

Scoil Chormaic Scoil Náisiúnta Pobail
Baile Stiofan
Baile Brigín
Contae Baile Átha Cliath



Scoil Chormaic Community National School
Stephenstown
Balbriggan
County Dublin

Principal/Príomhoide
Ms Deirdre Corcoran

Deputy Principal/Leas-Phríomhoide
Mr Alan Weston

Whole School Policy for Assessment

1. Introductory statement and rationale

This policy was revised by A. Weston and C. Downes in February 2018, and subsequently discussed and further developed by the teaching staff of Scoil Chormaic CNS at a school meeting on _____.

This policy was discussed, accepted and ratified by the Board of Management of Scoil Chormaic CNS on _____.

Continuing Professional Development in the area of Assessment for Learning (AfL) was delivered to the whole staff by A. Weston on November 6th, 2017. This policy draws on the NCCA Assessment Guidelines for its rationale, contents and purpose.

In Scoil Chormaic CNS, we recognise that assessment is an integral process of primary education, and that assessment procedures are contingent on the relationship between the curriculum and the child's interaction with it in the learning process. In this context, our assessment facilitates the modification of teaching strategies and can lead to curricular revision.

We adhere to the NCCA definition of assessment as “the process of gathering, recording, interpreting, using and reporting information about a child's progress and achievement in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes” (NCCA, 2007, p. 7).

2. Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the school

Scoil Chormaic CNS seeks to enable each child to develop his/her potential in a caring and secure environment where the talents of each child are valued. This work can best be done where there is a high level of openness and co-operation between staff, parents, pupils and the whole school community. We believe that this assessment policy will enhance our work.

3. Aims

- to benefit pupil learning
- to conduct Assessment for Learning - to help guide teachers with short term and long term planning
- to monitor learning processes and learning styles
- to conduct Assessment of Learning - to generate baseline data that can be used to monitor achievements over time
- to involve parents, guardians and pupils in identifying and managing learning strengths and needs
- to co-ordinate and structure assessment procedures on a whole-school basis
- to establish the necessary and appropriate tools and approaches to gather assessment information for reporting to parents

4. Purposes of assessment

- To identify the particular learning needs of pupils/groups of pupils including the more able
- To monitor each pupil's progress and attainment
- To enable teachers to modify their planning in order to ensure that the particular learning needs of individual pupils/groups are being addressed
- To compile records of pupils' progress and attainment
- To facilitate communication between parents, teacher, and other professionals about pupils' development, progress and learning needs
- To enable teachers to monitor their own approaches and methodologies taking into accounts pupils' different learning styles

5. Assessment for Learning (AfL)

Definition

This Assessment for Learning (AfL) policy is underpinned by two pieces of research. *Working inside the Black Box: Assessment for learning in the classroom* (Black, P., Harrison, C., Lee, C., Marshall, B., & Wiliam, D., 2004) (Appendix 1), and *Perils and Promises of Praise* (Dweck, C., 2007) (Appendix 2).

AfL has been defined as “the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where their learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there” (Black, et al, 2004).

AfL should be used to identify gaps in pupil learning and then provide them with the advice and next steps needed to fill them, while recognising the importance of encouraging learners to take ownership of their own learning and actively participate in their learning journey. This is facilitated through ensuring a safe, positive learning environment in the classroom, which promotes a ‘growth mind-set’ (Dweck, 2007), where intelligence is expandable and everyone has the ability to improve.

Characteristics of AfL

Research shows that effective AfL is a key factor in raising pupils' standards of achievement. At Scoil Chormaic CNS we aim to ensure that staff:

- Embed this policy in the teaching and learning process
- Share learning objectives (intentions/goals) with pupils
- Help pupils to know and to recognise the success criteria they are aiming for
- Provide clear and motivating feedback that leads pupils to identify where they have succeeded and what they should do next to improve
- Have a commitment that every pupil can improve
- Involve both staff and pupils in reviewing and reflecting upon pupils' performance and progress
- Involve pupils in being able to assess themselves and their peers
- Adjust planning and teaching to take account of the results of assessment.

This will be done by:

- Observing pupils – this includes listening to how they describe their work and their reasoning
- Questioning – using open questions, phrased to invite pupils to explore their ideas and reasoning
- Setting tasks in a way that requires pupils to use certain skills and apply ideas in relation to their next steps for learning, including being reflective about their learning
- Adapting planning to include challenging tasks matched to pupils' learning needs.

Classroom Practice

At Scoil Chormaic CNS, AfL takes place using the following strategies:

1. Sharing the learning objectives (intentions/goals)
2. Developing and sharing the success criteria
3. Using a variety of questioning (including the provision on 'wait time')
4. Using self-assessment and peer assessment
5. Providing effective feedback

These strategies are carried out by:

A. Sharing the learning objective:

The learning objective (sometimes referred to as WALT – We Are Learning To) is what teachers expect most children will know, understand or be able to do by the end of the lesson or group of lessons.

Teaching staff:

- Share the learning objective within the lesson in child-friendly language, and display it on the whiteboard/in the classroom
- Plan differentiated tasks that will fulfil the learning objective
- Share the learning objective to enable the child to know the purpose of the activity, thus transferring much of the responsibility for the learning from the teacher to the child

B. Developing and sharing the success criteria:

To encourage children to take responsibility for their learning, teaching staff:

- Explain and generate the success criteria (sometimes referred to as ‘Steps to Success’ or WILF – What I’m Looking For) for the planned task. Success criteria can be developed with the children as part of the learning process and then displayed on the whiteboard/in the classroom
- Ensure the children have interpreted the expectations so they can apply them as they are working independently, thus making their own judgements against the criteria before any teacher assessment of the task takes place
- Model using the success criteria against an example piece of work to aid the process of self and peer evaluation.

