

Scoil an Athar Tadhg



Assessment Policy

1. Rationale

Assessment is an integral part of high-quality learning, teaching and inclusion. It enables teachers to make informed professional judgements about pupils' progress, identify strengths and needs, adapt teaching, plan appropriate next steps and communicate meaningfully with pupils, parents, staff and relevant external professionals.

In Scoil an Athar Tadhg, assessment is understood as a continuous, responsive and purposeful process. It is not viewed as a series of isolated testing events. Assessment information is used to support learning, progression, wellbeing, inclusion and pupil participation.

This policy is informed by current national guidance, including:

- **Looking at Our School 2022: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools and Special Schools**
- **Primary Curriculum Framework 2023**
- **Redeveloped Primary Curriculum specifications 2025**
- **Preparation for Learning, Teaching and Assessment: Updated Guidance for all Primary and Special Schools 2026**
- **Whole-School Curriculum Planning Guidance 2026**
- **Department of Education circulars on standardised testing and reporting**, including Circular 0048/2026 and relevant preceding circulars
- **Guidelines for Primary Schools: Supporting Children with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Classes 2024/25** and Circular 0064/2024
- **NEPS Continuum of Support**
- **Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024–2033**
- **NCCA guidance on assessment, reporting and transfer of pupil information**
- **GDPR and Department of Education data-protection guidance**

The policy reflects the school's commitment to using assessment in a balanced, inclusive and evidence-informed way.

2. Aims of the Policy

The aims of this policy are to:

- promote a shared whole-school understanding of effective assessment practice
- support high-quality learning, teaching and assessment across all class levels and settings
- ensure that assessment informs teacher preparation, classroom practice and pupil progression
- support early identification of strengths, needs and barriers to learning
- inform differentiated, inclusive and targeted teaching approaches
- support the Continuum of Support process at Classroom Support, School Support and School Support Plus
- ensure that assessment information is used appropriately, ethically and fairly
- guide the use of screening, diagnostic assessment, standardised testing and progress monitoring
- support effective communication with pupils, parents, staff, the Board of Management and relevant external professionals
- inform school self-evaluation, whole-school planning and intervention planning
- ensure compliance with Department of Education requirements for standardised testing, reporting and data management

Assessment in this school is not used in isolation to label pupils, rank pupils, stream pupils or make high-stakes decisions. A range of evidence is considered before decisions are made about pupil support, target-setting, grouping, intervention or referral.

3. Guiding Principles

Assessment practices in Scoil an Athar Tadhg are guided by the following principles:

1. **Assessment is central to learning and teaching.**
Assessment helps teachers to understand what pupils know, understand and can do, and what they need to learn next.
2. **Assessment is part of preparation for learning, teaching and assessment.**
Teachers use their knowledge of the child, knowledge of the curriculum and knowledge of pedagogy to plan responsive learning experiences and appropriate assessment opportunities.
3. **Assessment should be purposeful.**
Assessment is used to inform action. Teachers consider why information is being gathered, how it will be interpreted and how it will support the next steps in learning.

4. A balanced approach is used.

The school uses Assessment for Learning, Assessment as Learning and Assessment of Learning.

5. Professional judgement is central.

Teachers interpret assessment information using their professional knowledge of the child, the curriculum, the learning context and the available evidence.

6. Multiple sources of evidence are used.

Decisions are not based on one test score or one assessment event. Evidence may include teacher observation, pupil work, discussion, screening information, standardised test results, diagnostic information, parental input and pupil voice.

7. Assessment is inclusive.

Assessment practices should enable all pupils to show what they know, understand and can do. Reasonable accommodations are provided where appropriate.

8. Pupils are active participants in assessment.

Pupils are supported to understand learning intentions, success criteria, feedback, next steps and personal progress in an age-appropriate way.

9. Assessment supports equity and early intervention.

Assessment information is used to identify needs early and to provide timely support.

10. Assessment data is handled ethically and securely.

Assessment records are stored, shared and retained in line with GDPR, Department guidance and school data-protection procedures.

4. Types of Assessment Used in the School

4.1 Assessment for Learning

Assessment for Learning is used on an ongoing basis to inform teaching and support pupil progress. It helps teachers and pupils to identify where pupils are in their learning, where they need to go next and how best to get there.

