks
- Work samples
- Concept mapping
- Curriculum Profiles
- Portfolio and project assessment
- Self-assessment
- Conferencing: teacher/pupil, teacher/teacher, teacher/parent
- Diagnostic and Standardised Tests
- Tracking and recording of reading material in Reading Logs

This approach is in line with the NCCA's "Assessment in Primary Schools" document which recommends that the mode of assessment should match the purpose of the assessment.

1. Teacher observation and teacher reflection:

Teachers provide the principal with a summary report every month (Cuntas Míósúil). This is a record of content taught, what learning targets have been

achieved and teacher reflection to aid and inform future planning. These monthly records are kept on the Teachers' Drive on all computers and are easily accessible.

In assessing and reflecting on their practice, teachers meet with their partner teacher regularly to observe, compare, discuss and share ideas on the following areas:

- What worked particularly well in my classroom this week/month?
- What was the most challenging moment in my teaching?
- If there was one thing I could do to improve the pupils' learning what would that be? What change/s could I make in my short-term planning based on my experience in the classroom?
- Was I clear about what learning outcomes I wanted the pupils to achieve in each lesson?
- How effective were my assessment methods in helping me identify what the pupils had learned?
- How did I cater for the different pupil learning needs and/or styles in my class?
- What resources worked effectively to support the learning?

2. **Teacher designed assessments / surveys:**

Data from these assessments/surveys are used by teachers to inform teaching and learning, adapting teaching methods/strategies, deciding where to focus their attention in their teaching and for sharing good practice and seeking advice with and from colleagues when required. Included in this approach are the following:

Spelling assessments:

Regular (weekly) tests are carried out by class teachers (see Whole School English Plan and Spelling Policy). Schonell Spelling assessments are administered from 2nd-6th at the beginning of each school year.

Phonics assessments:

Sight vocabulary/high-frequency word tests are administered regularly by the SES team and class teachers from Junior Infants – 6th class. These are compiled using vocabulary from the DOLCH list. The Jolly Phonics word boxes and 'Tricky Words' are used in Junior and Senior Infants with ongoing assessment. Infant teachers also assess pupils' blending skills and the SES team are notified by class teachers if early intervention is deemed necessary.

Mathematics assessments:

Mathematics assessments taken from the current Maths scheme are administered at the end of each half term. These are based on the content material/objectives that have been covered.

3. Work samples, portfolio and project assessment:

A file containing information, attendance notes, test results, on-going progress records of the pupils' etc. are kept by the class teacher for each child. This folder supports the teacher in reporting on a child's learning progress and achievement to parents and others while also helping the teacher identify the next steps to be taken to build on and develop the child's learning. The booklets from the standardised tests are retained and forwarded to the incoming class teacher. The assessment folder 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.

4. Learning outcomes / self-assessment / concept mapping / lesson summaries:

"Learning outcomes are statements of what is expected that the student will be able to do as a result of learning the activity" (Jenkins and Unwin, 2001).

In terms of teachers' planning, expected learning outcome statements describe:

- i) What teachers want the student to know at the end of a lesson (content)
AND
- ii) What teachers want students to be able to do at the end of a lesson (skill).

Learning outcomes have three major characteristics:

- i) They specify an action by the students / learners that is observable
- ii) They specify an action by the students / learners that is measurable
- iii) They specify an action that is done by the students / learners (rather than the teacher).

Clear defined learning outcomes can then be reviewed and assessment made on whether they have been achieved or otherwise (thus informing future plans).

A number of strategies in relation to learning outcomes and student self-assessment are used by teachers in LETNS. These include the 'KWL' strategy – asking children before a lesson what they know and what they want to know and then at the end of the lesson asking them what they have learned; 'WALT' (What are we Learning Today?) and 'WILF' (What am I looking for?), traffic light systems (whereby children indicate their level of understanding by marking their workbook/copy page with a colour (Green = I understand well, Orange = I think I understand but need you to check, Red = I do not understand), Thumbs up/down. Also, 'concept mapping' is often used by teachers to elicit (in a clear and visual way) what a child knows before and after a lesson.

Teachers maximise the visual learning environment of the classroom by using displays, posters and samples of children's work for on-going, informal

assessment of topics previously taught. Lesson content is summarised at the close of lessons to reinforce and also evaluate understanding of identified learning outcomes.

