

# Eureka Secondary School

EUREKA



## Assessment Policy

*August 2017*

## **Mission Statement**

1. Eureka Secondary School aims to provide the highest quality education possible to meet the needs of all students, within the limits of available resources, and within the environment and ethos that promotes Christian values, mutual respect and responsible citizenship.
2. The school aims to offer opportunities equally to all its students, whatever their ability, circumstances or religious experiences, in order to develop each person's potential to the full. Programmes are provided to facilitate students whose goal is further education, those who wish to enter the world of work, and those who wish to return to full-time study.
3. The school is committed to maintaining a supportive partnership with parents who are the primary educators of their children, with employers, schools, the local community and the parishes from which the pupils come.
4. The staff, the schools most valued resource, are supported and encouraged in their work, and we aim to promote their individual and corporate development through supportive structures and in-service training, both internal and external.
5. The school is committed to developing a community where mutual respect reigns, where personal standards of work and behaviour are high and where students grow to recognise fully their responsibilities both to themselves and to others. Our hope is that when they leave school, they may be better able to take their place in society as mature and responsible citizens imbued with the Christian values which are the inspirations of this school.

**Definition:** 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. Methods mostly include examinations, class work, projects, written/oral/aural work, homework; this list, however, is not exhaustive.

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

## **Aims of the Policy**

This policy sets out to:

1. Explain the rationale and importance of assessments
2. Highlight the different types of assessment that take place in the school (formative and summative)
3. Outline the annual schedule of assessments (summative)
4. Indicate the reporting procedures adopted post assessments

## Overall Rationale for Assessment

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

1. 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 students learning and adapt teaching strategies and learning activities as appropriate.
2. Assessments reinforce the learning carried out in the classroom.
3. They provide the students and parents/guardians with information regarding progress.
4. They establish baseline data in relation to a student's attainments in certain subjects.
5. They help to identify appropriate subject levels for students in Junior and Senior Cycles.
6. Assessments help identify students who may need additional support and services and to inform consultations with the NEPS psychologist where necessary.
7. They assist in the identification of students who may need to be referred to an outside professional or agency for assessment or direct intervention.
8. They assist the school management team in identifying students, subjects, classes and areas of the curriculum that require further timetabled support.
9. Assessments play an important role in subject choice, career guidance and progression to third level and further education.

## Assessment and the Student

Assessment should enable all students to:

- improve their levels of achievement;
- become actively involved in their own learning;
- be motivated to achieve their full potential.

## Types of Assessment:

### (i) *Formative Assessment*

**Definition:** The goal of Formative Assessment is to monitor student learning and provide ongoing feedback. This can be used by teachers to improve their teaching and by students to improve their learning. In more specific terms, Formative Assessments help students identify their strengths and weaknesses, and subsequently target areas that need work. They also help teachers recognise where students are struggling and enable them to address problems immediately.

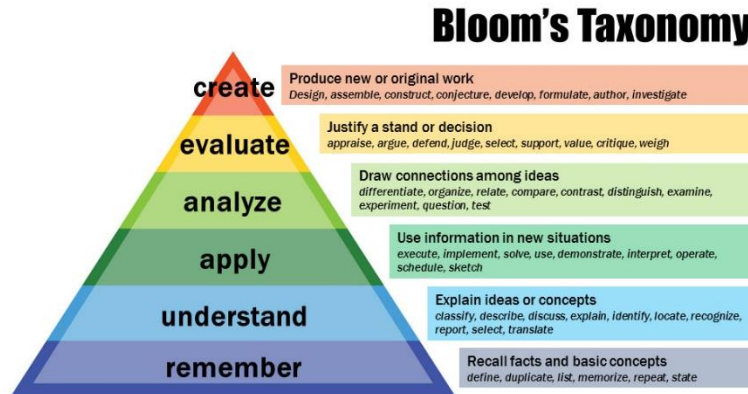
### *Overview of Formative Assessment in the School*

Eureka Secondary School has adopted the Assessment for Learning approach to Formative Assessment. Its purpose is to use the whole process of assessment to help students improve their learning. It is 'formative' because its intention is to form, shape or guide the next steps in learning. It is fundamentally about 'learning to learn'.

## Formative Assessment/AFL Strategies

While numerous strategies are used across the school, the most common include:

1. The implementation of Bloom's Taxonomy in Teacher Questioning. Teachers' questions start at the bottom of the triangle below, which can be classified as 'lower-order'. Depending on the extent to which the teacher wants to push the class, he/she will gradually move up the triangle towards questions that stimulate 'higher order' thinking among students.



2. The Sharing of Learning Intentions with students at the beginning of lessons or where deemed necessary throughout. Reference is made back to these at the end of the lesson to help clarify for teachers and students the learning that has taken place and the direction in which it needs to move.
3. The Sharing of Success Criteria involves teachers telling students in advance of a given piece of work what exactly they will be looking for when assessing it. This clarifies expectations for students. Teachers also provide timely feedback when work is being undertaken to maximise and enhance the learning taking place.
4. The implementation of Self and Peer Assessment. Teachers encourage students to reflect on their own work or that of others with a view to identifying what has been successful and areas that can be improved. Teachers can then assist in the areas which require improvement. The Student Journal also contains a Self Evaluation Section where students evaluate their own progress on a weekly basis. This process encourages them to reflect on their performance across all their subjects. Specific areas like punctuality, meeting deadlines, taking responsibility, etc. must also be evaluated. Students identify areas where they can improve going forward. This Self Evaluation Section is monitored by Class Tutors on an ongoing basis.
5. In line with the demands of the specification/syllabus in each curriculum area, teachers set regular homework and comment on the merits of the work produced, as well as making suggestions for improvement. Grades/marks are not always provided on homework; the focus is on providing constructive feedback and comment only marking. Teachers can also demonstrate how homework should have been completed and students can in turn self or peer correct. The overall goal is that teacher/students can see how learning can be improved. Homework is considered by the school to be an important element in reinforcing the student's grasp of material and work covered in class. It allows the teacher to informally assess how well the students have grasped new concepts; it allows teacher and student to identify the next steps in learning. The school expects that all homework is completed on time and to the best of a student's ability. All homework, written and learning, is to be recorded by students in their school journal. Students who miss class due to sports games, medical/dental appointments are expected to find out from their fellow classmates' what homework was set by the teacher and then complete this.
6. Assessment work may be differentiated to suit the needs and abilities of individual students.

