

# Boher National School Assessment Policy



**Introduction:**

This policy sets out our approach to assessment as an integral part of the teaching and learning process. It sets out guidance on assessment in order to assist us in identifying children with various learning needs, particularly in literacy and numeracy, in order to facilitate planning for teaching in these areas.

**Policy Rationale:**

The core of the policy is that all children should experience success at school. This policy strives to identify at the earliest possible opportunity, children who may have learning difficulties and put in place a school response to their needs. An effective assessment policy is central to this core objective. The Education Act, Section 22, requires schools to 'regularly evaluate pupils and periodically report the results of the evaluation to the pupils and their parents'. This policy is also a response to Literacy and Numeracy for Learning in Life; National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2012. Circular 0056/2011 and Supporting Assessment; Standardised Testing in Primary Schools; Circular 0018/2012.. The policy is based on the advice and information available from the DES & NCCA, and in particular:

- The Education Act (1998)
- The Primary School Curriculum (1999)
- The Primary Language Curriculum (2015)
- Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for Schools NCCA (2007)
- The Continuum of Support Guidelines for Teachers (2007)
- Literacy and Numeracy for Learning for Life (2011)

**Relationship to school ethos:**

Assessment is based on two approaches 'Assessment of Learning' (AOL) and 'Assessment for Learning' (AFL) and there should be a balance between the combinations of the two approaches. (Assessment in the Primary School; Guidelines for Schools).

Aims and Objectives:

The primary aims/objectives of the policy are;

1. To facilitate improved pupil learning.
2. To create a procedure for monitoring achievement.
3. To track learning processes which assist the long and short term planning of teachers.
4. To co-ordinate assessment procedures on a school basis involving parents and pupils in managing strengths and weaknesses.
5. To cater for different learning styles.

**Policy Content:**

This policy is geared towards using assessment to inform planning and identify the needs of all pupils, including the exceptionally gifted so that adequate strategies are put in place early enough to facilitate remediation. These strategies may include pupil self assessment, pupil profiling, two way communication between parents and teachers, modification of teacher programmes and/or individual education plans.

**Methods of assessment will include**

Self-assessment (i.e. KWL Charts, Rubrics, Thumbs up, Thumbs down, Traffic lights), Conferencing, Portfolio Assessment, Concept Mapping, Questioning, Teacher Observation, Teacher Designed Tasks and Tests and Standardised Tests.

It facilitates two way communication between parents and teachers. This will lead to modification of teacher programmes. These modifications are implemented along a progressive Continuum of Support, beginning with Classroom Support, advancing to School Support, and finally to School Support Plus for pupils with the highest level of need. At each stage, decisions are guided by systematic assessment to ensure that interventions are appropriately targeted and responsive to the child's development.. All children in receipt of IEPs (Individual Education Plans) will have a confidential file opened and maintained indefinitely to store relevant testing and IEPs.

**Equal Opportunity:**

Assessment is carried out on all pupils.

**Assessment Approaches:**

All areas of the curriculum (That it encompasses the cognitive, creative, physical and social aspects of learning).

1. *Continuous Assessment (informal).*

Teacher **observation** and **teacher-designed tasks** form an important part of informal assessment. The class teacher, particularly in the junior classes, observes children's engagement, progress, and difficulties during everyday classroom activities. Where concerns arise, the class teacher liaises with the SET. The SET may then withdraw pupils for additional support and/or carry out diagnostic assessments if required.

An assessment folder is kept for each pupil. The pupils will be asked to choose their favourite piece of work on a topic that they enjoyed learning to include in the folder. They may also be asked to write down what they learned in a class topic (KWL) or to identify what they need to do to progress their learning. Sample tests from each area of the curriculum can be included in this folder. It is hoped that this process will make pupils more aware of their own learning, standards, strengths, and difficulties. Through ongoing self-assessment they should aim to improve their work as the year progresses.

2. *Standardised Testing:*

The S.E.T team is responsible for purchasing the tests and keeping abreast of the most current research / new tests and is assisted by the principal. The school administers the **Micra T** and **Sigma T** standardised tests each year in May/ early June for Senior Infants through to 6th class. Tests are administered by the class teacher with the support of S.E.T.

The **Alpacha** test is given to all Junior Infants and Senior Infants in October. Therefore, children who are experiencing difficulty are targeted at the earliest opportunity and appropriate supports are arranged, in accordance with needs identified. The tests are administered by the S.E.T. teacher. In the event of a pupil being absent on the day of testing, the S.E.T will take responsibility for administering the test to the pupil on his/ her return.