5. **Conferencing: teacher/pupil, teacher/teacher, teacher/parent communication:**

Pupils work, including non-written work and homework is regularly monitored and corrected. Pupils are provided with constructive feedback on their learning identifying targets for improvement. Teaching is amended in the light of feedback. Teachers check pupil understanding during and at the end of lessons. Teacher/pupil conferencing is supported through a variety of teaching approaches and methodologies in the classroom e.g., Aistear, group work, collaborative work/independent work/ carousel teaching.

Colleagues teaching the same class level meet regularly to plan together, share good practice and advise each other. Information regarding pupil progress in the curriculum areas is shared with relevant staff members as necessary e.g. members of SES team/SNAs.

Meaningful information regarding pupil progress is communicated to parents regularly during the year via reading logs, homework journals, communication copies etc. Formal individual parent-teacher meetings normally take place in November. At these meetings, parents and teachers meet to discuss how each child is progressing and to discuss how they can further support their children in school. Information afternoons for parents of Junior Infants on the curriculum and classroom practice are held in October. Parents of incoming Junior Infants are invited to an information meeting in the June before the term commencement in September. Further communication with parents takes place through the child's individual journal and also through weekly information bulletins and monthly newsletters emailed by the Principal.

A written report giving a profile of pupil achievement in each curriculum area in qualitative and quantitative terms that are easily understood and meaningful are sent home to parents at the end of the school year. Parents are informed of the standardised test score in literacy and numeracy on the end of year report card. To avoid misinterpretation of written standardised test results, information on test results and how to interpret these is sent home with the end of year report card. Reports are sent home one week before the end of the school year to facilitate parents who may wish to respond to the content contained in these.

6. **Standardised Tests:**

The Dept. of Education and Skills (DES) require all schools to assess children using standardised tests normed on the Irish population at the end of 2nd, 4th and 6th classes.

The DRUMCONDRA test is used to assess attainment in literacy whilst the SIGMA T is used in relation to numeracy. These are administered in May to all pupils from 1st-6th Classes. Scores are used in order to identify pupils for additional support for the following school year.

Currently, the MIST (Middle Infant Screening Test) is used to assess pupils in Senior Infants.

Pupils who are absent on the day standardised tests are administered:

If pupils are absent on the day of testing the test will be administered to them by a SES teacher at the earliest convenient date.

How does the data from standardised tests inform teaching and learning?

At a whole school level test data is used to inform teachers on how children are progressing in literacy and numeracy compared to their peers nationally. Teachers compare standardised test scores from one year to the next to see how a child is progressing. Concerns are discussed with the SES team and interventions are made.

When children score below the 10th percentile further diagnostic assessment may be used to explore where his/her difficulties lie. Children in Senior Infants who are highlighted from the MIST as needing support are prioritised for the 'Forward Together' programme.

Teachers at different class levels use data from the standardised tests to identify strands/strand units in the curriculum where the children are scoring well/poorly and adapt their planning/learning outcomes accordingly.

School Support Plus Plan

Children with identified complex needs have specific learning targets set for them. Attainment of these targets and decisions on what will be done next are recorded in individual School Support Plus Plan. Individualised plans are drawn up outlining the background and history of previous support received, assessments completed and their results, strengths, needs and priority learning targets.

Assessment of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL): (See EAL Policy)

Children are initially assessed using the Up and Away Programme (IILT). Having received instruction throughout the school term from the EAL teacher, the children are assessed using the Primary School Assessment Kit (DES 2007). Each child presenting with a need for Language Support is entitled to

two years of support. At the end of the two-year period, the assessment is re-administered to determine if a third year of language support is needed or not.

Record Keeping:

Copies of individual end-of-year reports containing results of standardised assessments are kept in the school until the child is 24 years of age.

Storage of Assessment Information:

A file on each child is stored in the teacher's assessment folder in the classroom. Teachers on the Special Education Team (SET) also hold relevant documentation on each child. All such information is treated as *confidential*. Two copies only of a child's psychological/ occupational therapy/speech and language reports etc. are kept in the school: one in the child's individual file in the office and one to be shared between the class teacher and the SET. No arrangement is made to assess a child by the school, without parent/s' consent. Teachers treat all such information as *confidential* and with respect.

Activity:	Date:
Reviewed:	
Ratified by Board of Management:	
Effective from:	
Next Review Date: *	

*** Unless reviewed at an earlier date if deemed necessary by a change in law, Department policy, or to reflect changing school circumstances.**

Signed: _____

Chairperson:

Signed: _____

Principal: