**Castaheany E.T.N.S Assessment Policy**

1. **Introductory Statement:**

Our Assessment Policy was coordinated by a working group of teachers in the school year 2017/18. This followed on from the results of a staff survey on assessment practice in the school and whole staff CPD based on assessment. The survey and CPD was carried out by Zita Lysaght of DCU. The policy was reviewed by all staff and ratified by the BOM in June 2018.

1. **School Information:**

Castaheany Educate Together N.S. opened in September 2004 under the patronage of Educate Together. We endeavour to create a positive and inclusive atmosphere that respects all children, regardless of their religious, social, cultural background or special educational needs. Our guiding principle is that “No Child is an Outsider”. Our school is DEIS Band 2 with a high population of EAL families enrolled.

1. **Rationale:**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that there is an accurate account of progress and achievement for all children in all dimensions of their learning in our school (NCCA, 2007; NCCA, 2005). It is to clearly outline to staff how they should do this at each class level, and how this information should be gathered, recorded, stored, interpreted, used and reported. It is to identify strengths and needs in children’s learning and development at the earliest stage possible.

1. **Aims and Objectives:**

* To build up a picture of each child’s progress and achievement over time
* To inform teachers of recommended assessment strategies to build this picture
* To inform teachers of their roles and responsibilities in terms of assessment of children that they work with
* To have clear procedures to identify any difficulties children may have, and how to address these difficulties
* To have clear procedures on recording, storing and sharing of assessment information

1. **Assessment for Learning (AfL):**

AfL “...emphasises the child’s active role in his/her own learning” (NCCA, 2007, p. 9). It involves the teacher figuring out, as they teach, if the children are learning, and if they need to adapt their teaching to suit the learners’ needs better (Lysaght, 2017). In order to embed this practice in their classroom, a teacher can:

* Let the children know what is expected of them to learn and agree what success and achievement will look like
* Share the ‘air space’ with the children throughout the lesson in the form of questioning and discussion
* Share the teaching and assessment role with the children (Lysaght, 2017)

In our school, teachers will do the above through sharing WALT (We are learning to...) and WILF (What I’m looking for...) at the start of lessons. They can use a variety of teaching techniques outlined in Appendix A and questioning techniques in Appendix B in order to share the learning space and create an environment of inquiry and shared learning. They can use teacher, peer and self-assessment techniques outlined in Appendix A in order to share the teaching and assessment role with the children. A more detailed list of suggested techniques will follow in Section 8 and 9.

1. **Assessment of Learning (AoL):**

Assessment of Learning “...focuses more on medium- and long-term assessment...assessing the child’s learning at the end of a given period” (NCCA, 2007, p. 9).

Among the methods of AoL used in C.E.T.N.S. are:

* Teacher-designed tests and tasks at the end of a period of learning
* Standardised tests (See Section 10)
* Questioning (see Appendix B for Different Types of Questions)
* Teacher observation
* Feedback: It is envisaged that feedback from AoL tasks will inform further learning, and that results of tests will not take the form of just a score and/or grade. Grades or scores are useful for a teacher, but can be of “limited value” to a child (NCCA, 2007). Grades or scores given to children’s work may be accompanied by or replaced with written feedback. Oral and pictorial feedback is appropriate and more meaningful to early years’ classes, in place of written feedback.

1. **What should be assessed?:**

It is important that all aspects of a child’s progress and achievement are assessed, in some form. These aspects include:

* Cognitive- acquiring knowledge, critical thinking, literacy and numeracy, etc.
* Social-values, attitudes, confidence, social skills, etc.
* Physical-gross and fine motor skills, PE, etc.
* Creative -art, poetry, music, drama, response to their environment, etc.

Certain assessment methods are more suited to certain aspects of development, as outlined in Section 2 of the NCCA Guidelines for Schools in Assessment in the Primary School.

1. **Assessment in Early Years:**

“Assessment in the early years is an informal and natural part of the teacher’s interactions with children. Much assessment takes place through observations of the child, discussions with the child, and active listening to the child in a variety of learning situations” (NCCA, 2007, p. 78) At this stage, a child’s experience of learning is holistic and not subject-specific (NCCA, 2007; Primary Curriculum, 1999). Assessment can take the same form.

In early years in C.E.T.N.S (JI-1st), teachers can use the following assessment tools:

AfL:

* Learning Outcomes (WALT/WILF) stated at the start of lessons (whole class and small group/team-teaching), repeated back to the teacher, referred to throughout and checked in on at the end (See Appendix C, D, E, F for suggested wording of learning outcomes/objectives)
* Teacher observation notes, recorded and kept in teacher’s own assessment folder
* Questioning: See Appendix B for Different Types of Questions
* Thumbs up/down/sideways
* Think/pair/share
* Teacher’s choice of 2 or more other peer and self-assessment techniques from Appendix A

AoL:

* Samples of children’s own work e.g. writing portfolio/scrapbook, art portfolio, Aistear scrapbook, etc.)
* Teacher-designed tests and tasks
* Maths checklist e.g. RSGM, Planet Maths assessments
* Abair Liom Súil Siar pages
* Self-assessment of their own work, e.g. smiley face beside their best letter, Show and Tell question and answers, KWL (see Appendix A for suggested techniques)

1. **Assessment in the Middle/Senior Years (2nd-6th):**

In middle/senior years in C.E.T.N.S (2nd-6th), teachers can use the following assessment tools:

AfL:

* Learning Outcomes (WALT/WILF) stated at the start of lessons (whole class and small group/team-teaching), repeated back to the teacher, referred to throughout and checked in on at the end (See Appendix C, D, E, F for suggested wording of learning outcomes/objectives)
* Teacher observation notes, recorded and kept in teacher’s own assessment folder
* Questioning: See Appendix B for Different Types of Questions
* Traffic Lights
* Think/pair/share/square
* Two stars and a wish
* Teacher’s choice of 2 or more other peer and self-assessment techniques from Appendix A

