



St Joseph's Adolescent School

Roll No. 20153N

Assessment Policy

Introduction:

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and lies at the heart of promoting a student's learning. The term "Assessment" refers generally to the gathering and interpretation of information related to a student's learning abilities, learning attainments, learning strengths and learning needs. It enables the development of a holistic profile of the student. It can provide a framework within which educational objectives may be set and student progress charted and expressed. It forms the basis for planning the next educational steps in response to the student's needs.

Aims of Assessment:

Assessment should enable students:

- To improve their achievement
- To be involved in their own learning
- To be motivated to achieve their full potential

Assessment should enable teachers:

- To identify strengths and needs
- To acknowledge prior learning
- To assess progress and adapt planning as required
- To ensure that students know how to improve the standard of their work
- To evaluate teaching and learning styles and outcomes
- To review and change practice
- To meet statutory requirements
- To identify the next steps in progressing the students' learning
- To adapt her/his teaching strategies and/or learning activities as appropriate

- To provide students and parents with information regarding progress
- To establish baseline data in relation to a student's attainments in specific subjects
- To report to the Multi-Disciplinary Team in St Joseph's Adolescent Service strengths, needs and progress of students.

Reporting of assessment should enable parents:

- To be involved in their child's learning
- To understand and encourage the progress their child is making

Nature and Purpose of Assessment:

Definition:

Assessment in education is 'about gathering, interpreting and using information about the processes and outcomes of learning' (NCCA Guidelines 2007). It takes different forms and can be used in a variety of ways. St Joseph's Adolescent School will use a continuum of assessment methods ranging from student-led assessment through to teacher-led assessment.

The underlying philosophy/rationale taken to assessment in this school:

St. Joseph's Adolescent School is recognized as a special school, which functions, as outlined in our mission statement, to provide a therapeutic and supportive milieu within the school setting for students experiencing mental health difficulties. The school functions as part of a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) at St Joseph's Adolescent and Family Services. Students from the Day Unit and the Adolescent In-Patient Unit attend the school, as outlined in their care-plan.

St. Joseph's Adolescent School is a co-educational special school with a broad curriculum, which aims to cater for the diverse needs, abilities and aptitudes of its students aged 13 to 18 years. The special needs category designated by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) is 'severe emotional disturbance' and the pupil-teacher ratio for this category is currently 6:1.

Assessment in our school needs to be adapted in regard to the presenting needs of our students, the short-time nature of their placements in the school and the need to liaise closely with referring/local schools:

- School placements are short-term (vary from 6 weeks to 12 months), depending on the severity of the mental health/emotional difficulties. Average attendance is about 12 weeks.
- Students present with a wide range of mental health difficulties such as psychosis, severe anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, OCD, Conduct Disorder, eating disorders, suicidal ideation and deliberate self-harm.
- All students are supported in a phased return to their own school/training, including school meeting at student's school or training centres such as Youthreach, Solas, National Learning Network, Eve Holdings, etc.

Assessment in the school forms part of the overall assessment of a student's needs in St Joseph's Service and is incorporated into the Care Plans as formulated by all members of the Multi-Disciplinary Team.

Individual Education Plan (IEP):

The development of an 'Individual Education Plan' (IEP) is central to the education of each student, as outlined in the School Policy on Special Educational Needs (SEN). Initially, the Key-Teacher meets with the student for an 'educational intake interview'. The student is involved in the development of his/her IEP in addition to parents/guardians, teachers, members of the MDT and teachers from the referring school. In order to facilitate this process, Student/Parent/School Input Forms have been developed. (Appendix A). Feedback of information from each of those forms is incorporated into the IEP as appropriate. An initial school meeting with parents/guardians supplements this information.