Examples include:

- teacher observation
- questioning and discussion
- conferencing with pupils
- oral and written feedback
- sharing learning intentions and success criteria (WALT, WILF)
- use of exemplars and models
- pupil work samples

- mini-whiteboard responses
- exit tickets
- traffic lights, thumbs up/thumbs down and similar age-appropriate approaches
- teacher-designed tasks
- checklists and rubrics
- peer and self-assessment

Feedback should help pupils understand their progress and identify next steps. Feedback may be oral, written, individual, group-based or whole-class, depending on the learning context.

4.2 Assessment as Learning

Assessment as Learning supports pupils in becoming more reflective, independent and active learners. Pupils are supported to:

- understand what they are learning and why
- recognise strengths and areas for development
- reflect on their learning
- set personal or group learning goals
- monitor their progress
- use success criteria to improve their work
- respond to feedback

This approach supports learner agency, metacognition and confidence. Strategies are adapted to the age and stage of the pupils.

4.3 Assessment of Learning

Assessment of Learning provides information about pupil achievement at a particular point in time. It may be used to summarise learning, communicate progress or inform future planning.

Examples include:

- teacher-designed tests and tasks
- end-of-unit assessments
- projects and presentations
- curriculum-based assessments
- standardised tests, where appropriate
- diagnostic assessments, where appropriate

Assessment of Learning is interpreted alongside other evidence and is not used as the sole basis for decisions about pupils.

5. Standardised Testing

Standardised testing is one element of the school's overall assessment approach. It provides norm-referenced information about pupil attainment in specific areas, usually reading and Mathematics.

5.1 Department-required standardised testing

In line with Department of Education requirements, the school administers standardised tests in English reading and Mathematics in:

- **Second Class**
- **Fourth Class**
- **Sixth Class**

These tests are normally administered during the May/June testing window. Results are reported to:

- parents, through the end-of-year report and/or other appropriate communication
- the Board of Management, using aggregated data
- the Department of Education, through the required annual return

5.2 Additional school-based standardised testing

The school may administer standardised or norm-referenced assessments at other class levels for internal monitoring, early identification, tracking of progress or planning purposes. Where this occurs, the purpose of the assessment is made clear and results are interpreted carefully.

Additional testing may be reviewed annually to ensure that it is useful, proportionate and not leading to unnecessary over-assessment.

5.3 Infant classes

Whole-class standardised testing is not used as the primary assessment approach in infant classes. Assessment in Junior and Senior Infants is based mainly on:

- teacher observation
- play-based learning evidence
- language samples
- early literacy and numeracy tasks
- teacher-designed tasks
- pupil work samples

- early screening tools, where appropriate
- communication with parents

Where early screeners or individual assessments are used in infant classes, they are used to support early identification and planning. They are not used to label pupils or make high-stakes decisions.

5.4 Interpreting standardised test results

Standardised test results are interpreted alongside:

- teacher observation
- pupil work and classroom performance
- curriculum-based assessment
- screening information
- diagnostic information, where available
- pupil voice, where appropriate
- parental input
- attendance, wellbeing and contextual factors
- information from previous class teachers or support teachers

Standardised test scores are **not used as the sole basis** to:

- determine support provision
- set targets
- group or stream pupils
- make exemption decisions
- refer pupils for external assessment
- judge teacher or school effectiveness

They may, however, form part of the broader evidence base used to inform support, planning, target-setting and school self-evaluation.

5.5 Pupils who may not sit standardised tests

All pupils are included in assessment processes where possible. Exemptions or decisions not to administer a standardised test are considered only in exceptional circumstances and are recorded clearly.

Such decisions may apply where a pupil's learning, language, sensory, medical, emotional, behavioural or additional needs mean that the test would not provide useful or valid information at that time.

Where a pupil does not sit a standardised test, the school uses other appropriate assessment information to support planning and reporting.

6. Screening, Diagnostic Assessment and Progress Monitoring

The school distinguishes clearly between screening, diagnostic assessment and progress monitoring.

6.1 Screening

Screening assessments are used to identify pupils who may require closer monitoring, additional support or further assessment. Screening is particularly important for early identification in literacy, numeracy, language, attention, memory, motor development and social communication.