C. Using a variety of questioning:

Questioning enables teaching staff to find out what pupils know, understand and can do while highlighting misconceptions in order to target teaching more effectively. Teaching staff use a variety of questioning skills when working with children by:

- Providing a high proportion of open questions (with reference to Bloom’s taxonomy)
- Providing time for pupils to think about and discuss their responses to questions (pair share ideas/talking partners)
- Providing supplementary questions to extend understanding
- Providing questions that encourage pupils to reflect on their thinking
- Providing pupils opportunities to generate their own questions.

Questions may include:

- How can we be sure that...?
- What is the same and what is different about...?
- Is it ever/always true/false that...?
- How do you...?
- How would you explain...?
- What does that tell us about...?
- What is wrong with...?
- Why is... true?
- Why do you think...?

[Guides to questioning are available in the AFL folder on the school Google Drive.]

D. Using self and peer assessment:

Self and peer assessment enables pupils to actively participate in their learning and, through their own assessment of strengths and areas to develop, has a positive influence on the learners’ self-esteem, motivation and progress. For pupils to use self and peer assessment successfully they need to:

- Understand the criteria or standards that will be used to assess their work (through teaching staff sharing learning objectives and success criteria)
- Practise self and peer assessment strategies following thorough modelling by the class teacher

- Identify and celebrate what they have done well
- Reflect on their own work to identify any gaps between what they did and what they could have done
- Identify the strategies and implications for future learning that they might use to close the gaps
- Be supported to identify where they need to improve
- Be given time to reflect on their learning and make improvements where necessary
- View mistakes as important learning opportunities, as part of a growth mind-set
- Be part of a positive and constructive process in a safe learning environment with clear guidelines for successful assessment.

Self-assessment strategies may include pupils indicating their level of confidence with a particular learning goal or using systems such as traffic lights where appropriate. This could lead to pupils making their own choices about the tasks and resources appropriate to their need. They could also indicate, in their own work, evidence of where they have achieved the learning outcome and/or success criteria.

Peer assessment in particular helps pupils to become clearer about their own expectations through trying to explain strengths and areas for development to others. This may result in the learning of new and more efficient strategies.

At Scoil Chormaic CNS, any written self or peer assessment, including editing, will be done in a different colour to both the child's original work and the preferred colour used by the class teacher.

With regards to Mathematics or any other learning in which the pupils' work is either right or wrong, teaching staff may provide the answers for pupils to check and mark their own work or that of their peers. This helps identify common errors and misconceptions to be dealt with immediately in the lesson. In these instances, teaching staff are still required to have an overview of the pupils' understanding in order to plan effective subsequent lessons.

E. Effective feedback:

Feedback is any information that is provided to the child, both orally and written, about their learning. Teachers should give pupils regular feedback, both orally and through accurate marking, and encourage pupils to respond to the feedback. It is most effective when:

- It relates specifically to the learning objective and success criteria
- It focuses on the task rather than the pupil
- It is given regularly and while still relevant
- Suggestions for improvement act as 'scaffolding' between what the child can currently do and what they could achieve with direction
- It allows for quality communication around learning
- It encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem
- Mistakes are viewed as important learning opportunities
- Evaluative comments/reminders/questions/next steps are given which indicate how to make improvements

- Children are given time to act on the feedback by either improving the work their feedback relates to, or acting on the feedback in subsequent work
- Teaching staff use the information gathered to adjust their planning for the next lesson or series of lessons.

At Scoil Chormaic CNS we place a high importance on ensuring all feedback is effective and has the primary aim of driving pupil progress and outcomes, thereby eliminating unnecessary workload around marking. We achieve this by:

- Recognising that oral feedback given during the lesson is usually more effective than written feedback afterwards;
- Recognising the enhanced value of comment-only feedback;
- Building time into lessons to allow effective feedback to be delivered;
- Ensuring written feedback is meaningful, through trusting teachers, as professionals, to provide feedback that is best for their pupils and circumstances and incorporating outcomes into subsequent planning and teaching;
- Ensuring written feedback is manageable, through making sure the time spent marking has the desired impact on pupil progress and does not take longer than the child spent on the piece of work;
- Ensuring written feedback is motivating, by being constructive and achievable
- Ensuring any written feedback is shared with the pupils in the following lesson in order to have the required impact (with regards to Mathematics, pupils are expected to complete some or all corrections, where appropriate, to demonstrate their developed understanding);
- Planning any ‘deep marking’ into the most effective place(s) of a unit of learning to bring the learning forward (i.e. deep marking at the end of a unit has less impact as there is no opportunity for development. More meaningful feedback would be a celebration of learning);
- Measuring the effectiveness of the feedback through how a pupil is able to tackle subsequent similar tasks (meaning that it is unnecessary for teachers to provide a written record of oral feedback);
- Adopting a ‘write, reflect/edit, mark’ sequence during lessons where appropriate, involving pupils completing work to the highest possible standard, then reviewing and re-working before it is marked by teaching staff or a peer;
- Recognising that self and peer assessment that meets the requirements of the success criteria is valuable feedback in itself and does not require further written feedback from teaching staff;
- Acknowledging work and effort with a variety of strategies, including, but not limited to, marking, verbal feedback, displays, class sharing time, rewards (such as stickers, praise, points, etc.). Homework does not require extensive written feedback.