**Formative** and **summative** testing is carried out before and after **Literacy Lift-Off** support, respectively. These assessments are conducted with the support of the S.E.T. Formative assessment is used to identify each pupil's instructional level and to determine the appropriate Literacy Lift-Off activities. Summative assessment is then used to analyse progress and to identify pupils who may require further support going forward.

**Standard** and **percentile rankings scores** are recorded on Aladdin, the student management software system, by each individual teacher. Aladdin is secure and encrypted. The class teachers / S.E.T. team analyse the results in June for allocation of resources to pupils in September.

Appropriate support for the children experiencing difficulties will range from In-class support, Team Teaching, Literacy Lift Off and Learning Support small groups. All parents of children from 1st to 6th Class will receive these results, with the STEN score recorded on the June school report. Time is available after the issue of reports, should parents wish to consult with class teachers to discuss their child's scores.

The results are also used to inform the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan.

### **Diagnostic Assessment:**

The school policy on Psychological Assessment is a three-step approach based on the NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service) Continuum of support process.

1. *Stage 1- CLASSROOM SUPPORT*
2. *Stage 2- SCHOOL SUPPORT*
3. *Stage 3- SCHOOL SUPPORT PLUS*

#### *Stage 1- CLASSROOM SUPPORT*

- Parent/Teacher share concerns and these concerns are recorded.
- Simple informal problem-solving approaches commonly used by class teachers to support emerging needs are identified.
- Support Plan is drawn up for the school term. The success of the plan is recorded on an ongoing basis.
- After 1 or 2 terms, if concerns remain, the teacher requests the involvement of S.E.T. teacher. Pupil moves to Stage 2.

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#### *Stage 2- SCHOOL SUPPORT*

- Class teacher/S.E.T. teacher/parent re-assesses the child's needs.
- A School Support Plan is drawn up, involving a more systematic process of gathering information, and the development and ongoing monitoring of the plan.
- At the end of term 1 the plan is reviewed and modified.
- Depending on the nature of the needs, the additional teaching will be within a small group or on an individual basis or a combination of both either in class or on a withdrawal basis.
- If concerns still remain, the school consults parents to request move to Stage 3.

#### *Stage 3- SCHOOL SUPPORT PLUS*

- This stage applies where the needs are enduring and/or severe and complex and where progress is considered inadequate despite carefully planned and reviewed interventions.
- Parent/teacher/Educational Psychologist/Child
- School formally requests a consultation/referral with an Educational Psychologist.
- A new cycle of consultation, assessment, planning involving all concerned begins.
- A detailed IEP/School Support Plus plan, identifying agreed interventions and actions is drawn up.
- This review process will be ongoing.
- Decisions with regard to support and allocation of resources may be made at this stage if appropriate.

### **School Administered Diagnostic Tests/Screening**

In addition to the formal Standardised Tests we use a variety of diagnostic tests, where appropriate. These tests are listed below-

All children in Junior Infants to first class are screened in order to identify children experiencing difficulties in learning. Some or all of the following screening measures may be used

- Input from parents
- Teacher observation
- Teacher designed tasks and tests
- Checklists
- Jolly Phonics teaching & test
- S.E.T. Teaching
- Formative and Summative assessment for Literacy Lift Off
- Student Support Plans are reviewed in January and June each year.
- Alpaca Phonics Test

These will be administered by the SET team following referral by the class teachers in consultation with parents/guardians. The administration of such tests is in keeping with the approach recommended by Circular 0013/2017 where a staged approach is used by the individual class teachers before recourse to diagnostic testing /psychological assessment. Parents are provided with test results and if a psychological assessment is warranted, parental permission is sought and a consent form is completed. The Principal will facilitate such an assessment with a NEPS psychologist. The screening tests used to identify learning strengths and weaknesses in the school are;

Micra T – Reading Test

Sigma T- Maths Test

Maths Class Assessments

Teacher designed tasks and tests

Sight Word tests- PM high-frequency words

Alpacha phonics tests

Free Writing samples

Running records

I.S.T

### WIAT (Wechsler Individual Achievement Test)

- Used by Educational Psychologists, often administered with the WISC.
- Assesses comprehension, reading, and spelling.
- Provides age norms (from 5 years).
- Includes fluency components (WIAT-III).
- Useful for new pupils; provides standard scores enabling comparison across normed tests.
- Administration time: approximately 45 minutes.