Screening information may be gathered through:

- whole-class screening tools
- early literacy and numeracy screeners
- teacher observation
- curriculum-based tasks
- checklists
- language and phonological awareness checks
- spelling inventories
- fluency checks
- pupil work samples

Screening does not provide a diagnosis. It indicates that further observation, support or assessment may be needed.

6.2 Diagnostic assessment

Diagnostic assessment is used where there is a need to understand a pupil's learning profile in greater depth. It helps to identify specific strengths and needs and to inform targeted intervention.

Diagnostic assessment may be administered by:

- Special Education Teachers
- class teachers, where appropriate
- NEPS psychologists
- speech and language therapists
- occupational therapists

- other external professionals
- private practitioners, where parents choose to access private assessment

Diagnostic information may relate to areas such as:

- phonological awareness
- phonics and decoding
- reading fluency
- reading comprehension
- spelling
- written expression
- oral language
- Mathematics
- working memory
- processing speed
- attention
- social communication
- motor skills
- adaptive functioning

Diagnostic assessment is used to inform support planning and intervention. It is not used in isolation to label pupils or restrict access to support.

6.3 Progress monitoring

Progress monitoring involves gathering short, regular and focused evidence to determine whether pupils are responding to teaching or intervention.

Progress monitoring may include:

- pre- and post-intervention assessments
- curriculum-based assessment
- phonics checks
- spelling checks
- oral reading fluency measures
- writing samples
- maths fact checks
- pupil work samples

- teacher observation notes
- target-review records
- pupil self-reflection

Progress monitoring is used to decide whether to:

- continue an intervention
- adjust the teaching approach
- increase or decrease support
- change targets
- move a pupil between levels of support
- consult with parents or external professionals

Assessment for intervention should be proportionate. The school aims to avoid over-assessment and to ensure that assessment leads to action.

7. Assessment and the Continuum of Support

Assessment is central to the school's graduated response to pupils' needs. The school uses the Continuum of Support model:

- **Classroom Support**
- **School Support**
- **School Support Plus**

7.1 Classroom Support

At Classroom Support level, the class teacher uses everyday assessment information to identify strengths, needs and barriers to learning.

Evidence may include:

- observation
- pupil work
- questioning and discussion
- teacher-designed tasks
- screening information
- parental input
- pupil voice
- attendance and wellbeing information

The class teacher implements classroom-based strategies and monitors progress. A Classroom Support Plan may be developed where appropriate.

7.2 School Support

At School Support level, the class teacher and Special Education Teacher work collaboratively to gather further information, identify priority needs and plan targeted support.

Assessment information is used to develop a Student Support Plan with clear strengths, needs, targets, strategies and review dates. Targets should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

Support may include:

- in-class support
- team teaching
- small-group intervention
- individual support
- language support
- literacy or numeracy intervention
- social communication support
- regulation or wellbeing support
- assistive technology support, where appropriate

Progress is reviewed using agreed assessment evidence.

7.3 School Support Plus

At School Support Plus level, pupils have more complex or enduring needs requiring more intensive, individualised or multi-agency support.

Assessment information may include:

- school-based assessment data
- Student Support Files
- psychological reports
- speech and language therapy reports
- occupational therapy reports
- medical information
- reports from other external professionals
- parental input
- pupil voice, where appropriate

Support is planned collaboratively and reviewed regularly. Access to school support is based on identified need and does not depend solely on a formal diagnosis.

8. Assessment in Special Classes

Assessment in special classes reflects the individual strengths, needs, interests and learning profiles of pupils. Assessment is used to support access, participation, communication, independence, wellbeing and progression.

Assessment approaches may include:

- observation across settings
- pupil work samples
- teacher-designed tasks
- communication profiles
- sensory and regulation observations
- social communication records
- behaviour support data, where relevant
- individual curriculum-based assessment
- progress in relation to Student Support Plan targets
- input from parents and external professionals
- pupil voice, where appropriate

Assessment is linked to the pupil's priority learning needs and relevant curriculum pathways. Targets are reviewed regularly and updated in response to evidence of progress.

Where standardised assessments are not appropriate or do not provide valid information, alternative assessment evidence is used.