It is important to have a wide range of feedback strategies and not rely heavily on one type. Feedback strategies could include:

- Learners checking their work against the success criteria
- Learners comparing their own work with good quality exemplars or rubrics

- Teaching staff questioning/probing an individual/small group about on-going work
- Teaching staff raising an observed common problem with the whole class
- Peer and self-assessment
- Marking*

All work requires feedback in some form. Where there is no written feedback evident on a piece of work, another feedback strategy will have been used in its place.

* It is important to note with marking and grades that it can promote a fixed mind-set in children and teachers should aim to avoid giving marks or grades where possible. The development of a growth-mind-set should be at the centre of marking and feedback and teachers should consider an alternative marking technique such as the T+, T, T-, Tx grading system (T+ = above target; T = on target; T- = below target; Tx = off target). This is just an example and is not prescriptive.

AfL Strategies

Some strategies we use at Scoil Chormaic CNS include, but are not limited to:
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WALT KWL Peer and Self assessment Comment-only feedback Two stars and a wish Traffic lights Learning logs Reflective Journals (including Homework)

Format of an AfL Lesson

The format of an AfL lesson differs in a number of ways from more traditional lessons. Below is the general format for an AfL lesson that may be used in Scoil Chormaic CNS:

- Start with the big picture and connect current lesson with any previous lessons
- Introduce the learning intention (WALT) at the beginning of the lesson
- Introduce/create success criteria (WILFs) that will inform the pupils how to achieve the learning intention
- Identify pupils' prior knowledge on the subject
- Make use of effective questioning throughout the lesson
- Involve students in peer/self-assessment based on the success criteria – throughout the lesson pupils are reminded to use the success criteria to assess how well they are doing or whether they need help
- Give focused oral/written feedback based on the success criteria during the lesson – either to individuals or with a focus group
- Finish with a plenary – discuss how the pupils' learning developed throughout the lesson. Pupils are encouraged to make an overall self-evaluation about their success or evaluate where improvements need to be made

[Further information on AfL and support templates and documentation for all these areas of AfL is on the school Google Drive.]

6. Assessment of Learning (AoL)

A wide range of assessment methods are in use in the school, based on the NCCA Assessment Guidelines. These are:

A. Standardised testing:

Standardised tests are used to measure a child’s reading and mathematical skills, and to determine children’s progress in those areas. Information from the tests is important given the vital role of literacy and numeracy in enabling children to access the full curriculum. A standardised test is an assessment instrument that contains standardised procedures for its administration and scoring and for the interpretation of its results. In other words, the test is administered, scored and interpreted the same way no matter when or where it is used. A number of standardised tests available to Irish schools have been normed on the Irish primary school population. Teachers will be familiar with these. Normed means that the tests allow the teacher to compare a child’s performance on the test with the performance of children of that class level or age in Irish primary schools.

The test items also relate to the content of the *Primary School Curriculum*. When used in combination with information from other assessment methods standardised test results contribute to the accuracy of the teacher’s monitoring, and assist in identifying the needs of individual children (or groups of children).

Standardised tests used in Scoil Chormaic CNS <i>(See annual SET calendar for dates of administration)</i>	
Literacy	Numeracy
Senior Infants – MIST First Class – Drumcondra Reading Second Class – Drumcondra Reading Third Class – Drumcondra Reading Fourth Class - Drumcondra Reading Fifth Class - Drumcondra Reading Sixth Class - Drumcondra Reading	First Class – Drumcondra Maths Second Class – Drumcondra Maths Third Class - Drumcondra Maths Fourth Class - Drumcondra Maths Fifth Class - Drumcondra Maths Sixth Class - Drumcondra Maths
Intelligence tests	
First Class – NNRIT Fourth Class – NNRIT	

Pupils may be excluded from a standardised test if in the view of the school principal (refer to Circular 0138/2006):

- They have a learning/ physical disability which would prevent them taking the test
- Newcomer pupils, where their level of English is such that attempting the test would be inappropriate.

These tests will be administered once a year and the results will be recorded on Aladdin, available for parent-teacher meetings and used by teachers (and the school) to inform their teaching and learning. They will be of benefit in planning for the effective use of resources available and will inform individual teacher planning. In addition, it is recognised that summative assessment can be used formatively and teachers will endeavour to use summative assessment in this way.

Standardised tests will be administered, corrected, interpreted, recorded and reported by the class teacher. If children are absent, ‘catch up’ tests will be administered by a support teacher as soon as possible.

Reporting results to parents will be in accordance with Circular0138/2006. Sten scores will be reported and we have agreed standard language descriptors to be utilised throughout the school (see table below).

Standard score range	Sten score range	Descriptor	Coverage
115 and above	8-10	Well above average	Top one sixth of pupils
108-114	7	High Average	One-sixth of pupils
93-107	5-6	Average	Middle one third of pupils
85-92	4	Low average	One sixth of pupils
84 and below	1-3	Well below average	Bottom one sixth of pupils

B. Teacher-designed tasks and tests:

Tasks and tests can take the form of written or oral assessments or practical assignments developed by the teacher to assess children’s learning. They can be used throughout the school year as a basis for continuous assessment (AfL). Tasks and tests can also be used at the end of an academic year or at the end of a period of learning about a certain topic for the purpose of AoL. However, tasks and tests can serve both AoL and AfL at the same time, since teachers may firstly report the results of tasks and tests and then use the results to decide what they should teach and how they should approach each topic.

Tasks or tests provide opportunities for children to demonstrate their levels of understanding (or misunderstanding) and their skills, and offer valuable information that can be used to plan future work directed towards the children’s needs.