AoL:

* Samples of children’s own work (SALF, portfolios, project work, etc.)
* Teacher-designed tests and tasks
* Planet Maths assessments
* Abair Liom Súil Siar pages
* Self- and/or peer-assessment of their own work (see Appendix A for suggested strategies)

1. **Standardised Testing:**

In order to identify pupils who may require supplementary teaching, screening; including standardised testing, is carried out in classes annually and further diagnostic testing may need to take place. The information gathered from these formal assessments is then used to inform decisions for support and pupil’s support plans (CSP, IPLP/GPLP and IEP)

In our school we carry out the following standardised tests:

· Senior Infants: MIST, Reading/Maths recovery

· 1st class: Micra T, Sigma T, and Reading/Maths Recovery

· 2nd class: Micra T, Sigma T, NNRIT/NVRT

· 3rd class: Micra T, Sigma T

· 4th class Micra T, Sigma T.

· 5th class: Micra T, Sigma T and NNRIT/NVRT.

· 6th class: Micra T, Sigma T.

We continually review the assessments and screening tests that we use in order to balance the needs of our pupils and the need to provide information for appropriate support. Therefore we may deviate from the above list prior to the review date.

1. **Assessment for Supplementary Teaching (Learning Support):**

We use the Continuum of Support Framework set out by the Department of Education to identify and support children with additional needs. The Continuum of Support is a problem-solving model of assessment and intervention that enables us to gather and analyse data, as well as to plan and review the progress of individual pupils.

We identify pupils’ educational needs, to include academic, social and emotional needs, as well as needs associated with physical, sensory, language and communication difficulties. This, in turn, allows us to identify and respond to needs in a flexible way.

Further information regarding assessment for supplementary teaching can be found in our school’s Additional Support Policy.

1. **Psychological Assessment:**

The procedures and responsibilities for organising and following up on psychological assessments are carried out by the SENCO. All psychological assessments are stored securely in the SENCO’s room.

1. **Recording Information:**

According to the Education Act (1998), schools must create and maintain individual records of children’s learning while they are attending school. Assessment can be recorded in many forms: marks, grades, written feedback, checklists, portfolios, profiles, narrative comments, etc. The following explains the requirements for class teachers in C.E.T.N.S

Teacher’s Records/Pupil File: Teachers will have their own assessment folder (soft and/or hard copy). This can contain records pertaining to the cognitive, social, physical and creative progress and achievement of the children in their class. It can include written observations, work samples, photographs of individual children, etc. It can also contain results of teacher-designed tasks and tests, e.g. checklists.

Standardised Assessment Folder: Each class has a folder containing results of whole-class standardised tests, which is added to each year of school.

Report Card: The school follows the NCCA report card template (see Appendix G). The report card is available for parents/guardians in sufficient time before the closure of the school. Class teachers will hand the report card to the parents/guardians. Alternatively, parents/guardians can send in a stamped addressed envelope to have the report card sent home or they can collect if from the school office. Only parents/guardians can collect the report card.

The following outlines the requirements for SET team in C.E.T.N.S:

Pupil File: Each pupil who receives supplementary teaching should have a file containing their continuum of support folder, work samples, pre- and post-intervention assessments and diagnostic and standardised tests and support plans.

Report Card: SET’s are required to comment on achievement and progress of the children who they withdraw in the section *Additional Support Teaching*.

1. **Sharing Information:**

Teachers and SNAs share assessment information, on a ‘need to know’ basis. It is recommended that ‘handover meetings’ will take place in June/September regarding children’s progress.

Requests from outside agencies will be handled according to the Data Protection Policy, Section 4.

1. **Storing Information:**

Location: All student data is stored in secure, locked filing cabinets that only personnel who are authorised to use the data can access. Employees are required to maintain the confidentiality of any data to which they have access.

SEN files are securely locked in SET rooms.

1. **Staff Roles and Responsibilities:**

According to the Teaching Councils Code of Professional Conduct (2016), teachers should:

* “maintain high standards of practice in relation to pupil/student learning, planning, monitoring, assessing, reporting and providing feedback
* plan and communicate clear, challenging and achievable expectations for pupils/students
* develop teaching, learning and assessment strategies that support differentiated learning in a way that respects the dignity of all pupils/ students” (Teaching Council’s Code of Professional Conduct, 2016, p. 7)

Therefore, it is the role of class teachers to:

* implement assessment strategies, as outlined in Sections 8 and 9
* keep assessment records, as outlined in Section 13
* differentiate learning objectives and methodologies, according to the needs of the children they are teaching
* inform SET class co-ordinator, principal and parents of concerns they have with regard to the development of children in their class
* complete report cards for each child in their class
* report standardised test scores to parents at annual parent-teacher meetings

It is the role of SET team to:

* implement assessment strategies, as outlined in Sections 8 and 9
* differentiate learning objectives and methodologies, according to the needs of the children they are teaching
* inform class teacher of concerns they have with regard to the progress of children they are working with
* keep assessment records, as outlined in Section 13
* regularly review and maintain support plans

1. Implementation and Review:

This policy will be implemented from September 2018. We aim to review it by June 2021.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Chairperson, BOM)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Bibliography:

* NCCA (2007), Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools, NCCA, Dublin.
* NCCA (2005), Assessment Guidelines for Schools, NCCA, Dublin.
* The Teaching Council (2016), Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers, The Teaching Council, Maynooth.
* Zyaght, Z. (2017), Some Basic Pointers to BEd and PME Students Regarding the Integration of Assessment, Teaching and Learning on SP, DCU, Dublin.