9. Inclusion, Accessibility and Reasonable Accommodations

The school aims to ensure that all pupils can participate meaningfully in assessment. Reasonable accommodations are provided where appropriate, while maintaining the purpose and validity of the assessment.

Accommodations may include:

- additional time
- rest breaks
- small-group or individual administration

- use of assistive technology
- enlarged print or adapted materials
- reduced-distraction setting
- reader or scribe support, where appropriate
- visual supports
- communication supports
- sensory or regulation supports
- alternative ways to demonstrate learning

The use of accommodations is based on the pupil's usual way of working and identified needs. Accommodations are recorded where appropriate.

10. Pupil Involvement in Assessment

Pupils are supported to become active participants in their own learning and assessment.

Teachers use age-appropriate approaches to help pupils:

- understand learning intentions and success criteria
- reflect on their work
- identify strengths
- recognise next steps
- set learning goals
- respond to feedback
- monitor progress over time

Raw standardised test scores are not shared directly with pupils. Instead, pupils receive age-appropriate feedback that supports confidence, motivation and progress.

11. Use of Assessment Data

Assessment data is used to:

- inform teacher preparation and classroom practice
- identify strengths and needs
- plan differentiated and inclusive learning experiences
- guide additional support and intervention
- develop and review Student Support Plans

- monitor pupil progress
- support transitions between classes and settings
- inform parent-teacher meetings and written reports
- support school self-evaluation
- identify whole-school patterns in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy
- inform professional learning and resource allocation

Assessment data is not used to rank pupils publicly, label pupils, stream pupils or make high-stakes decisions based on a single score.

Aggregated assessment data may be reviewed by the Principal, Deputy Principal, Special Education Team and relevant staff to identify whole-school trends and priorities. Such review is used to support school improvement and is interpreted carefully.

12. Communication with Parents

Assessment information is communicated to parents through:

- parent-teacher meetings
- end-of-year written reports
- meetings with class teachers and/or Special Education Teachers
- Student Support Plan meetings, where relevant
- informal communication, where appropriate
- transition meetings, where required

Parents are informed about their child's progress, strengths, areas for development and next steps. Where standardised test results are reported to parents, they are explained in accessible language and presented as one part of a wider picture of learning.

The school encourages parents to share relevant information that may support assessment, planning and pupil progress.

13. Reporting and Transfer of Information

The school follows current NCCA and Department guidance in relation to reporting and transfer of pupil information.

End-of-year reports provide parents with information about pupil progress, strengths and areas for development. Standardised test information is included where relevant and required.

For pupils transferring to post-primary school, the school uses the appropriate transfer documentation, including the Education Passport materials, in accordance with current guidance.

Relevant assessment information may also be shared when pupils transfer to another primary school, special class or special school, subject to appropriate procedures and data-protection requirements.

14. Psychological and External Assessments

Where appropriate, pupils may be referred for psychological assessment through NEPS. In some cases, parents may choose to access private assessment or assessment through other external services.

The school uses psychological and external reports to inform teaching, support planning and reasonable accommodations. Recommendations are considered in the context of the school setting, available resources and the pupil's identified needs.

Access to school-based support is based on identified need and does not depend solely on the presence of a formal diagnosis.

The school may consult with NEPS, NCSE, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, CAMHS, primary care teams or other agencies, where appropriate and with parental consent.

15. Assessment, Team Teaching and Intervention

Assessment is used to plan, monitor and review team teaching and intervention.

Where team teaching is used, teachers identify:

- the learning focus
- the pupils requiring additional support
- the pupils requiring extension or enrichment
- the assessment evidence being used
- the intended learning outcomes
- how progress will be monitored

Interventions should normally include:

- clear entry criteria
- baseline information
- specific targets
- agreed teaching approaches

- progress-monitoring arrangements
- review dates
- exit or continuation criteria

Pre- and post-intervention evidence is used to evaluate impact and inform next steps.

16. Digital Assessment and Digital Records

Digital tools may be used to support assessment, recording, communication and analysis, where appropriate.

Digital assessment may include:

- digital quizzes or checks for understanding
- online standardised testing platforms
- digital portfolios
- pupil audio or video samples
- digital writing samples
- assistive technology outputs
- school-approved tracking systems

Digital records are stored securely on school-approved platforms. Access is limited to relevant staff. Staff must follow school procedures in relation to GDPR, confidentiality, passwords, device security and sharing of pupil information.