C. Teacher observation:

Teacher observation, spontaneous or planned, can happen any time a teacher and child interact. Observations made by the teacher in the classroom provide some of the most immediate and accurate information about a child's learning. When teacher observation is compiled as a written record it allows the teacher to describe a child's learning in context. These records can make the planning of further work for an individual, group or whole class more focused and systematic.

By recording details of what a child says, does or makes, and, more importantly, how the child says, does or makes things the teacher can gather important information about a child's learning. He/she can identify the child's learning needs and preferences and can gauge how effectively those needs are being met in class. Teacher observation provides the teacher with information about how the child interacts and works with others. It also helps the teacher to assess not only the child's ability to transfer skills and knowledge across the curriculum but also his/her ability to use learning materials and resources.

Observation helps the teacher to find out the varying degrees of success with which a child acquires and masters different skills and knowledge and then to adjust teaching and learning contexts accordingly. Some of the knowledge and skills acquired by the child are best observed in action, and so teacher observation may often be the only way to assess a child's progress accurately. The *Primary School Curriculum* recommends the use of teacher observation in *all* subjects.

Teacher observation is part of classroom work. It includes listening and watching, and requires the teacher to notice, recognise and respond to the child's thinking and actions. Observation may focus on an individual child or on a group, but not all children will need the same level of observation at all times. Teacher observations occur spontaneously as children engage in learning activities and those observations may be recorded. More effective and purposeful monitoring of a child or a group involves teacher observation that is planned and recorded in a structured and focused way.

Teacher observation can be used at any time in a classroom. For example, a teacher may decide to observe the discussion within a particular group in the classroom or the work of a child with learning difficulties. He/she makes suitable arrangements to observe the child or group, which may include organising group work for other children, securing the co-operation of a colleague, and/or drawing up checklists. Observation usually takes place over a short period of time. The teacher observes the child or group as they carry out planned tasks or assignments and he/she records the relevant information. Subsequent observations allow on-going monitoring of the child or group.

D. Questioning:

Questioning underpins all classroom assessment methods. Teachers regularly ask children oral questions about their work to find out what they have done and why. Teachers use these questions to assess knowledge and understanding and to guide children in their learning. Children also use questions to help them to learn, for example they ask their teacher and their peers questions. Part of the teacher's work in using questioning as an assessment method is to model good questioning. This in turn helps children to become more skilful at asking good questions to aid their own learning. (See AfL section of this policy.) There are many different types of oral questions. These range from closed questions in which the teacher anticipates a single, factual answer to open-questions which encourage a more critical, analytical response, and which facilitate multiple solution paths.

Questions can also be used to assess learning (AoL) and to assist learning (AfL) although the distinction is not clear cut and questions may perform both functions to some degree. The following paragraphs explore some examples of oral questioning techniques.

Teachers' questions can assess children's depth of learning by encouraging them to elaborate on an answer, whether it be their own or another child's. This is called **probing**. Probing involves questioning children about how they have reached a solution to a problem or how they are presently working on a task. Probing can elicit clarification, solicit additional information, or redirect a child's response in a more fruitful direction. Probes include questions like, 'How did you get that?' and 'Why is that?' When using probing as an assessment method it is a good idea to ask if any of the probes can be more effective in determining children's current understanding and if so, how.

Teachers' questions can also take the form of **prompts**. Prompts involve asking children to consider aspects of a task with the aim of helping them to reach a correct solution or to use a more appropriate method. Prompts include questions like, 'Does that work for all even numbers?' and 'Suppose the shape was a rectangle, would that make any difference?'

Here are a number of questions to keep in mind if you are using prompts as an assessment method:

- Do the prompts address the common difficulties likely to be encountered by the children? If not, how might the prompts be altered?
- Do any of the prompts go too far, to the extent that you are, in effect, telling children what they should be doing rather than guiding them to reconsider their plans?

Answering questions

The examples above focus on the teacher asking questions. Encouraging the children to ask questions of the teacher can also provide information to support AoL and AfL. This can be achieved by:

- *Giving the children opportunities to ask questions:* Pause after making an important point or explaining a topic, or ask, ‘Any questions?’ or ‘Do you want me to say more?’ Give the children time to formulate their questions before going to the next point.
- *Trying not to postpone answering a question or not ignoring a child’s question:* If one child tends to monopolise class time try saying, ‘Let’s take questions from people we haven’t heard from, or Vincent, I’ve already answered several of your questions, let’s hear from some of the others first’.
- *Answering the child’s questions adequately:* If the teacher does not wish to answer the question directly then he/she could try
 - repeating the question or paraphrasing it to ensure that the entire class hears the question.
 - redirecting the question to another child or to the class in general, asking for an answer or comment, or an elaboration of the issue.
 - responding to the child’s question by directing his/her attention to things that may only be implied in the answer, and so help the child answer his/her own question.
- *Listening to the question:* Look at the child when he/she is talking; show that you are following by nodding; check whether you really understand what he/she is saying by rephrasing the question.
- *Promoting a discussion among the children:* Involve the majority of the class in trying to answer some questions.

E. Concept mapping:

Concept mapping (also known as semantic networking) is a process used to make spatial representations of ideas and the relationships between these ideas. The concept maps (or semantic networks) are similar to graphs containing ideas and labelled lines which describe the relationships between them. The purpose of the maps is to help the child show what and how he/she thinks about an idea. While there are different kinds of concept maps, they all help the child to organise and represent his/her thinking. In this way, the maps are graphic organisers or picture summaries of the child’s understanding of ideas and the relationships between ideas.

The information the teacher gathers through concept mapping can provide important starting points and check-in points for teaching and learning. Constructing a concept map helps children to draw together the information they already have and understand about a particular topic or idea, and incorporate new information in their thinking as they learn. Concept maps can also improve children’s understanding of individual concepts and help them to see connections between concepts.