### CAT (Cognitive Abilities Test)

- Assesses general cognitive ability and provides an IQ measure.
- Organised by age groups with four levels (A-D).
- Includes a teacher guide pack.
- Helpful for supporting cases of dyslexia or dyscalculia.
- Full administration may take around one hour.

### TEST 2R

- Individual early screening and diagnostic assessment.
- Comprises 18 tasks: the first 5 are screening tasks; performance determines whether the remaining 13 diagnostic tasks are administered.
- Screening tasks take about 20 minutes.
- Scores must be entered into the TEST 2R website twice: after screening and after diagnostic tasks.
- Requires unsharpened pencil.

### Edinburgh Picture Test

- Assesses cognitive abilities for younger pupils.
- Recommended before administering TEST 2R.

### Diaphon

- Two levels depending on age.

- Spelling assessment of 100 words (typically administered in sets of 20-30).
- Missed spellings correspond to specific worksheets targeting blends/sounds.
- Suitable for class, group, or individual administration.

#### Early Literacy Test

- For ages 4.5-7.5.
- Useful where there are concerns about comprehension, reading, or spelling.
- Administered individually.

#### WRAPS (Word Recognition and Phonic Skills)

- Recognition-based assessment in which pupils select correct spellings from multiple options.
- Does not require recall of spellings (unlike Diaphon).

#### Diagnostic Reading Analysis (DRA)

- Comparable to WIAT.
- Replaced the previously used NARA assessment.

#### Mental Ability Test

- Not norm-referenced.
- Used in 2nd and 3rd class.
- Similar to the CAT.

#### NRIT (Non-Reading Intelligence Test)

- Cognitive test suitable for groups of up to four pupils.
- Considered quicker than the CAT.
- First Edition regarded as stronger than the Second Edition.
- Test materials need to be reordered.

#### Basic Number Screening

- One-to-one maths screening.

- Includes follow-up worksheets.

#### MALT (Maths Assessment for Learning and Teaching)

- Preferred maths screening tool.
- UK-based assessment.
- MALT 5 covers Junior pupils; MALT 12 covers 6th Class.

#### Primary School Assessment Kit

- EAL resource issued by the Government for children newly arrived from other countries.

#### Ashton Index

- Primarily a reading assessment, with some number tasks.
- Older but still effective.
- Can be administered more frequently than WIAT (no waiting period required).
- Includes assessments of memory and left/right orientation.
- Contains a drawing task ("Draw-a-Man") used to estimate emotional age, mental age, and maturity.
- Includes non-verbal reasoning tests for ages 10-11 and 12-14.
- Useful for identifying children with strong visual/perceptual reasoning but reading/spelling challenges.

#### Irish Exemption Documentation

Include WIAT scores and photocopies of relevant pupil work as supporting material.

NEPS- First 100 words checklist

NEPS -Second 100 words checklist

These tests are administered individually or on a class basis. Screening is used by the school to initiate the staged approach to intervention as per Circular 0013/2017

#### Screening

The ALPACA (Assessing Letter and Phonemic Awareness Class Assistant) screening tool is being used by the Junior and Senior Infant classes. In Junior Infants, the children are screened three times a year – September/ January and June. The screener checks for understanding of rhyming, initial sounds,

blending, letter name knowledge and deleting. The screener picks out children that may be at risk for having difficulties in these areas and may need further diagnostic assessment and intervention.

### **Psychological Assessment:**

If stages 1 and 2 fail to deliver the adequate intervention, the class teacher/S.E.T team will contact the parents for permission to arrange a psychological assessment for their child. The most common form of assessment used in our school is teacher observation, teacher-designed tests, projects and homework (informal assessment). These informal assessments are at the discretion of individual teachers. Records of teacher-designed tests are kept by the individual teachers and communicated to parents at the Parent-teacher meeting and the school report issued at the end of the school year. Each teacher has discretion as to the format, administration and frequency of in-class testing. The most common types of informal teacher designed testing in our school are maths tests, spelling tests and running records of reading. If the allocation of assessments has been saturated in the school that year, the parents are informed that they could consider getting their child assessed privately and the school will facilitate this by supplying them with the required information from the NCSE website (a list of recommended psychologists and therapists and their details).

