

Assessment Policy June 2023

Mission Statement

St. Mary's is a community which is proud of its Catholic tradition and is committed to developing each person's full potential in a positive, supportive and Christian environment. We invite everyone to participate and we urge everyone to contribute.

Introduction

The Assessment Policy has been developed following consultation between students, staff, parents, and Board of Management. The Education Act (1998) requires schools to regularly evaluate students and periodically report these results to students and parents. In fulfilling this requirement, it is necessary for schools to develop assessment procedures, which provide an accurate account of a student's progress and achievement. In this policy document the term 'parent' is taken to include 'guardian.'

Aims of the Assessment Policy

- To create consistent and standardised assessment procedures for monitoring and reporting achievement in the school
- To assist in improving teaching and learning
- To provide clarity and support for the use of assessment for:
 - Monitoring student progress and evaluating what a student has learned in a topic.
 - Reinforcing learning and highlighting shortcomings in the learning process in order to develop intervention strategies.
 - Evaluating the effectiveness of teaching strategies in the learning process.

- Providing feedback to students and parents.
- Identifying appropriate subject levels for students.
- Identifying students needing additional support and to inform consultations with outside agencies such as NEPS.
- Informing subject choice and career guidance.
- Fulfilling course requirements in specific subjects.
- Helping students become independent learners who apply learning from assessment to goal-setting for improvements.
- Enhancing realistically high expectations.
- Encouraging the skills of self-assessment.

Expectations

Students are encouraged to be reflective, self-directed learners and strive to fulfil their potential in their academic and personal development. We expect students to try their best at all times in participation in learning opportunities, in homework and in all tests and examinations – this will help any assessment procedure as it will give a true reflection of where a student stands at a given time on the learning continuum. We encourage students to seek advice and support and to support their learning by committing to regular attendance. We recognise the different gifts, talents and abilities of all our students and we provide a caring community of inclusion.

Teachers are encouraged to assess with accuracy and consistency and provide students with constructive feedback. Teachers are expected to be aware of, and implement, DES/SEC guidance of assessment in relation to their subject area. Teachers should maintain accurate records and exercise professional judgement when discussing students' learning needs.

Parents are encouraged to support students in providing a space for homework and study. Parents may support students to plan, organise, complete and submit work on time. Parents are invited to liaise with the school if their daughter is experiencing difficulties and are

encouraged to attend information evenings and parent-teacher meetings to keep informed about matters relating to their daughter's studies and progress

Student Support

Students are supported in many ways including:

- The provision of a well-resourced and maintained learning environment.
- The creation of a supportive learning environment based on respect for all and an encouragement to participate and grow in confidence while working alone or with others.
- Teacher feedback (oral/written) to students about their work.
- Teacher setting targets for progressing learning.
- Recognition of academic excellence achievements and positive contribution achievements in school awards.
- Support from the Class tutor, Year Head, Pastoral Care team, Guidance Counsellors, SEN team, Deputy Principal and Principal.

Forms of Assessment in St. Mary's

Teachers use a number of forms of assessment dependent on the subject or topic being assessed. The teacher may use an 'Assessment of learning' approach to determine a student's level of performance at the end of a unit of teaching and learning or with a given task. The teacher may also use an 'Assessment for learning' approach to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by teachers to validate their teaching and by students to improve their learning.

Teachers may use a number of strategies for assessment such as:

- Worksheets & written classwork.
- Questions and answers in class – verbal and written.
- Essays & assignments.

- Reading & writing in Class.
- Sample exam questions.
- Homework – written or learned.
- In-class demonstration.
- Evaluation of work – peer/self-assessment.
- End of topic/unit tests.
- Formative feedback after tests.

A number of key elements are central to Assessment:

- Learning Outcomes are shared and Criteria for Success are explained so that students will know what is to be achieved and determine levels of success.
- Feedback is vital to help shape or guide the next steps in learning. The feedback may be done orally, with a grade or by comment-only written feedback to highlight what a student has done well, areas of improvement needed and how improvements might be made.
- Assessment work should be differentiated to suit the needs and abilities of the individual student.
- A positive classroom culture and ethos, which encourages students to think and talk about their learning and which provides a safe place for open, honest and respectful discussion.
- Questioning skills (student to teacher/ teacher to student/ student to student), which stimulate thinking and reflecting on learning and explicit teaching of how to consciously reflect on what one knows and how to make an evaluative comment on it.
- Records should be kept, as appropriate, to provide a report on student progress.

