

Schull Community College

Assessment Policy

Preamble

The College is a co-educational school catering for the educational needs of the post-primary population of the Mizen Peninsula and beyond.

Its essential role is that of a caring community, setting standards which enable each pupil to develop to his/her potential.

Scope of the Assessment Policy:

The term "Assessment" refers generally to the gathering, collating and interpretation of information related to a student's learning abilities, learning attainments, learning strengths and areas of learning that need addressing.

Assessment Policy Statement:

The Education Act (1998) requires schools to regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to students and their parents. In fulfilling this requirement, schools must develop assessment procedures, which provide an accurate account of a student's progress and achievement.

Aims of the Policy:

'Teaching and Learning' is the core business of the college. This assessment policy is designed to complement and enhance that core business.

This Assessment Policy aims to

1. Explain the rationale and importance of assessments
2. List the different types of assessments
3. Detail the annual schedule of assessments
4. Detail the reporting procedures post assessments

'All assessment in junior cycle, formative or summative, moment in time or on-going, SEC, NCCA, or teacher-designed, should have as its primary purpose, the support of student learning.' Framework for Junior Cycle document 2015, p35.

Formative and Summative Assessment

Formative assessment involves a range of strategies designed to give students, teachers and parents, feedback about students' understanding of elements of their learning in courses. The feedback is the essential element of formative assessment.

Summative assessment refers to the assessment of learning at a particular juncture and aims to provide a summary of the achievements of the learner at that point in time.

Rationale for Assessment:

Assessment is an essential part of good teaching and learning for the following reasons:

1. Formative assessments enable the teacher to monitor a student's progress and make decisions about what and how the student is learning. This information allows the teacher to identify the next steps in advancing the student's learning and adapt teaching strategies and learning activities as appropriate.
2. Assessments help to identify appropriate subject levels for students in the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations.
3. Assessments help identify students who may need additional support and services and to inform consultations with the NEPS psychologist where necessary.
4. Assessments assist school management in identifying students, subjects, classes and areas of the curriculum that require further support.

Assessment should enable students to:

- make more informed decisions about subject choice, career choice and progression to third level/further education and about life skills,
- gain a better understanding and appreciation of subject studied,
- be more motivated,
- gain a greater sense of achievement.

Assessment should enable parents to:

- Be involved in their child's learning
- Understand and encourage the progress their child is making
- Check their child's progress throughout their time in the school

Types of Assessment

Assessments can be either informal or formal.

▪ Informal Assessment

The most common forms of assessment used in the college, and also known as formative assessment, are of an informal nature. These take place regularly in the classroom, for all class groups. They may take place at the discretion of individual teachers who will use a blended combination of methods as outlined below. These will be used constructively for learning to take place. Timely feedback and constructive feedback/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 and to fully inform them regarding the learning process.

Informal Assessments methods include using –

- Worksheets, quizzes & written classwork
- Questions and answers in class
- Essays, journals, projects & assignments
- Radio/movie projects
- Reading & writing in class
- Sample exam questions
- Homework – written and learned
- Presentations
- Debates
- Performances
- Observations

- **Formal Assessment**

- There are a number of types of formal assessments, of a summative nature, that take place in the College. The results of these generally form the basis for the reports issued to parents. Formal assessment techniques include –
- Entrance assessments
- Monthly/End of Topic/Chapter Tests
- House Examinations
- State Examinations
- Learning Support assessments

Entrance Assessments:

Incoming first years undertake assessments in English and Mathematics which are used as a basis to form mixed ability first year class groups. This assessment offers an early indicator to the school of a student's academic potential.

Tests utilised:

- NGRT2 –Reading
- Diagnostic Spelling Test
- Mathematics competency

Monthly/End of Topic/Chapter Tests

These forms of assessment are conducted at the discretion of the teacher on a monthly, end of chapter or end of topic basis. These formal tests are a vital component in providing feedback to teachers, students and parents, on the level of each student's attainment and learning in that specific subject area. Constructive feedback is given by teachers to students who complete these tests.

House Examinations

When appropriate, and as determined by each department plan, common assessments across a year group will be used in each subject area. This will provide for increased cooperation and a common benchmark across each subject area.

First Years are regularly assessed throughout the first term and this informs the grade in their Christmas report. They will sit formal summer examinations at the end of May or early June.

Second Year and Fifth Year students sit their 'Term Tests' in late November/early December and their 'Summer' Examinations at the end of May. The duration of these 'House' examinations may vary according to age, level and teacher discretion.

The purpose of these examinations is to measure student learning and attainment in each subject area, and to give students experience in sitting formal examinations similar in nature to the state examinations. As far as is possible, 'House' examinations are common across all classes.

Third Year and Sixth Year students undertake Pre-Junior Certificate and Pre-Leaving Certificate in February of their examination year to prepare them for their state examinations in June. The Pre Examinations are set externally and are marked internally and/or externally. These Pre Examinations enable teachers to guide students in their decision regarding higher or ordinary level papers and are very useful to the students in measuring their progress in their Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate years thus far. Students also gain valuable experience in time management and answering technique through sitting these Pre Examinations.

Transition Year students: Their Christmas and summer reports are based on continuous assessment in the classroom as determined by their subject teacher and agreed departmental practice.