Concept mapping is particularly useful in assessing children’s learning in science, history and geography.

How is concept mapping used?

Concept mapping begins with a discussion on the relevant idea or concept. Through this discussion, the teacher or children record(s) key words which represent the children's understanding of the idea or concept. These words become the basis for creating the concept maps, with the idea or concept the central focus of the map. Concept maps can be 3-D or 2-D. Making 3-D maps requires resources such as paper or card and string or wool, while 2-D maps can be created using paper and pencil or computer software such as word processing or concept mapping software.

Whatever format is used, the teacher sets the children the task (individually, in pairs or in groups) of organising the words or **concepts** in a way which enables them to describe relationships between concepts and sub-concepts. The number of concepts represented in a child's concept map provides evidence of the breadth of the child's understanding of the topic or area of study.

The levels of concepts represented (concept, sub-concept, sub-sub-concept) suggests the depth of the child's understanding. The children use lines to represent the **relationships** across the concepts and sub-concepts with arrows indicating the direction of the relationship. The teacher encourages children to show as many relationships as possible. The number of relationships represented in the child's map provides evidence of the extent of the child's integration of ideas within the topic or area of study. The teacher asks children to describe the relationships using as few words as possible. The accuracy of the child's description of relationships provides a further indicator of the extent of his/her understanding.

F. Portfolio assessment:

From an early age children can develop self-assessment skills, gradually taking more responsibility for the quality of their own work. Creating a portfolio is a useful way to promote these skills. A portfolio is a collection of the child's work, reflecting his/her learning and development over a period of time. It can provide evidence of progress in learning in a curriculum area, a subject, a strand, or across a number of these, using a topic or theme as the focus. The *Primary School Curriculum* recommends the use of portfolios as well as work samples and projects for assessing learning in a number of subjects: Gaelige, English, mathematics, SESE, SPHE, visual arts, music and drama.

Depending on its purpose, the portfolio can be used over a year, a term, or a shorter period. Portfolios also provide opportunities for collaborative assessment whereby the teacher and child together look at and talk about the child's work, identifying positive features and points for improvement.

Portfolios can exist in hard copy and/or electronically. An electronic portfolio, also known as an e-portfolio or digital portfolio, is a collection of a child's work created using word processing, presentation, multimedia authoring, concept mapping, database and/or spreadsheet software, and is assembled by the child.

Simple text-and-illustration entries can be created by very young children. E-portfolios also provide scope for connecting work within the portfolio (for example, linking a video file to a document) and external to the portfolio (for example, linking a website to a presentation). The NCCA's guidelines, *ICT in the Primary School Curriculum* (2004, p.35) note that the range of electronic work samples will increase as children become more familiar with developing and maintaining their e-portfolios. 'This will stimulate their interest in using ICT for learning, and foster their ability to assess their own work.' E-portfolios can be updated and managed online, which facilitates sharing the child's work with others and storing assessment data within the classroom and school.

What might the child put in a portfolio?

The portfolio's contents depend on the portfolio's purpose(s). The teacher decides on the purpose(s) of the portfolio *before* beginning to use it. Examples of purposes might be: to show improvement in children's work, to show a range of work, to show children's strengths and interests, or to show their best work. The portfolio can represent both AfL and AoL. Depending on its purpose(s), the portfolio might contain samples of the child's work across the curriculum or in a particular subject including:

- Examples of written work at different stages of development (stories, letters, poetry)
- Project work in science, history or geography
- Work samples in visual arts
- Charts or diagrams from mathematics or science
- Photographs or video-recordings of the child's participation in a physical education activity
- Recordings of musical work.

G. Conferencing

Conferencing in the context of assessment means that those concerned with the child's learning share their knowledge and understanding of the child's work, its processes and outcomes during a planned or intuitive meeting. During the school year the child's work and progress can be the subject of meetings between the child and his/her teacher, or the teacher and parents, or teacher and teacher, or all parties together. These should take place regularly and are especially useful in an AfL setting for delivering feedback.

How is conferencing used?

The teacher sets aside a certain time for the conference, which might be termed a review, or a meeting, or simply a conversation. If conferencing is done regularly, for example weekly, the teacher will probably be able to devote only a few minutes to each child. If children are new to

the process this might be a useful way to start. The duration or frequency will not matter as much as the child participating in and valuing the exercise.

The subject of the conference might be a single product of learning (a written story, a drawing, a project), or general learning experiences, such as using ICT or taking part in a drama or a field sport. The conference should be informal and non-threatening. It is essentially a conversation about school-work. At a later stage, or with older children, the teacher may use the conference to assign a grade to a particular piece of work the child has completed.

Discussion of criteria would be essential: ‘What is it that makes this a good piece of work? How might it be improved?’ A simple assessment rubric would be useful for this activity. A rubric is an assessment tool which describes varying levels of quality in a specific piece of work.

The classroom climate is a significant factor in the conferencing process. Children need to know and accept that they are not under examination in a conference with the teacher, and that they are free to say what they feel about their own performance in an activity or area of learning. The conference is more likely to succeed in a classroom culture that respects children’s opinions and encourages them to express them. Children also need to see the conference as an opportunity to learn something about themselves as learners.

H. Self-assessment

Children are involved in self-assessment when they look at their own work in a reflective way, identify aspects of it that are good and that could be improved, and then set personal learning targets for themselves.

