

Assessment and Reporting Policy

1. MISSION STATEMENT

Castlerea Community School is dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in a caring environment of mutual respect so as to foster the full potential of its students and staff.

In partnership with Parents we strive to create a desire for life-long learning respect for the individual, an awareness of the needs of the disadvantaged, concern for the environment, and an appreciation of our own unique culture.

Phobailscoil an Chaisleain Riabháigh, scoil ata dírithe ar sar-oideachas a chur ar fáil I dtimpeallacht chaoin, air a bhfuil comheas I reim I dtreo is go gcothaitear lan chumas na ndaltai agus na mbaill foirne. I bpairtíocht le tuismitheoiri deanamid ar ndícheall chomh maith le meas ar fheiniúlacht an duine, airdeall ar an te ta faoi leatrom, curam dar dtimpeallacht agus tuiscint ar ar gcultúr.

1.1 Scope of the Assessment and Reporting 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.

1.2 Assessment and Reporting 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 develop assessment procedures, which provide an accurate account of a student’s progress and achievement.

DES Circular 0055/2019:

The school takes note of Circular 0055/2019 ‘Arrangements for the Implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle with particular reference to the school year 2019-2020’ in implementing this policy.

This Assessment Policy outlines the importance of assessment and the key role students, parents and teaching staff play in supporting this policy document.

1.3 Aims of the Policy:

This Assessment and Reporting 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

2. Rationale for Assessment:

Rationale - Why Assess?

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.

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 help to identify appropriate subject levels for students in the Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate.
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 timetabled support.
5. Assessments play an important role in subject choice, career guidance and progression to third level and further education.
6. Provide the student and his parents with information regarding his/her progress.
7. Establish baseline data in relation to a student’s attainments in certain subjects
8. Assist in the identification of students who may need to be referred to an outside professional or agency for assessment or direct intervention.
9. Teach students to assess their own work

3. Types of Assessment

3.1 Assessment arrangements for Junior Cycle subjects

A new dual approach to assessment has been introduced that supports student learning over the three years of junior cycle. This new approach measures and reports achievement at the end of those three years.

This dual approach reduces the focus on one externally assessed examination as a means of

assessing students and increases the prominence given to classroom-based assessment and formative assessment.

This change of emphasis arises from an acknowledgement that students learn best when teachers provide feedback that helps students to understand how their learning can be improved.

3.2 Formative Assessment: (Assessment for Learning)

Formative assessment is ongoing and involves teachers and students reflecting on how learning is progressing and deciding on the next steps to ensure successful outcomes. It involves a shift from focusing mainly on summative judgments to engaging in ongoing activities that can be used to support next stages of learning.

A vital part of formative assessment is the feedback that teachers provide to their students and students' feedback to teachers. Through a range of assessment for learning strategies the teacher helps the student to identify what has been achieved and where there is room for further learning and development.

Classroom-Based Assessments in subjects (CBAs) have been introduced to allow students to demonstrate their understanding of concepts and skills and their ability to apply them in ways that may not be possible in an externally assessed examination. They will be used in the assessment of learning in subjects and in short courses. Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) will be assessed by the students' teachers and reported on to students and parents/guardians during junior cycle and in the JCPA.

Students will undertake two Classroom-Based Assessments facilitated by their teacher, one in second year and one in third year. Classroom-Based Assessments in all subjects will be specified at a common level.

Informal Assessment

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

Worksheets & written classwork

Questions and answers in class

Essays, projects & assignments

Reading & writing in Class

Sample exam questions

Homework – written or learned

Presentations

Performances

3.3 Assessment Task

The written Assessment Task for each subject will be specified and published by the NCCA. It will relate to the learning outcomes of the second Classroom-Based Assessment. Students must complete their second CBA in order to undertake the associated Assessment Task.

The Assessment Task will be completed in class under the supervision of the teacher in accordance with a timeframe and guidance from the NCCA. The Assessment Task will be returned to the SEC for marking and will be marked as part of the Final Examination. Marks for the Assessment Task in each subject will be incorporated into the calculation of the grade for that subject by the SEC.

The value to be assigned to the Assessment Task will be included in the assessment guidelines for each subject. A separate Assessment Task will not be required in those practical subjects where the second CBA will continue to be assessed by the SEC (Art, Craft and Design, Music, and the Technology subjects – MTW and T.G).

Subjects in Junior Cycle with new specifications will be assessed through

- Two Classroom Based Assessments (one in second year and one in third year) reported on to parents/guardians by the school on our VSware system

Circular 0055/2019

When assessing the level of student achievement in a Classroom-Based Assessment against the learning outcomes, teachers will use 'on-balance' judgement in relation to the Features of Quality, which are set out in four level descriptors:

Classroom Based Assessment Descriptors

Exceptional

Above Expectations

In Line with Expectations

Yet to Meet Expectations

- An Assessment Task (marked by the SEC) in each subject
- A Final Examination set, held and marked by the SEC.