As Transition Year is focused on experiential learning and personal development, the forms of assessment vary. Transition Year assessments may involve the following:

- External certifications (i.e. ISA, Gaisce, HACCP),
- Portfolios of class work,
- Individual and group projects,
- Oral presentations and discussions,
- 'Show Me' boards,
- Worksheets,

- Self and peer evaluation techniques,
- Radio/movie projects (Tionnscoimh Raidió/Scannán as Gaeilge)
- School based TY certification
- Reports on work experience
- Exhibitions of work for various school events and activities
- Pupil diary/log of personal progress

Transition Year is very much about students learning about their own strengths, competencies and skills. Assessment in TY is about enhancing presentation and communication skills and impacting positively on the students' self-esteem.

State Examinations:

The school strives to ensure that all Third Year and Sixth Year students participate (as directed by the State Examinations Commission) in the many assessments that make up the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate Examinations. These continuous assessments which can include orals, course work, practical work, portfolio work amongst others, are conducted in accordance with the regulations set down by the State Examinations Commission and can be worth up to 25% of the final mark in the particular subject.

The Junior and Leaving Certificate State Examinations begin on the first Wednesday after the June Bank Holiday Monday each year. The exact timetable of examinations is usually available from the previous January.

Learning Support Assessments:

All First Years are assessed by the Resource/Learning Support Department, being cognisant of information from enrolment forms, entrance testing (as above), referrals from teachers, and visits to primary schools, where applicable, to check for possible special education needs. This enables the Learning support department to apply and make provision for additional learning support.

Students may be selected for the WRAT4 (Wide Range Achievement Test) testing them in Reading, Comprehension, Spelling and Mathematics. Another test used is DASH (Detailed Assessment for Speed of Handwriting) to assess handwriting.

A progress report can be prepared where concern is expressed about a student's progress. This yields feedback from subject teachers regarding the student's progress. If a student is identified as having a learning need/difficulty, the Resource Co-ordinator will apply to the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) for extra support.

Where resources allow, and when possible, any reasonable accommodations that the students may be entitled to in state examinations are replicated in the in-house examinations at Christmas and summer.

Classroom strategies such as differentiated assessment, visual aids, spelling waivers, readers, scribes, increased time and use of dictionaries, amongst others, may be used from time to time, as determined by the Resource Co-ordinator, in consultation with individual subject teachers.

The school's NEPS psychologist, in consultation with school management, may carry out psychological assessments and other assessments on students at different times throughout the year. These assessments inform staff/parents/students of learning difficulties and strategies they can all use to support and assist improved learning in the classroom.

Reporting Procedures

There are many different methods whereby the results of formal and informal assessments will be reported to students and parents.

Non Standardised Reports

- The formative assessment process, as outlined above, involves giving feedback to students. This is given directly to students regarding their progress. As there are a variety of assessment strategies feedback can equally take a number of forms. The purpose of feedback from the teacher is to enhance the student's learning.
- Student Journal – the teacher may communicate the outcome of any assessment to the parents/guardian of a student by writing the result or a note in the student's journal.

The parent/guardian is expected to acknowledge receipt of this note by countersigning it.

- Direct contact – teachers may decide, as they see fit, to contact the parent/guardian directly with respect to the outcome of any assessment undertaken by a student
- Signature of parent on assessment – the teacher may send the corrected assessment itself home with the student to be viewed and signed by the parent/guardian.
- Parent Teacher Meetings – there are Parent Teacher Meetings for all year groups throughout the academic year. At these meetings it is possible for teachers to relay the outcomes of varying assessments to parents/guardians of individual students that generate an accurate picture of the student's progress. Students (except for First years) are expected to accompany their parents/guardian to the parent/teacher meeting, with a view to receiving direct feedback regarding performance and behaviour. Students are expected to be in full school uniform and have their school journal with them.

Standardised Written Reports

Formal written reports are posted to the parents/guardians of students on up to two occasions during the academic year, depending on the year group being assessed. The report template is computerised and allows teachers to distinguish levels. A mark and grade are awarded and a comment can be generated from a menu. Alternatively, a personalised comment can be given. All reports are signed off by the Class Teacher and/or Principal/Year Head and a general comment may be made on progress to date.

- First, Second and Fifth Year parents/guardians receive their Christmas report during the Christmas holiday, and their summer report during the summer holidays.
- Transition Year parents/guardians receive their first report during the Christmas holidays and the second during the summer holidays.
- Third and Sixth Year parents/guardians receive a report with the results of their Pre-Junior or Pre-Leaving Certificate examinations in Feb/March.

The above policy covers a variety of assessment procedures and techniques. It is not designed to be exhaustive or over prescriptive. If new innovative assessment techniques

are discovered, teachers are free to use them at their professional discretion in the classroom for the benefit of their students and, if successful, share them with colleagues, school wide.

The new Junior Cycle Framework is to be implemented with immediate effect. As part of that process, assessment procedures will play a key role in teaching and learning in every classroom. The College's assessment policy as outlined is designed to complement the proposed changes as detailed in the Junior Cycle Framework document 2015.

This Assessment Policy was reviewed by the Board of Management.

This Policy was agreed on __07/06/2016_____.

Signed __Noel Coakley_____ Signed __Brendan Drinan__
Chairperson of BOM Principal

Date _07/06/2016_____

Date of next review __07/06/2021_____