Self-assessment involves metacognition—the process of being aware of and reflecting on one’s own learning. Self-assessment skills include effective questioning, reflection, problem-solving, comparative analysis, and the ability to share thoughts in a variety of ways. Self-assessment can be used by children of all ability levels and in all areas of learning. In age-appropriate ways, it can be used throughout the primary school and across subjects. Whole class discussions, group situations or one-to-one conferencing are all platforms for self-assessment.

In looking at examples of self-assessment across the curriculum, the child can use self-assessment skills in drafting, revising, editing and publishing a piece of his/her own writing. He/she can use the skills in choosing the best samples of his/her work to include in a portfolio for Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE), Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) or Arts Education. Self-assessment can also play a critical role in creating, talking about, and recording musical compositions.

Keeping a portfolio as a personal record of progress and reviewing its contents encourages the child in self-assessment by helping him/her to clarify objectives and set new learning targets. It

can be used to foster reflection, both verbal and non-verbal, and higher-level thinking skills. A learning log can be used to document the child's self-assessment and reflection on his/her work samples or collections.

Self-assessment is an essential part of AfL. It enables the child to take greater responsibility for his/her own learning. The child can use different strategies when thinking about what he/she has learned and use a set of criteria to make judgements about it. The most successful criteria are those that are agreed beforehand by the teacher and the class. Self-assessment helps the child to recognise the next steps in his/her learning and to become more independent and motivated. As the child develops self-confidence he/she can feel more secure about not always being right. In this way, self-assessment contributes to a positive classroom climate in which making mistakes is considered central to the learning process. The results of the child's self-assessment (for example, learning logs, portfolios, pieces of writing) can be shared with his/her parents during parent/teacher meetings. This can give parents more information about the child's learning from the child's own perspective.

How is self-assessment used?

The skills of self-assessment need to be learned over time. This involves a long-term, continuing process that is planned at class and school level. The skills the child needs can be taught or modelled by the teacher and practised by the child until he/she feels comfortable using them independently. The teacher can encourage the child to think about his/her own work using guiding questions, tools or aids. These include, for example, rubrics, *Know, Want to know, Learned* (KWL) grids, *Plus, Minus and Interesting* (PMI) diagrams, ladders, traffic lights, talk partners/buddies, checklists and webs. The teacher can incorporate learning targets and success criteria into classroom discussions. The child can then learn to assess his/her work against these targets or criteria. By giving positive, informative feedback to the child the teacher can support him/her in recognising and taking the next appropriate steps in learning.

7. Diagnostic and screening tests

An early screening process is in place in the school. This process can lead to early intervention strategies being put in place. Early intervention is of great importance at Scoil Chormaic CNS. Screening can take the form of whole-class screening or individual pupil screening (in the form of a diagnostic assessment).

Screening tests used in the school include:

i. Trinity TEST 2r

The Trinity TEST 2r will be piloted in 2018 on a trial basis with a view to using it as a screening test for Infants in literacy. The Trinity Early Screening Test for Reading and Writing (TEST2r) is a tool to assist teachers in the classroom to devise plans, which meet the learning needs of each pupil. It is administered to five and six-year-old children.

TEST2r is divided into two parts:

- The first part constitutes a rapid screener test, made up of five subtests. These are administered to all the children in a class as a means of formative assessment (Assessment for Learning – AfL). In this way, it helps the teacher to identify the learning needs of each child.
- If a child does not perform well in a particular subtest (or subtests), then the teacher will administer Part 2. These subtests are more diagnostic in nature, in order to clarify specific literacy subskill needs. Based on these results a teacher will decide on appropriate interventions.

ii. Belfield Infant Assessment Profile (BIAP)

The BIAP may be administered to Infants for whom concerns have arisen about his/her development or if the class teacher expresses concerns about the child's ability to work at the same level as his/her peers. This test will be administered in a one-to-one setting by a support teacher.

iii. Middle Infant Screen Test (MIST)

The MIST is administered in Senior Infants each year. Results are communicated to parents. In addition, the MIST programme Forward Together will be recommended for pupils who obtain scores below the threshold. If feasible, the Forward Together programme will be facilitated in the school setting by teachers or if not feasible parents will be facilitated in using the programme at home.

iv. Other Diagnostic tests used in the school include:

- The **Bracken Basic Concept Scale (Expressive)** maybe administered to Junior Infant pupils whose parents have expressed concerns about their development or if the class teacher expresses concerns about the child's ability to work at the same level as his/her peers. This test will be administered in a one-to-one setting by a SET teacher.
- **The Wide Range Achievement Tests (WRAT IV)** includes word reading, reading comprehension and spelling tests. It is suitable for the complete age range and uses US norms. This individually administered test also includes a maths assessment. Published by PAR.
- **The Non-Verbal Reasoning Test (NVRT)** involves no reading, so can provide insight into the abilities of pupils who think more easily in images than words and those who have limited reading skills, for example dyslexics, poorly motivated pupils who haven't learned to read, or those who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL). The designs used within the tests are also not culturally specific and involve very little mathematical knowledge, so that only reasoning skills are assessed. By testing such basic

learning processes these assessments can provide valid indicators of future academic performance in certain subjects including Maths and Science, as well as enhancing your knowledge of a pupil's abilities to help inform teaching strategies.

- The **Mathematics Assessment for Learning and Teaching (MaLT)** is a mathematics assessment for ages 5-14. Nationally standardised on over 12,500 pupils, MaLT can be used at any time during the school year - for screening, monitoring and tracking progress, as well as for individual diagnostic profiling.
- The **Phonological Assessment Battery 2 (PhAB2 Primary)** offers a comprehensive battery of tests that help assess phonological awareness in children aged 5 -11 years. It helps identify the phonological difficulties some children encounter in learning to read. In turn, this allows appropriate intervention to be provided to help improve underlying literacy skills.
- The **Assessment of Comprehension and Expression (ACE)** test is designed to identify children with delayed or impaired language development. It includes items which draw on verbal comprehension, expression and grammar, plus aspects of semantic and pragmatic knowledge, allowing professionals to identify children with significant and unusual patterns of language development.