The combination of the Assessment Task and the Final Examination will generate a final grade, certified by the SEC.

3.4 Summative Assessment: (Assessment of Learning)

Formal Assessment

There are many types of formal assessments that take place in the school. The results of these generally, form the basis for the reports issued to parents. Formal Assessments include –

Monthly/End of Topic/Chapter Tests

House Examinations (every 10 weeks)

Mock Examinations Aural/Oral Tests

Aptitude Tests

Leaving and Junior Certificate Examinations

Entrance Assessments CAT

The goal of summative assessment is to evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional unit. It aims to provide a summary of the achievements of the learner.

- All students undertake in-house exams in November, February and May
- Third and sixth year students undertake 'Mock' exams in the week before the midterm, in the second term. Examination papers are usually sourced and corrected externally.

The total number of days required for Leaving Cert mock exams will be kept under review so as to protect tuition time

Marked scripts will be handed back to students in all cases.

All Summative Assessments are coordinated by the Assistant Principal and APLI post holder with responsibility for exams

The formality of November, February and Summer exams is highly regarded by students, staff and parents.

For in-house exams a common assessment takes place in all subjects in first year, second year and third year. This will provide for increased cooperation and a common benchmark across each subject area.

Monthly/End of Topic/Chapter Tests - These forms of assessments will be 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 will be given by teachers to students who complete these tests.

All Junior Cycle Specification exams will be graded as follow:

GRADE RANGE (%)

Distinction ≥ 90 to 100

Higher ≥ 75 and 90

Merit ≥ 55 and < 75

Achieved ≥ 40 and < 55

Partially Achieved ≥ 20 and < 40

Not Graded ≥ 0 and < 20

3.5 Transition Years

As Transition Year is focused on experiential learning and personal development, the forms of assessment used may vary from the standard practices used in other years.

Portfolio assessments take place in December and May.

Students sit formal exams in February and May.

Transition Year assessments involves the following: external certification, portfolio work, oral presentation and interview

3.6 Level 2 Learning programmes (L2LP's)

Level 2 Learning Programmes are available for certain categories of students with general learning difficulties/needs in the low mild to high moderate range of ability who commenced their Junior Cycle from September 2014. These programmes were reported on for the first time in the JCPA in 2017.

L2LPs are designed for a small number of Junior Cycle students where the difficulties/needs of those students prevent them from taking some or all of the subjects or short courses on offer at Level 3 as a result of being identified as requiring additional learning supports.

L2LPs are not suitable for students who are learning English as an additional language, and should not be undertaken by these students. Some students with general learning difficulties/needs in the low mild to high moderate range of ability may also be capable of

undertaking a Level 3 state examination and a CBA or only the CBA in that subject or a Level 3 short course. Students' learning achievements will be reported to students/parents/guardians through the JCPA. L2LP guidelines are available at Appendix 1

3.6 Assessment and Wellbeing

The school takes note of Circular 0055/2019 'Arrangements for the Implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle with particular reference to the school year 2019-2020'

It states:

2.6.1 Reporting on Wellbeing through the JCPA Reporting on students' learning in Wellbeing aims to provide a picture of what students have learned about Wellbeing and the skills they have developed to support their Wellbeing. It is expected that schools will report on student learning about Wellbeing as part of ongoing assessment and reporting throughout Junior Cycle.

Wellbeing will be reported on through the JCPA for the first time in 2020. Wellbeing will show in a separate area of the JCPA. It is in this area that schools will report on student achievement in CSPE, SPHE and PE. This will be facilitated by the use of the descriptors which have already been developed and reflect the appropriate language of learning. The Wellbeing area of the JCPA will also include a free text space where schools can report on achievement in Wellbeing in other areas.

4. Schedule of Assessments

As indicated by Circular Letter 0055/2019 - There is a need to avoid 'over-assessment' and the cumulative burden on students and teachers of multiple assessments across the full range of subjects. In this context, the Classroom-Based Assessments will substitute other assessments currently undertaken in the school such as in-house examinations, etc. as appropriate.

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.

In-class formative assessments

These forms of assessments will be 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 will be given by teachers to students who complete these tests.