Digital assessment should support learning and should not replace professional judgement or direct teacher observation.

17. Record Keeping and Data Protection

Assessment records may include:

- teacher observations
- teacher-designed assessment records
- standardised test results
- screening records
- diagnostic assessment results
- pupil work samples
- intervention records

- Student Support Files
- psychological and external professional reports
- correspondence with parents or external agencies
- transition records

Records are stored securely in line with GDPR and school data-protection procedures.

Records may be stored in:

- the pupil file
- Aladdin or other school-approved digital systems
- restricted-access school drives
- Special Education Team records
- secure hard-copy files, where necessary

Access to assessment information is limited to staff who require the information for professional purposes. Sensitive information, including psychological and medical reports, is handled with strict confidentiality.

Parents may request access to records in line with data-protection procedures. Records are retained and disposed of in accordance with the school's data-retention policy.

18. Whole-School Review of Assessment Information

The school reviews assessment information to identify whole-school strengths, needs and priorities.

This may include review of:

- standardised test trends
- literacy, numeracy and digital literacy data
- screening information
- intervention outcomes
- pupil progress in relation to support targets
- assessment practices across class levels
- transition information
- attendance and wellbeing patterns, where relevant

Whole-school review is used to inform:

- school self-evaluation
- curriculum planning

- team-teaching priorities
- early intervention
- professional learning
- resource allocation
- policy review

Data is interpreted carefully and in context. It is used to support improvement, not to rank pupils, teachers or classes.

19. Assessment Calendar

An annual assessment calendar is maintained and reviewed by the Principal, Deputy Principal and Special Education Team. The calendar identifies:

- standardised testing windows
- agreed school-based screening periods
- key diagnostic assessment periods
- timelines for Student Support Plan reviews
- intervention review dates
- reporting deadlines
- transfer documentation deadlines

The calendar is reviewed annually to ensure that assessment is useful, manageable and proportionate.

20. Monitoring and Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed every 2–3 years or earlier if:

- Department of Education guidance changes
- curriculum guidance changes
- standardised testing requirements change
- SEN guidance changes
- data-protection requirements change
- school priorities change
- review of practice indicates that amendment is required

The success of the policy will be considered using the following indicators:

- assessment practices are consistent, purposeful and manageable
- pupils' strengths and needs are identified early
- assessment information informs teaching and intervention
- Student Support Plans include clear, evidence-informed targets
- progress is monitored and reviewed
- parents receive clear information about pupil progress
- assessment data is stored and shared appropriately
- whole-school assessment information informs school improvement
- transition information is transferred efficiently and securely

Communication, Monitoring and Review

- Following consultation with staff, this policy was adopted by the Board of Management at its meeting on 08/06/2026
- The policy will be communicated to staff, parents and the Board of Management through appropriate school channels, including the school website where applicable.
- The original signed copy of this policy is available in the school office.

Signed: *Dan Crowley*

Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 08/06/26

Signed: *Cormac Duggan*

Principal / Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 08/06/26

Appendix 1: Assessment Approaches and Tools

The following table provides examples of assessment approaches and tools used in the school. This list may be updated as school practice develops and as new guidance or tools become available.

Assessment type	Examples	Purpose	Notes
Formative assessment	Observation, questioning, conferencing, exit tickets, mini-whiteboards, think-pair-share, teacher feedback, pupil work samples, self-assessment, peer assessment, checklists, rubrics	To inform teaching and identify next steps	Used across all class levels
Assessment as Learning	Reflection tasks, learning logs, success criteria, personal targets, two stars and a wish, traffic lights, pupil conferencing	To develop pupil ownership, reflection and metacognition	Adapted to age and stage
Teacher-designed assessment	Spelling checks, phonics checks, tables checks, end-of-unit tasks, writing samples, maths tasks, oral language tasks, projects, presentations	To assess specific learning outcomes and inform planning	Used flexibly by class teachers
Screening	Early literacy and numeracy screeners, PASS, ALPACA, QUEST, Core Phonics-type checks, spelling inventories, oral language checklists, fluency checks	To identify pupils who may need closer monitoring or support	Screening does not provide a diagnosis
Standardised testing	Department-approved reading and Mathematics tests; other norm-referenced tests used by the school where appropriate	To provide norm-referenced attainment information and support tracking	Required in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes; additional use may be school-based
Diagnostic assessment	WIAT, CTOPP-2, YARC, detailed phonological awareness, phonics, reading, spelling, writing or Mathematics diagnostics, where appropriate	To identify specific strengths and needs and inform targeted intervention	Usually used where concerns have already been identified
Progress	Pre/post intervention probes,	To evaluate response	Used to review