The administration of such tests is in keeping with the approach recommended by circulars 02/05, 13/17 and the NEPS Continuum of Support where a staged approach is used by the individual class teachers and SET 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 happening. From these results an individualised education plan will be devised. In consultation with parents the results of the diagnostic assessment may be made available educational psychologist/other education professionals if further assessment is required.

8. Psychological assessment

In Scoil Chormaic CNS, the criteria used in the selection of pupils for learning support is greatest need (see SEN Policy, 2018). The class teacher and relevant support teachers and the Care Team (see Care Team Policy, 2018) will discuss the results of interventions in place, diagnostic testing, screening and informal testing. The staff members involved will adhere to and follow the guidelines provided in the 'Continuum of Support' (NEPS, 2007). Following discussion, the staff members will decide whether intervention from a psychologist is required. If deemed appropriate, the relevant staff members will discuss the case with the NEPS psychologist assigned to the school.

Class teacher/principal will contact the parents for permission to secure a psychological assessment for their child. Class teacher/principal will arrange consultation with specialised professionals to organise an assessment. The outcomes of the assessment will inform an individual educational plan for the child and this plan will incorporate recommendations made by the psychologist or other specialised professional(s). The reports are stored in the individual pupil's files in a filing cabinet the support teacher's classroom.

Psychological Assessment may be conducted by the following organisations:

- ✓ National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- ✓ Health Service Executive (HSE), Early Intervention Team
- ✓ HSE, Assessment of Need Team
- ✓ HSE, School Age Team
- ✓ Mater Child and Adult Mental Health Services for Children
- ✓ Private psychological assessment e.g. Dyslexia Association of Ireland, private practitioner,

If the class teacher has concerns regarding a child, the class teacher will refer child to support teacher(s) in consultation with parents/guardians for diagnostic testing. This is done through the Care Team process. Results are communicated at parent-teacher meetings or at specific meeting if required.

9. Pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL)

The Primary School Assessment Kit (PSAK) is administered to children who present with EAL. There are three phases to this test:

1. PSAK Placement is administered to new children to the school to establish their English Benchmark Proficiency. This is administered in September/October. Children in need of EAL interventions will be identified through this process.
2. PSAK Set 2 is administered to monitor the progress and efficacy of EAL teaching interventions. This is administered to tracker children from high, mid and low ability groups in each class with a score attributed to all members of the group based on the tracker results. This is administered in February/March.
3. PSAK Set 3 is administered to tracker children from high, mid and low ability groups in each class with a score attributed to all members of the group based on the tracker results. This is administered in April/May. These results are reported to DES.

[See SEN policy for more.]

10. PM Reading assessments

To ensure that all pupils' reading skills in English are developed in line with their ability, the school shall deploy greater and more frequent use of PM reading assessments (beginning September 2017) to ensure pupils move on to the next level in their reading, and in the PM reading scheme. These assessments can and should be carried out by the class teacher and/or the SET teacher at regular intervals. Regular assessment in this area will ensure that more able

children move on more quickly and are more challenged in their reading (in the PM reading scheme) and that all children are on levels appropriate to their individual ability – with the possibility of regular advancement within the PM reading scheme.

Additionally, PM Reading assessments should be used in Infant classes to establish reading readiness and to allow children able to read to commence reading immediately, and to be regularly reassessed in line with their ability (as outlined above). [This replaces the previous practice whereby formal reading did not commence for Infants until the final term of Senior Infants. Children will now commence formal reading when they are ready.]

11. More-able pupils

An Individual Challenge Plan shall be put in place for children who have STeN scores of 10 in either Drumcondra Reading or Drumcondra Maths. The class teacher will have primary responsibility for these plans with significant support from a designated SET teacher(s), where possible. Development of meta-cognition skills, advancement in either Reading or Maths or both, and the provision of greater challenge – leading to more independent learning – shall be the primary aims of the Individual Challenge Plan.

12. SET co-ordinators' roles in assessment (as per SEN policy)

The SET co-ordinators in Scoil Chormaic CNS shall undertake the following responsibilities, related to assessment:

- Oversee the implementation of a whole-school assessment and screening programme to identify pupils with very low achievement and learning difficulties so that these pupils can be provided with the support they need. This typically involves several weeks of assessment at the beginning of the school year, involving some or all of the SET teachers in the school.
- Co-ordinate the administration by Class Teachers of a whole-school screening programme to identify pupils with very low achievement and / or learning difficulties in English and Mathematics
- Consult with Class Teachers on the identification of pupils who may need diagnostic assessment, taking into account:
 1. The pupils' scores on an appropriate standardised screening measure;
 2. Agreed criteria for identifying pupils;
 3. Teachers' own views of the pupils' difficulties and needs;
 4. Support Teacher caseload;
 5. Co-ordinating comprehensive diagnostic assessment for each pupil who has been identified as experiencing low achievement and / or learning difficulties;
 6. Keeping teachers informed about external assessment services that are available and the procedures to be followed for initial referrals, when requested. Researching current assessments for primary schools;
 7. Maintaining assessment tests;

