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Roll No: 20379Q

Assessment and Recording Policy

Introduction

This Policy was originally drafted following consultation with the school staff. A need was identified to develop assessment procedures, which will provide an accurate account of children's progress and achievement.

Policy rationale

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.

The Primary Curriculum emphasises in general terms, the importance of assessment in enabling the teacher to extend and enrich pupils' learning across all curriculum areas.

Research has highlighted more specifically how teachers can use assessment to make learning more enjoyable, more motivating and more successful for each child. The renewed focus on assessment recognises the growing confidence "that assessment can be used as a means of increasing student achievement and not simply as a means of measuring it" (O'Leary, 2006)

The core of the policy is that all pupils should experience success at school. It endeavours to identify at the earliest possible opportunity, pupils' specific learning difficulties that emanate from their diagnosis of autism and complex needs, putting in place a whole school response to their needs.

Relationship to the School Ethos:

Stepping stones Special School has an evidence based teaching and learning Ethos. Our ultimate goal would be to improve learning through effective assessment practices, ensuring that each pupil is enabled to reach their full potential.

Aims and objectives:

The primary aims/ objectives of the policy are:

1. Assessment should improve learning
2. Assessment methods should enable progress in all important learning goals to be facilitated and reported.
3. Assessment methods should promote the active engagement of students in their learning and its assessment, when possible.
4. To create a procedure for monitoring achievement
5. To track learning processes which assist the long and short term planning of teachers.
6. To coordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis involving parents and pupils.

Principles:

The following principles should guide the assessment process for students with a diagnosis of ASD:

- Assessment should involve careful attention to the signs and symptoms consistent with ASD as well as other coexisting needs.
- When a student has a diagnosis of ASD, a review of his or her developmental history in areas such as speech, communication, social and play skills is an important first step in the assessment process.
- Evaluation of academic achievement should be included in assessment and intervention planning to address learning and behavioural concerns in the child's overall school functioning.
- Assessment procedures should be designed to assist in the development of instructional objectives and intervention strategies based on the student's unique pattern of strengths and weaknesses.
- Because impairment in communication and social reciprocity are core features of ASD, a comprehensive developmental assessment should include both domains.
- Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process, a valuable formative tool.
- The outcomes of assessment modify our teaching methods, provide feedback on the Curriculum as well as indicate pupils' progress.
- Results of assessment are communicated in a way useful for pupils, teachers, parents and their interested parties

The assessment Process in School:

Assessment is an on-going process throughout the child's education. Therefore, it is important that all members of the teaching staff and Behavioural team are involved in developing, implementing, and reviewing the assessment policy. Parents should be also involved in the assessment policy, which helps in creating a sense of ownership and allows for a more effective implementation.

Assessment and planning are interrelated; please see below the School Development Planning model obtained from the NCCA .

The purpose of the Policy:

There is a legislative requirement for schools to have an assessment policy as informed by the following publications: 'Assessment in the Primary School: Guidelines for Schools (NCCA, 2007). As well as, Circular 0056/2011 'National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy' .

The guidelines set out the relevant implications for recording and reporting about children's progress and achievement. The guidelines also include some useful information on the roles of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) in supporting children's learning. The NCCA refers to the purposes of assessment as:

- assessment as an integral part of the teaching and learning process;
- assessment to facilitate pupil performance by providing information;
- the skilled and judicious use for a variety of assessment techniques which can have a positive effect on classroom practice;
- assessment as a formative and diagnostic process;
- the teacher as professional with a central role in the assessment of pupils.

While specific activities of the assessment process will vary and depend on the child's age, history, referral questions, and any previous evaluations and assessments, the following components should be included in a best practice assessment and evaluation of ASD in school-age children:

- Record review
- Developmental and medical history
- Medical screening and/or evaluation
- Parent/caregiver interview
- Direct child observation
- Cognitive assessment
- Academic assessment
- Adaptive behaviour assessment
- Communication and language assessment

Children with ASD often demonstrate additional problems beyond those associated with the core domains. Therefore, other areas should be included in the assessment battery depending on the referral question, history, and core evaluation results. These may include:

- Sensory processing
- Attention skills
- Motor skills
- Family system
- Coexisting behavioural/emotional problems

Assessment methods:

The NCCA Guidelines provide practical advice on developing a school's assessment policy based on two assessment approaches: Assessment of Learning (AoL) and Assessment for Learning (AfL). We aim to use a balanced combination of assessment FOR and OF learning.

Assessment of Learning (AoL)

Assessment OF learning is '**summative**', i.e. its main purpose is to grade and certify students' achievement which will be reported to parents and others relevant people such as the SENO, the principal or the school's psychologist

Assessment for Learning (AfL).

Assessment for learning is '**formative**', whereby teachers and learners use assessment to improve learning.