### **Identification of Pupils for Support:**

Following formal and informal assessments, the following children will be prioritised for supplementary teaching support;

- Those performing at or below the 10th percentile in literacy or numeracy standardised tests.
- Pupils previously in receipt of supplementary teaching support who continue to experience significant difficulties.
- Pupils who are identified as having significant needs through the process of ongoing assessment as set out on the Continuum of Support Process.
- Pupils with mild or transient educational needs including those associated with speech and language difficulties, social and emotional problems, or coordination or attention control difficulties and pupils with specific learning disabilities.
- Pupils with significant educational needs.
- Pupils who present with a range of learning difficulties which may affect a pupil's ability to access the full curriculum.
- Pupils who have additional literacy or language needs including those who have English as Additional Language (EAL).
- Pupils who present as being exceptionally able who score at or above the 95th percentile in standardised tests

### **Recording:**

In our school, all standardised test results and teachers' notes are recorded and securely stored on the Aladdin student management system. This digital system ensures safe retention of information, reduces administrative workload, and prevents the accumulation of physical records. Work samples are retained in each child's individual folder until their departure at the end of 6th Class.

For pupils with IEPs, a dedicated file is created and maintained in a secure physical filing cabinet. This file contains confidential material such as psychological reports, correspondence with outside

professionals, School Support Plans, and Individual Education Plans (IEPs). These files are stored securely while the pupil is enrolled in the school and are archived indefinitely following the pupil's departure, in accordance with Data Protection legislation and school policy.

School reports are generated and stored on Aladdin and issued to parents electronically via the secure, encrypted platform each June.

### **School Reports:**

School reports are issued to parents in June each year through the secure, encrypted Aladdin platform. Reports include each pupil's progress across all subject areas and are accompanied by standardised test results where relevant.

Pupils are graded on a scale of 1 to 5:

- **5 – Highly Capable and Competent:** Awarded to pupils who average 85%–100% over the year. These pupils display high competency in the subject area, grasp new knowledge and skills easily, or demonstrate exceptional diligence in completing tasks.
- **4 – Capable and Competent:** Awarded to pupils who average 70%–85% over the year. These pupils display above-average ability or application, learn new knowledge and skills easily, and demonstrate consistent diligence.
- **3 – Managing Comfortably:** Awarded to pupils who average 50%–70% over the year. These pupils are competent in the subject area, learn at an average pace, and apply themselves adequately to tasks.
- **2 – Experiencing Some Difficulty:** Awarded to pupils who average 30%–50% over the year. These pupils are below average in the subject area, may struggle with knowledge or skills, and require additional effort or support to improve.
- **1 – Experiencing Significant Difficulty:** Awarded to pupils who average 0%–30% over the year. These pupils display difficulty grasping concepts and may require substantial support to progress.

The **Comment section** within each subject area is used to clarify and personalise a pupil's grading. It should be noted that, for some pupils, the grade awarded reflects their maximum attainment in a subject given their individual abilities, circumstances, and the effort applied throughout the year.

### **Communication Steps:**

It is hoped that the results of assessment are reported in a way useful for pupils, teachers, parents and other interested parties.

1. A School Report is sent to the parents/guardian at the end of the school year. We give results of standardized tests for Micra T and Sigma-T for each class in the reports.
2. Where parents/guardians have concerns about test results or comments in school reports, they are invited to contact the class teacher/principal to discuss the same.
3. Parent/Teacher meetings are held in late November.
4. The aggregate results are reported to the Board of Management yearly and sent to the Department of Education.

**Success Criteria:**

This policy is considered successful if;

1. Early identification and intervention is achieved
2. Clarity is achieved regarding procedures involved in a staged approach
3. Procedures are clear, with roles and responsibilities defined
4. The Special Education team have clearly defined roles and objectives
5. There is efficient transfer of information between teachers
6. There is also an efficient transfer of information between teachers & parents, the school and DES/ Second Class Schools

**Roles and Responsibilities:**

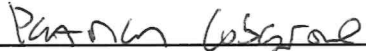
Class Teachers, Special Education Teachers and the Principal assume shared responsibility. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to enact staged interventions at class level. At Stage 2, the responsibilities are shared with the S.E.T. The S.E.T assumes a primary role at Stage 3 when a Psychological Assessment may be required. Parents have a role at all stages and the lines of communication must be always kept open.

**Implementation:**

This policy reflects current practice in the school.

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The policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Boher N.S. on 18-June-2024

Signed:   
Chairperson, Board of Management