4.1 House Exams

Formal assessments will be conducted after each 10 week block of learning for the following groups:

Year Group	Timetabled	Assessment 1 (November)	Assessment 2 (February)	Assessment 3 (May)	Reported
1 st year	Yes	Core subjects only	All subjects	All subjects	VShare
2 nd year	Yes	All subjects (ex. CBA's)	All subjects (ex. CBA's)	All subjects (ex. CBA's)	VShare
3 rd year	Yes	All subjects (ex. CBA's)	Mock exams	Junior Cycle examination	VShare / JCPA
TY	No	All subjects	All subjects	All subjects	VShare
LCA	No	All subjects	All subjects	All subjects	VShare
5 th year	Yes	All subjects	All subjects	All subjects	VShare
6 th year	Yes	All subjects	Mock exams	Leaving Cert examination	VShare / LC

The duration of these exams shall be as follows:

First Years: 1 hour

Second Years: 1 hour 30 minutes

Third Years: 1 hour 30 minutes

Transition Year: to be decided by TY teachers

LCA: Completed during class time

Fifth Years: 2 hours.

Sixth Years: 2 hours.

These exams are of a serious nature, and this is recognised by students, parents and teachers alike. The purpose of these exams is to measure student learning and attainment in each subject area, and to give students experience in sitting formal exams similar in nature to the state exams.

4.2 Mock Exams

Mock exams take place in February each year to prepare them for their state exams in June. The Mock Examinations are set and corrected externally. These Mock Examinations are very beneficial to the students in measuring their progress in their Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate years. Students will gain valuable experience in time management and answering technique through sitting these Mock Examinations.

4.3 Transition Year students

TY students will have their Portfolio Assessment at Christmas and Summer

TY students sit house exams in the school. As Transition Year is focused on experiential learning and personal development, the forms of assessment used may vary from the standard practices used in other years. Transition Year assessments may involve the following: external certification, portfolio, project, oral presentation, multimedia, self and peer evaluation as illustrated in the Portfolio Assessment

4.4 State Exams

The school will strive to ensure that all 3rd and 6th Year students participate (as directed by the State Exams Commission) in the many assessments that make up the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate Examinations. These assessments which may include orals, course work, practical work, portfolio work amongst others, will be conducted in accordance with the regulations set down by the State Examinations Commission.

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

4.5 Other Assessments

The school will engage in other assessments periodically throughout the year.

Incoming first years will undertake assessments in Literacy and Numeracy (CAT) which will be used as a basis to form mixed ability first year classes. This assessment will offer an early indicator to the school of a student's academic potential.

Learning Support Assessments:

All first years will be screened by the Learning Support Department to investigate the possible provision of additional help where necessary. If a student is identified as having a learning need/difficulty the SEN Coordinator will discuss the matter with management.

Classroom strategies such as differentiated assessment, visual aids, hearing aids, spelling waivers, increased time and dictionaries amongst others, may be used from time to time, as determined by the SEN Coordinator 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.

5. Reporting Procedures

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

5.1 Non Standardised Reports

- 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 journal. The parent/guardian is expected to acknowledge receipt of this note by countersigning it.
- 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
- 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.
- Parents may access their child’s academic records through the VShare system
- Parent Teacher Meetings – there are Parent Teacher Meetings for all year groups throughout the academic year. At these meetings it will be 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. From 3rd year onwards, students are required to attend these parent teacher meetings (student parent teacher meetings)
- Formal written reports are posted on VShare to the parents/guardians of students on three occasions during the academic year, depending in which year group they are in. The report template is computerised and consists of the following information: Subject; Level; Mark & grade; Homework (dropdown); Engagement in Class (dropdown); Comment (freeform); and Year Head comment. A printed copy of the report will be given to students to take home or at the parent/teacher meeting where the timing coincides. CBA’s will be reported on in a separate report at the end of the academic year.
- Reporting windows:

Nov Assessments:	10 days from end of exams
Feb Assessments:	5 days from end of exams
Mock Exams:	May vary depending upon turnaround

Appendix 1 (Homework)

1. The setting, completion and correction of homework remain an integral part of school life.
2. When setting homework, staff will give clear instructions and will be mindful of the amount of homework given, when the work will be due, the age of the class involved, etc. Pupils will be required to write details of homework into their Journals.
3. All assigned homework will be checked/corrected as soon as possible.
4. Dealing with incomplete/unsatisfactory homework is a matter in the first instance for the subject teacher to deal with.

Responding to uncompleted homework (taken from the Homework Policy)

1. Should a student be unable to complete a homework assignment, a Parent/Guardian should write a brief note to the teacher. Where no explanation is recorded-teachers will record the non-completion of homework in the student Homework Journal. Parent(s)/guardian(s) should discuss this serious matter with the student and sign the Journal.
2. Should a student again fail to complete homework (again recorded in the Journal) the student will receive a note in their journal and behaviour points will be given.
3. Further sanctions will be discussed and implemented by the school authorities
4. It is agreed that all corrected tests will be given back to students