Assessment for Learning is about assessing progress, analysing and feeding back the outcomes of that assessment positively and constructively to:

1. Agree actions to help the learner improve
2. Adapt teaching methods to meet the learner's identified needs.

Assessment Process in Stepping Stones:

It is our intention that teachers will assess all students in September/October, using one of the following assessments:

- The Psychoeducational Profile-Third Edition (**PEP-3**) to assess pupils who are under the age of 6 if appropriate.
- The Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (**ABLLS**) **Primary and /or Post Primary age**
- The Verbal Behaviour Milestones Assessment and Placement Program: The **VB-MAPP** to assess pupils **Primary and /or Post Primary age**
- The Assessment of Functional Living Skills (**AFLS**): Community Participation based Skills, Basis living Skills and School skills modules - to assess pupils **Post Primary age**

Circular 0056/2011 states that teachers will follow up students assessments in June of the same year (only for Mathematics and Language and Communication) for those pupils who are at the end of 1st (8 years) ,4th(10 years) and 6th (12 years) class. Additionally it states that “Students may be excluded from standardised testing if in the view of the school principal they have a learning or physical disability which would prevent them from attempting the tests or, in the case of migrant students, where the level of English required in the test would make attempting the test inappropriate.”

Please note that all our pupils have a diagnosis of autism and complex needs and present with a General Learning Disability that ranges from Mild, to Moderate to Severe. All students are assessed at the beginning of each academic year. The school personnel involved in the assessment process will choose the most appropriate assessment tool.

Continuous Classroom Assessment:

In junior classes (students from 4-12) each student has a skills tracking folder which tracks all their progress in all academic goals for the core curricular subjects (language and communication, maths and SPHE) The senior classes (students aged 13-18) have junior cycle folders for each child. Both folders are reviewed by the class teacher to inform continuous planning.

The information gathered and recorded in their folders serves two purposes:

1. Reporting on the child’s learning progress. This is Assessment of Learning (AoL)
2. Identifying the next steps to be taken to improve the child’s learning. This process is called assessment for learning (AfL)

Classroom folders

Each teacher has a classroom folder. Included in this folder is:

- Class profile
- Timetables
- Pupil profile plans
- Risk assessments
- Behaviour support plans
- Individual Education Plans
- Long term plans

Psychological Assessment:

On admission, every student will have a psychological assessment with a diagnosis of autism (Please refer to Admissions Policy) each student’s report is kept in a filing cabinet in the secretary’s office. The reports are available to teachers and the Director of Education to study and analyse. They help to inform each child’s Individual Education Plan, along with other assessments conducted by the teachers. The assessments must remain in the school, they are not allowed to be photocopied and taken from the school premises.

A school leaver will take priority for a NEPS/HSE psychological Assessment; therefore the Principal/ Class teacher will contact the parents for permission to secure a Psychological Assessment for their child.

Informal Assessment:

The forms of assessment used in our school include all of the following

- Teacher observation and checklists
- Teacher designed task and tests,
- Projects and homework (If requested)
- Skills tracking folders
- Fortnightly planners and monthly reports.

Records of teacher-designed tests are kept in the Assessment folder and fortnightly planners are kept in each student's folder.

Recording:

Each pupil has a folder which contains as follows:

- **Fortnightly plans**
- Speech and Language Therapist guidelines (if applicable)

Teachers pass on IEP goals, end of year reports, the students last academic plan and skills tracking folders to the next teacher that will be teaching the student the following academic year.

Documentation that each teacher needs to forward to the School's secretary is as follows:

- IEPS and End of the Year Reports.
- Speech and language therapy, Occupational therapist and psychological reports, consent forms etc.

Staff Roles and responsibilities:

Teachers, Director of Education/ behaviour support team and the Principal assume shared responsibility.

On admission the Director of Education, class teacher and SNAs (under the direction of the class teacher) will share responsibility to assess the pupil.

During the School year informal assessments are conducted by the class teacher and supported by classroom staff.

The Director of Education, in conjunction with the classroom teacher, has the responsibility of assessing pupils on areas that are paramount to children with ASD:

- Social skills
- Attention skills
- Behaviour related issues

Principal assumes a primary role when a Psychological Assessment may be required.

Parents have a role at all stages and the lines of communication must be kept open.

Success Criteria:

This policy is considered successful if:

- Early identification and intervention is achieved.
- Procedures are clear and roles and responsibilities are defined.
- There is efficient transfer of information between teachers and relevant school professionals

Implementation

This policy is effective immediately.

Ratification & Communication

This policy was ratified by the Chairperson of the Board of Management in MARCH 2012.

Review Timetable:

This policy was reviewed on _____

Evaluation:

This policy is monitored on an ongoing basis.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Management:

Chairman: _____ Date : _____
Alan Doyle

Principal: _____ Date: _____
Dolores Cullinane