

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan

Assessment Policy September 2012

Introduction

This Assessment Policy was developed in partnership with all members of the Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan Community – students, teachers, parent, management and trustees. It recognises the requirement of the school to *regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to the students and their parents*, as set down by the Education Act 1998. This Assessment Policy will be reviewed regularly, as directed by the Board of Management.

Relationship to Mission Statement

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan is a Catholic co-educational school committed to the holistic education of all students, to ensure that individually, they each realise their full potential in a social and physical environment that is caring, supportive and joyful. We work in partnership with students, staff, parents and the community, and welcome all students from our multicultural society.

This Assessment Policy will play a key role in striving to ensure that each student realises his/her full academic potential in a learning environment that reflects a culture of partnership between teachers, parents and students.

Aims and Objectives of this Policy

The primary aims and objectives of the policy are:

- To facilitate improved teaching and pupil learning.
- To create a consistent and standardised assessment procedure for monitoring and reporting achievement in the school
- To co-ordinate assessment procedures within departments on a whole school basis

Assessment for Learning & Assessment of Learning

Our policy covers both **assessment of learning** and **assessment for learning**. **Assessment of learning** is assessment for accountability purposes, to determine a student's level of performance on a specific task or at the conclusion of a unit of teaching and learning. The information gained from this kind of assessment will be used in reporting. **Assessment for learning**, on the other hand, is a continuous process which combines a grade with advice to the student towards further improvement. Both forms of assessment are invaluable, and will be used by equally by teachers in this school.

The Purposes of Assessment

- To evaluate what a student has learned in a particular area
- To provide feedback to students in a timely and constructive manner
- To provide feedback to teachers on the success of particular teaching methodologies in the learning process
- To highlight difficulties and shortcomings in the learning process in order to develop intervention strategies
- To identify students who require extension activities such as learning support
- To encourage and increase the skills of self assessment
- To keep records of attainment that will inform parents through the school's reporting process
- To measure the progress of students over time
- To raise expectations and standards
- To act as an incentive for students in the learning process.
- To ascertain whether it is appropriate for a student to continue studying in any given subject area.

Forms of Assessment

1. 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 student's progress over time and to fully inform the learning process. Informal Assessments methods include –

- Worksheets & written classwork
- Questions and answers in class
- Essays & assignments
- Reading & writing in Class
- Sample exam questions
- Homework – written or learned

2. Formal Assessment

There are many types of formal assessments that take place in the school environment.

- I. Monthly/End of Topic Test** – These forms of assessments will be conducted at the discretion of the teacher on a monthly or end of chapter 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 partake in these tests, and the results of these tests will be used in the school's formal reporting structure where appropriate.
- II. House Exams** – 1st, 2nd and 5th Years will sit their *Christmas Exams* in early December and their *Summer Exams* at the end of May. The duration of these exams shall be as follows – 1st Years 1 hour, 2nd Years 1.5 hours and 5th Years 2 hours.

These exams are of a very 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. All house exams will follow the same operating rules as state exams. The results of these *Christmas Exams* and *Summer Exams* will be reported in the *Christmas Reports* and *Summer Reports* respectively. Continuous assessment in each subject area leading up to these exams will also be reported separately in the *Christmas Reports* and *Summer Reports*. This continuous assessment will be based on a minimum of three assessments as determined by the individual teacher.

3rd Year students will sit class timetabled exams at Christmas. 6th Year students will undertake eighty minute formal class exams at Christmas. These class exams will be based on comprehensive Junior Cert and Leaving Cert course content, covered to date in each subject area. 3rd and 6th *Christmas Reports* will include the results of these Christmas Exams, and also - recorded separately - the results of a minimum of three continuous assessments in each subject area, as determined by the individual teacher. 3rd and 6th Year students will undertake Pre Junior and Pre Leaving Cert Mock Exams in February each year to prepare them for their state exams in June. These mock exams are seen as being very beneficial to the students in measuring their progress in their Junior Cert and Leaving Cert years. Students will gain valuable experience in time management and answering technique through sitting these mock exams. The results of these mock exams will form the basis for the Pre Junior Cert and Pre Leaving Cert Reports sent out in April. 3rd Year and 6th Year students do not sit any formal house exams at the end of May, and do not receive a *Summer Report*.

Transition Year students do not sit any formal state or house exams in the school. Their Christmas and Summer Reports are based on continuous assessments in the classroom as determined by their individual subject teacher. 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.

III. 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 Cert and Leaving Cert exams. These assessments which may include orals, course work, practical work, portfolio work amongst others, will be operated in accordance with the regulations set down by the State Examinations Commission.

IV. Other Assessments – the school may engage in other forms of assessment from time to time. Incoming 1st Years will undertake a CAT assessment which will be used as a basis to form mixed ability 1st Year classes. This assessment will offer an early indicator to the school of a student's potential. All 1st Years will be screened by the Learning Support Department to investigate the possible provision of additional help where necessary. All 3rd Years will undertake a DATS assessment to assist in their investigation of possible college and career choices, when they proceed to 5th Year. 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.

General Guidelines

The form that these informal and formal assessments will take, are dependent on the subject area being assessed and will vary from subject to subject. Certain forms of assessment may oftentimes be peculiar to a particular subject.

All forms of assessment above will strive to meet the additional needs of students in the classroom when they arise. 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 individual subject teacher.

Where feasible, 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.

Students are expected to treat all of the above forms of assessment with respect. Any student who willingly fails to participate fully, or who acts in a disrespectful way towards any form of assessment in the school will be dealt with accordingly.

Assessment and Reporting

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

- **Student Journal** – students will record all continuous assessment results in their journals for all subjects. The teacher may communicate the outcome of any assessment to the parents/guardian of a student by writing a note in the students 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.
- **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 generates a accurate picture of the student's progress.
- **Written reports** – Formal written reports are posted to the parents/guardians of students on two occasions during the academic year, depending which year group they are in. 1st, 2nd, Transition Year and 5th Year parents/guardians will receive their *Christmas Report* in December before the Christmas holidays, and their *Summer Report* during the Summer holidays. Parents/guardians of 3rd and 6th will also receive a *Christmas Report* in December, but will then receive another report in April with the results of their Pre Junior and Pre Leaving Cert Exams. 3rd and 6th Year parents/guardians do not receive a *Summer Report*.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting of _____ (date)

Signed _____ Chairperson

Next review date : _____