8. Ordering standardised assessment scripts each year;
 9. Distributing standardised assessment scripts to Class Teachers each year;
 10. Maintaining the results of standardised assessment each year and share the results with the Principal Teacher;
 11. Advising Class Teachers about baseline and screening assessments in September each year, when requested;
- Support with plans and planning:
1. Advising the Principal / Teacher on the construction of Support Plans;
 2. Advising the Principal on current individualised planning best practice, when requested;
 3. Advising Class teachers and Support Teachers about Support Plans;
- Co-ordination Activities:
1. Maintaining a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching at each stage of support - Classroom Support / School Support / School Support Plus;
 2. Advising Parents on procedures for availing of special needs services, when requested;
 3. Advising Class Teachers on procedures for availing of special needs services, when requested;
 4. Liaising with external agencies such as psychological services to arrange assessments and special provision for pupils with special needs;
 5. Implementing a tracking system at whole-school level to monitor the progress of children with learning difficulties;
 6. Advising the Principal Teacher about pupils who have been allocated SEN provision, when requested;
 7. Completing application forms for outside agencies such as NCSE; NEPS; CAMHS etc., in collaboration with Class Teachers and the Principal Teacher, as required;
 8. Advising on “*effective timetabling practices that ensures continuity*” (Circular 13/17), when requested;
 9. Advising on Transition, when requested.

13. Recording the results of Standardised or Diagnostic assessments

Standardised or diagnostic assessment results are recorded in hand written format on the appropriate charts and record sheets that belong to the test in use. In Scoil Chormaic CNS we understand the terminology associated with assessment results. Test response booklets are placed in the pupil’s file in the classroom. Results of whole school standardised testing are recorded on the annual Report Card and/or this information is given to parents at the parent-teacher meeting.

Sensitive data is stored in files and access is restricted. One copy of reports from professionals is stored in the school in the SEN filing cabinet. Assessment results are also uploaded/logged on Aladdin.

In case of informal testing, the teacher may direct a pupil to be an agent of their own learning when reviewing work and teacher designed tasks and tests. As a staff, we endeavour to create opportunities to communicate appropriate information based on assessment to relevant staff members (e.g. SET teachers or the new class teacher in September).

Relevant psychological assessments/reports will be transferred on to a new school and/or secondary school on receipt of parental consent or as part of the School Passport.

14. Record keeping in Scoil Chormaic CNS

General record keeping should comprise:

- a. An Assessment Folder (including, but not limited to):
 - Work samples (all work MUST be dated)
 - Checklists
 - Rubrics
 - Photographs of work or displays
 - Teacher comments or observations
 - Worksheets
 - Test scores (including the tracking of scores)
 - Test examples
 - Standardised or Diagnostic test scores
 - Continuum of Support documents (Student Support Files)
 - AFL samples (KWLs, WALTs or WILFs)
 - Samples of pupil's self-assessment, where appropriate
 - Rating scales
 - Records of comment-only feedback
- b. A pupil portfolio (for each child):
 - May contain the items listed as peer Assessment Folder (above)
 - End of year report cards (or information provided at Parent-Teacher meetings, at teacher discretion)
- c. Work samples (including copies that demonstrate work done and learning progression)
- e. Standardised test scores (should be uploaded to Aladdin)
- f. Diagnostic test scores (where appropriate, should be uploaded to Aladdin)
- g. Teacher-designed tasks or tests
- h. Ready Set Go Maths checklists or checklists from Maths books
- i. Aistear assessments

Record Keeping in SET team may comprise some of the following:

Pupils with EAL

- a. Primary School Assessment Kit
- b. Oral Language teacher-designed assessment checklists
- c. Checklists at the beginning and end of each theme (where possible)

- e. Group Portfolios
- f. Group Daily Assessment Records

Pupils with Additional Needs

- g. Letter Knowledge Assessment Records
- h. First 45 Sight Words Record
- i. Phonological Assessment Battery – to assess reading
- j. Belfield Infant Assessment Profile – measures perceptual development; motor development, learning styles, language and communication, social and emotional development.
- k. My Starting School Booklet (after 3 weeks) from www.communicationhall.co.uk
- l. Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire – to be completed by parents
- m. Early Start child profile sheets
- n. Group Portfolio
- o. Group Daily Assessment Records

15. Success criteria

Practical indicators of the success of the policy will include:

1. A range of AfL and AoL assessment approaches are used to position assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning;
2. Procedures run smoothly and efficiently because there is clarity about what is expected and who is responsible for different aspects of assessment;
3. Transfer of information from class teacher to class teacher happens efficiently at the beginning and end of the school year;
4. Parent and teacher feedback on the effectiveness of this policy is satisfactory;
5. Efficient and timely reporting of assessment results to parents and to the Department of Education is facilitated and is possible.
6. The pupils teaching and learning is enhanced.

16. Roles and responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the class teacher to use correct and appropriate assessment practices, as per this policy, and to ensure that a staged intervention, differentiated or learning support approach is provided for in line with NEPS (Continuum of Support) guidelines and the school SEN Policy (2018).

A. Weston is responsible for the ordering and storing of blank test booklets.

The SET co-ordinators (A. Weston and C. Downes) are responsible for the creation of an assessment timetable each year.

Each class teacher is responsible for the administration and scoring of Standardised Assessments (except for catch up assessments, which will be administered and scored by a SET teacher). SET teachers generally carry out one-on-one screening or diagnostic assessments.

17. Implementation Date

This policy will take effect from _____.

18. Date for Review

September 2019

19. Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on _____ and it is to be made available to the school community via the school website.

Appendix 1

Working inside the Black Box: Assessment for learning in the classroom (Black, P., Harrison, C., Lee, C., Marshall, B., & Wiliam, D., 2004).

Appendix 2

Perils and Promises of Praise (Dweck, C., 2007).