Assessments in Year Groups

First Years

Prior to entry into 1st year information is obtained on incoming students from information shared by parents through a student profile form, from visits to the primary schools, when needed, by the Learning Support Co-Ordinator, from any professional reports or NEPS transfer forms received and from the Education Passport document received from the primary schools. Students also complete an assessment in February of their 6th class year consisting of a NCCA Maths competency test, the NGRT reading test and a page of writing in English. These assessments give an indication of broad bands of ability levels and are used to help create mixed-ability groupings. 1st years follow continuous assessment throughout the year and sit Christmas and Summer exams. The exam results and teachers' comments are available to parents via Vsware. Where possible, as determined by subject department planning, common assessments across a year group will be used in each subject area.

Second Years

2nd years follow continuous assessment throughout the year and sit Christmas and Summer exams. The exam results and teachers' comments are available to parents via Vsware. 2nd year students may also complete a Classroom Based Assessment (CBA) as part of their Junior Cycle assessments. Where a CBA occurs close to the Christmas or Summer exams the CBA may account as the assessment and assessment descriptor may appear on the report. Where possible, as determined by subject department planning, common assessments across a year group will be used in each subject area. Second years may also undertake the Post-Primary and Diagnosis in English (PPad-E), the CAT4 cognitive ability test and the English as an Additional Language Primary Assessment test.

Third Years

3rd years follow continuous assessment throughout the year with class tests in October/November and Mock Junior Cycle exams in February. The exam results and teachers' comments are available to parents via Vsware. The mock exams are sent away

for external correction and results of mock exams are reported to students and parents as soon as possible upon the return of marked mock exam scripts. 3rd year students may also complete a Classroom Based Assessment (CBA) and other assessments as part of their Junior Cycle assessments. There will be no summer report for 3rd years as they will sit the Junior Cycle state exams in June. 3rd year students will be offered the opportunity to record 'Other Areas of Learning' as part of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).

Transition Year

TY offers different ways of learning through opportunities such as workshops, modules personal development activities, online learning and work experience. Students are assessed throughout the year, through use of a credit scoring system, on their attendance, participation and completion of tasks. A report is presented and a certificate is awarded, based on cumulative totals of credits attained, at the end of the year TY Awards night. Parents of TY students also receive a Christmas report showing credits obtained and teacher comments for the term to date.

Fifth Years

5th years follow continuous assessment throughout the year and sit Christmas and Summer exams. The exam results and teachers' comments are available to parents via Vsware. 5th year students may also complete aspects of the Leaving Certificate course as determined by the State Examinations Commission. Where possible, as determined by subject department planning, common assessments across a year group will be used in each subject area. Students studying LCVP or LCA may also complete assessments determined by the requirements of these courses.

Sixth Years

6th years follow continuous assessment throughout the year with class tests in October/November and Mock Leaving Certificate exams in February. The exam results and teachers' comments are available to parents via Vsware. The mock exams are sent away for external correction and results of mock exams are reported to students and parents as soon as possible upon the return of marked mock exam scripts. 6th year students may also complete aspects of the Leaving Certificate course as determined by the State Examinations Commission – such as projects, portfolios and oral examinations. There will be no summer report for 6th years as they will sit the Leaving Certificate state exams in June.

Standardised Tests

Other forms of assessment e.g. standardised tests such as the CAT 4 (Cognitive Abilities Test 4) assessment and NGRT (New Group Reading Test) are used in the school to provide information on students' potential or progress. The Learning Support team may administer tests to aid with developing a learning support plan for a student. The school's NEPS psychologist, in consultation with school management and parents, may carry out psychological assessments on students. The NCSE visiting teacher service assessment for Deaf/ visually impaired students may also carry out assessments of students.

Reporting

Different methods are used to report assessments:

- Teachers may communicate the outcome of any assessment to a parent by writing a note in the student's journal.
- The teacher may contact the parent by email or phone call to communicate in respect of an assessment.
- The teacher may report directly to a student in person, by writing on an assessment answer sheet or via a student's Google classroom account.
- Written reports from Christmas, Mocks and Summer exams are available to parents via the school's administration system, Vsware.
- A Parent – Teacher meeting is available for all year groups throughout the academic year.

- Junior Cycle results are given to students when they are made available to the school.
- Leaving Certificate students receive their results via their individual accounts on the State Examination Commission's exam portal.
- Once the Junior Cycle results are available and the Department of Education's administration system allow access students who have completed the Junior Cycle will be awarded JCPA (Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement) certificates. This certificate contains the examination results from the Junior Certificate, information on student wellbeing and student-supplied information on 'Other Areas of Learning' completed in the Junior Cycle.

Awards

A whole-school annual awards ceremony is held in October to recognise achievements in the previous academic year. Awards are issued for academic excellence, for endeavour and for contribution to school life.

Data Protection

The school will ensure that student information, in line with data protection requirements, is kept secure with access confined to designated school staff.

Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on _____ and is subject to regular review.

Chairperson: _____ Date: _____