The IEP includes the following:

- Personal information
- School information/SEN/curriculum/subjects/learning/social aspects
- Diagnostic information on admission to St. Joseph's

- Key personnel involved in the IEP
- Impact of SEN on educational development
- Formal and informal assessments (see below)
- Interests and strengths
- Learning needs and behavioural needs
- Subject / targets with teaching methods / resources
- Progress and outcomes.
- Start and review dates

In relation to the IEP, every effort is made to set appropriate short term goals for the student. These will be reviewed with the student and, on a weekly basis, (currently on Wednesday at 2pm) by all key teachers as a conference-group. The allocated key teacher will oversee the transition from school to the next setting (as per the EPSEN Act, 2004). (See Appendix B: IEP Template)

Forms of Assessment:

Assessments can be either informal or formal.

1. Informal Assessment

The most common forms of assessment used in the school are of an informal nature and these take place regularly in the classroom. These informal assessments are at the discretion of individual teachers who will use them constructively for learning to take place. Timely feedback and constructive advice are vital components in this process. Where appropriate, teachers will keep records of these assessments to provide an insight into a student's progress over time and to fully inform the learning process. Key teachers will record this progress in the student's IEP. Informal assessment methods include:

- Questions and answers in class
- Worksheets and written class-work
- Essays and assignments
- Reading and writing in class
- Teacher observations
- Teacher daily and weekly evaluations (recorded on School-T Drive)
- Sample exam questions
- Homework – written or learned.

2. Formal Assessment

There are various types of formal assessments that take place in the school. As student placements are short, the school does not provide regular house examinations, such as

Christmas and Summer Examinations. However, all students are offered formal assessment in some form during their placement. Formal assessments include:

- 'Mock Examinations' for Junior Certificate students (3rd year) and Leaving Certificate students (6th year) during the month of February
- End of Chapter/Topic Tests
- Aural/Oral Tests
- Junior and Leaving Certificate Examinations
- Leaving Certificate Applied – Continuous Assessments and Examinations
- York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension

Both informal and formal assessments, as above, and the input of other professional reports (such as, Speech and Language Therapy, Psychology, etc.) enable a profile to be built up of each student. (See IEP). From this planning teachers generate programmes of work and lesson plans, with clear learning targets and activities.

See Appendix C for full list of assessments currently being used in the school.

Assessment Approaches:

This Assessment Policy is based on two assessment approaches and St Joseph's Adolescent School will use a balanced combination of both:

Assessment for Learning (AfL) takes place when the teacher shares information with the student about the student's learning and when the teacher uses this information to plan the next steps in their teaching and in the student's learning. AfL is characterised by:

- Sharing learning goals with students
- Helping students to recognise the standards they are aiming for
- Involving students in assessing their own learning
- Providing feedback, which helps students recognise what they must do to close any gaps in their knowledge or understanding
- Communicating to the student that they can improve
- Adjusting teaching to take account of the results of assessment.

Assessment of Learning (AoL) is used to provide a summary of what the student has achieved at fixed points, such as end of period of study or when a unit of work is completed or at the end of an academic year. Information from assessment of learning can be used to report to others, such as parents, teachers and members of the MDT.

Responsibilities:

The Principal and teachers share the responsibility to assess students, record progress and identify learning needs.

Record Keeping:

Record keeping is an essential element of good teaching. It provides the basis for reports and discussions with parents. However it must not be so detailed that it hinders teaching and learning. A record of academic subject matter covered in each class and daily/weekly evaluations of each student's presentation, engagement and outcomes are recorded on the St Vincent's Hospital Schools/T Drive. This can be accessed in both the Day Unit and AIPU. The evaluations are presented at the MDT meetings on a weekly basis in each Unit. Each student's IEP is also recorded on the School/T Drive. All other forms of assessment and reports are recorded in the appropriate school files for each school-year and stored safely in the school office.

Implementation of Record Keeping:

Each teacher will be responsible for maintaining the following:

- A short-term plan of teaching and assessment activities (weekly)
- A medium-term plan of teaching and assessment activities (4-6 weeks)
- An IEP.

Reporting and using the results of Assessments to improve student learning:

Parents/Guardians play a critical role in supporting their children's learning. The Principal and teachers in St Joseph's School share information with parents/guardians about the progress that students are achieving in the school. In this regard, teachers use different sources of evidence, such as informal and formal assessments (as recorded on the IEP) and examples of students' work. Key teachers meet parents/guardians on at least two occasions during a student's placement – shortly after admission in regard to the IEP and prior to re-integration to their school.