## **(ii) Summative Assessment**

**Definition:** Summative Assessment refers to the assessment 'of' learning. It occurs at the end of the learning process. Its goal is to provide a summary of the achievements of the learner.

### **Types of Summative Assessments & Corresponding Scheduling**

The main types of Summative Assessments that take place in the school are as follows:

1. Monthly/End of Topic/Chapter Tests. These are conducted at the discretion of the teacher and are a vital component in providing feedback to teachers, students and parents/guardians on the level of each students' attainment and learning in any given subject area.
2. *First, Second and Fifth Year students* sit Christmas Exams in late December and Summer Exams at the end of May. The purpose of these exams is to measure student learning and attainment in each subject and to give students experience in sitting formal exams similar in nature to state exams. These exams are standardised by subject departments in order to be able to moderate across the year groups and to ensure a consistent standard.
3. *Third and Sixth Year students* sit house exams in November and undertake Mock Exams before Mid-Term Break in January/February. External Exam Papers are issued. Corrections are completed by class teachers and/or external examiners. Through these exams, students gain valuable experience in time management and answering techniques and also get an overview of their progress to date in all subjects. These students then complete State Examinations in June.
4. *Year students* complete Christmas and Summer Exams in their main core subjects. Continuous Assessments are completed in other subject areas; marks awarded are based on a credit system which focuses on areas like meeting deadlines, participation, punctuality, etc. This programme is focused on experiential learning and personal development; assessment strategies include portfolios, projects, oral presentations, multi-media, self and peer evaluations.
5. Classroom-Based Assessments (in second & third year) are completed in Junior Cycle subjects where new specifications have been implemented.
6. *Leaving Cert Applied students* undertake key assignments and tasks in the majority of subject areas. Mock and State Exams are completed in English & Communication, Specialisms, Languages, Social Education and Maths.

## **(iii) Psychometric Testing**

At the point of entry to the school, as well as Entrance Exams, First year students complete Aptitude Tests (Drumcondra Aptitude Tests in 2017 and previously Cognitive Ability Tests, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition) and the Drumcondra Reading Test. These tests assess students' verbal, numerical, non-verbal and spatial abilities. The results from these are utilised as follows:

1. Students with particular needs are identified; the Guidance Counsellor and Learning Support Co-ordinator meet to discuss the relevant students. The provision of extra resources is explored/organised; meetings with parents are built into this process.
2. IEPs (Individual Education Plans) for the relevant students are drawn up by the Learning Support Teachers, in conjunction with parents and the school management team.

All Transition Year students complete Aptitude Tests. One purpose here is to highlight the areas in which students are most successful, and to try to capitalise on these as far as possible in their subject selection for Leaving Certificate and future education plans.

The results from all the Psychometric Tests above are further utilised by all teachers in Academic Progress Tracking (See below).

#### ***(iv) Academic Progress Tracking***

A further area of assessment implemented in the school is Academic Progress Tracking. This tracking involves reviewing and assessing the progress of students relative to the results they attained on their Aptitude Tests when in First or Transition Year. The procedure adopted is as follows:

1. The tracking is completed at two points during the year, towards the end of Term 1 and then Term 2.
2. Apart from Transition Years, teachers track students in 'all' year groups.
3. A specific coding system (S - Satisfactory, E- Exceeding and C - Concern) is used to record progress levels.
4. Consideration is given to both formative and summative assessments completed throughout each term during this process.
5. The tracking results are subsequently factored into the planning and implementation of teaching and learning strategies in each class and in the setting of targets for students. Teachers can also access teaching and learning strategies set out for individual students within the reports from the Aptitude Tests.
6. The overall results are reviewed by all Year Heads, with a particular focus on students who may be underperforming and on finding ways, in conjunction with Class Tutors to improve progress.

### **Reporting Procedures**

There are many different methods adopted in reporting the results of formative and summative assessments to students and parents.

#### ***(i) Non-Standardised Reports***

1. Student Journal – the teacher can communicate the outcome of any assessment to parents/guardians by writing the result or a note in the student journal. There is a 'designated section' in the journal for recording test results in all subjects. Parents/guardians are expected to countersign results recorded in this section.
2. Direct Contact - the teacher may decide as they see fit to contact the parent/guardian directly with respect to the outcome of any assessment undertaken by a student.

3. Parent Teacher Meetings – these take place for all year groups throughout the academic year. At such meetings teachers can relay the outcomes of varying assessments to parents/guardians of individual students so as to generate an accurate picture of the student's progress.

**(i) *Standardised Written Reports***

Formal written reports are posted to parents on two occasions during the academic year, after students complete House Exams. Marks, grades and accompanying teacher comments are provided. All reports are signed off by the Year Head and a general comment on progress to date is made.

1. Parents of First, Second, Transition and Fifth Year students receive Christmas Reports in January, and Summer Reports during the Summer holidays.
2. Parents of Third and Sixth Year students receive reports in November/December; they receive another report with the results of their Mock Examinations in March.