Assessment type	Examples	Purpose	Notes
monitoring	reading fluency checks, phonics progress checks, spelling inventories, writing samples, maths probes, target-review evidence	to teaching or intervention	targets and plan next steps
Special class assessment	Observation across settings, individual learning targets, communication profiles, sensory/regulation observations, curriculum-based tasks, work samples, Student Support Plan reviews	To support access, participation, independence and progression	Adapted to individual pupil profiles

Appendix 2: Assessment Across Class Levels

The following provides examples of assessment approaches commonly used at each stage. Teachers use professional judgement to select approaches suited to the pupils, curriculum area and learning focus.

Junior and Senior Infants

Assessment approaches may include:

- teacher observation
- play-based assessment
- oral language observation
- conferencing and discussion
- pupil work samples
- teacher-designed early literacy and numeracy tasks
- phonological and phonemic awareness checks
- letter-sound and early word-reading checks
- number sense and early maths tasks
- fine-motor and letter-formation observation
- self-assessment using age-appropriate visuals
- early screening tools, where appropriate
- parental input

Whole-class standardised testing is not the main assessment approach at infant level.

First and Second Class

Assessment approaches may include:

- teacher observation
- teacher-designed tests and tasks
- phonics, spelling and reading checks
- oral language tasks
- writing samples
- maths tasks and problem-solving activities
- checklists and rubrics
- projects and presentations
- exit tickets
- self-assessment and peer assessment
- screening tools, where appropriate
- standardised testing in Second Class in line with Department requirements

- progress monitoring for pupils receiving support

Third and Fourth Class

Assessment approaches may include:

- teacher observation
- teacher-designed tests and tasks
- curriculum-based assessments
- writing samples across genres
- oral presentations
- projects
- checklists and rubrics
- concept maps and KWL charts
- exit tickets
- self-assessment and peer assessment
- spelling and vocabulary assessments
- reading fluency and comprehension checks
- Mathematics assessments
- standardised testing in Fourth Class in line with Department requirements
- diagnostic assessment and progress monitoring, where appropriate

Fifth and Sixth Class

Assessment approaches may include:

- teacher observation
- teacher-designed tests and tasks
- writing samples across genres
- oral presentations and debates
- projects and research tasks
- peer and group feedback
- success criteria and rubrics
- concept maps and KWL charts
- self-assessment and reflection
- reading fluency and comprehension checks

- spelling and vocabulary assessments
- Mathematics assessments
- standardised testing in Sixth Class in line with Department requirements
- transition-related assessment information
- Education Passport materials for transfer to post-primary
- diagnostic assessment and progress monitoring, where appropriate

Special Classes

Assessment approaches may include:

- informal and structured observation
- teacher-designed tasks
- individual learning targets
- Student Support Plan reviews
- strengths and needs profiles
- communication observations
- regulation and sensory observations
- independence and participation records
- work samples
- curriculum-based assessment
- input from parents and external professionals
- pupil voice, where appropriate
- diagnostic assessment, where appropriate

Appendix 3: Standardised Testing, Reporting and Data Use

The school administers Department-required standardised tests in English reading and Mathematics in Second, Fourth and Sixth Classes. The results are used as one source of information to support teaching, learning, reporting and school self-evaluation.

Standardised test results are:

- interpreted carefully and in context
- reported to parents in accessible language
- reported to the Board of Management in aggregated form
- submitted to the Department of Education as required
- used alongside other assessment information

Standardised test results are not:

- used as the sole basis for support provision
- used as the sole basis for target-setting
- used to label pupils
- used to rank pupils publicly
- used to stream pupils
- used to judge teacher performance

Where pupils are exempted from standardised testing or where results are not considered valid, the reason is recorded and alternative assessment information is used to support planning and reporting.