Discharge Reports:

On discharge, the parents/guardians of each student are provided with a full assessment report. As part of this report, key teachers are responsible for completing, in the appropriate section, a discharge report under the heading 'Educational Interventions'. This may include details of the student's engagement in the educational programme,

presentation and concentration, peer and adult relationships, educational outcomes achieved, strengths and learning needs identified. Further educational recommendations and supports for parents and schools are included.

Implementation:

This policy supersedes the (Draft) Assessment Policy drawn up in 2008 and is effective from October 2014

Policy Reviewed October 2014
Ratified by Board of Management
Signature _____
Chairperson Board of Management
Date _____
Review Date _____

References:

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Department of Education and Science (2000) Learning Support Guidelines. Dublin: Government Publications Sales Office.

Department of Education and Science (2012) School Self-Evaluation: Guidelines for Primary Schools. Dublin: Inspectorate, Department of Education and Skills.

NCSE (2007) Guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process. Dublin: Government Publications Office.

NCCA (2010) Standardised Testing In Lower Secondary Education. NCCA Research Report No. 12. Dublin: NCCA.

NCCA (2008) Exceptionally Able Students: Draft Guidelines for Teachers. Dublin: NCCA.

NCSE (2012) Research Report No. 10 Curriculum and Curriculum Access Issues for Students with Special Educational Needs in Post-Primary Settings: An International Review. Authors: Alison O'Mara, Benedicte Akre, Tony Munton, Isaac Marrero-Guillamon, Alison Martin, Kate Gibson, Alexis Llewellyn, Victoria Clift-Matthews, Paul Conway and Chris Cooper

Circular 0056/2011: Initial Steps in the Implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

Government of Ireland (1998) Education Act. Dublin: Government Publications Sales Office.

Government of Ireland (2004) Education for Persons with Special Education Needs (EPSEN), Dublin: Government Publications Sales Office

NCCA (2009) Reporting to Parents in Primary School: Communication, Meaning and Learning. Dublin: NCCA.

NCCA (2008) Exceptionally Able Students: Draft Guidelines for Teachers. Final Report on the Consultation.

Appendix A:

- 1) IEP Input Form (Student)
- 2) IEP Input Form (Parent/Guardian)
- 3) IEP Input Form (Current School)

Appendix B:

IEP Template

Student name:

School:

Year:

Age:

Past School:

Summary of information (formal & informal MDT assessments/recommendations & dates)

Additional Information/Concerns:

Summary of Strengths (incl. attainments, preferences, interests, learning style) and Needs

STRENGTHS	NEEDS
Priority Learning Needs	
Subjects:	
Goals:	

Learning targets/Objectives	Teaching Strategy/Resources	Progress/Outcomes	Status date	Staff Involved

Appendix C:

Assessments currently being used in St Joseph's School:

Literacy Diagnostic/Formal Assessment	YORK Assessment of Reading for Comprehension
Informal Assessment	DEAR Group (Drop Everything And Read) Basic Sight Vocabulary (Dolch List) Aston Index Handwriting Checklist Assessment of Writing (functional, personal) Checklist of Language Skills Oral Language Running Record School Input Forms (IEP) Parent/Guardian Input Forms (IEP)
Numeracy Diagnostic/Formal Assessment	To be decided following Project Maths In-Service
Informal	Numeracy assessment programme (Elaine King) Social Numeracy Checklist School Input Forms (IEP) Parent/Guardian Input Forms (IEP)
Learning Style	VAK Questionnaire Multiple Intelligences Questionnaire Career Guidance Teacher Online Questionnaire
Social skills	Social Skills Checklist SUSST Group (Education/SLT Team Teaching) Observation in Groups Student Input Form (IEP) School Input Forms (IEP) Parent/Guardian Input Forms (IEP) School meetings Parent meetings
Fine/gross motor skills	Observation Checklist

Future plans	
Literacy	Diagnostic Reading Analysis (2 nd Ed) New Group Reading Test 2015(2 nd ed)
Numeracy	Still to be decided