

# Primary

## Overview

### Assessment Guidelines for Schools

## Assessment Guidelines for Schools

The launch of the NCCA's guidelines by the Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin, T.D. on 28th November 2007, in St. Clare's National School, Harold's Cross, Dublin 6W marked a milestone in primary education in this country.

 The Primary School Curriculum (1999) outlines **why** assessment is important in supporting children's learning, while the new guidelines describe **how** teachers can use assessment to make learning more interesting and motivating for children.

What can you expect to find in the guidelines?

- a variety of assessment methods for gathering information about children's learning, ranging from child-led methods such as self-assessment and conferencing, to teacher-led methods such as teacher-designed tasks and tests, and standardised testing.
- advice to schools on developing, implementing and reviewing their policy on assessment.
- advice on the legislative requirements for schools in communicating information about children's progress and achievement.

 A full copy of the guidelines can be accessed here:

Introduction and section 1

Section 2

Section 3

Section 4

Appendices and bibliography

 An online browsable copy of the guidelines can be accessed by clicking here.

## Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum - Guidelines for teachers

The guidelines were disseminated to all primary schools in January/February 2008.

### Advisory Group

The NCCA was supported in developing the assessment guidelines by the following people:

Prof. Eugene Wall (Chairperson)	Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
Ms. Deirdre Lyddy	Inspectorate, Department of Education and Science
Mr. Pádraig Mac Fhlannachdha	Inspectorate, Department of Education and Science
Mr. Seosamh Mac Ionmhainn	National Educational Psychological Service
Dr. Damian Murchan	Trinity College, Dublin
Mr. Éamon Murtagh	Inspectorate, Department of Education and Science
Dr. Michael O'Leary	St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra
Dr. Gerry Shiel	Educational Research Centre, Drumcondra

### Context for developing the guidelines

Feedback from teachers and parents in Phase 1 of the Primary Curriculum Review (2005) showed that schools needed much greater information and advice on the process and outcomes of assessment in primary schools. For example, teachers asked for more detailed advice and support on how to conduct assessments (such as teacher observation) including the information to be gathered, recorded and reported, over what period of time and for what purpose. These findings are discussed in detail in a report on the review: Review of the Primary School Curriculum (2005).

### Additional Material

- Assessment in Primary Schools (2005)
- Review of the Primary School Curriculum (2005)

## Primary Curriculum Review, Phase 1: English, Visual Arts and Mathematics

The NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment) gathered data for phase 1 of Primary Curriculum Review during the 2003/04 school year. In all, 698 teachers from 170 schools responded to the *Review and Reflection Template for Teachers*, and groups of children, parents, teachers and the principals from six different schools participated in interviews as part of a school case study. Four key findings were highlighted in the two research strands.

The NCCA responded to these findings by working with schools to develop a number of resources to support them in teaching and learning. These are summarised below.

### The English Curriculum

**Finding:** Teachers identified the organisation of the English Curriculum according to four overarching strands as a key challenge when planning children's learning. The four strands were reported to be vague and hard to understand. Findings showed that many teachers had abandoned the strands or had replaced them with the strand units.

**Resource:** In a direct response to this the NCCA published, *Additional support material: Structure of the English Curriculum* (2005). This document provides an alternative structure for the English Curriculum with oral language, reading and writing as the overarching strands.



### Information for parents

**Finding:** Parents reported that their engagement with their children's learning in the home was limited by the lack of information available to them about learning in primary schools.

**Resource:** In March 2006, the NCCA launched the DVD for parents, *The What, Why and How of children's learning in primary school*. It is available in five languages, English, Gaeilge, French, Lithuanian and Polish. The DVD was distributed to all primary schools in April that year. It is available from your local full time education centre (while stocks last) and can also be viewed online.

 To support schools in using the DVD with parents, the NCCA has developed an **e-booklet**, *The what, why and how of children's learning in primary school: Information for parents*. The booklet can be downloaded, customised, photocopied and distributed to parents to accompany the DVD.

### Methods of teaching and learning

**Finding:** Teachers' strong ownership of the child-centred theories underpinning the *Primary School Curriculum*, contrasted with their limited ownership of child-centred teaching and learning methods. Findings showed that teachers needed much greater exemplification of methods of teaching and learning with the *Primary School Curriculum* including:

- Active learning
- Environment-based learning
- Collaborative learning
- Differentiated learning (particularly in multi-class settings)
- Higher-order thinking and problem solving.

**Resource:** The NCCA is currently developing a website which will show what teaching and learning with the curriculum looks like in different class contexts. ACTION (Assessment and Curriculum Teaching Innovation On the Net) will provide a platform for showcasing different teaching methodologies that can be used with the *Primary School Curriculum*. Internet video, pod casts, samples of children's work, samples of teachers' materials, photographs and various other support materials will be housed on ACTION at [www.action.ncca.ie](http://www.action.ncca.ie)



### Assessment

**Finding:** Findings showed that teachers required greater advice on using assessment to support teaching and learning. Although almost 100% of teachers reported using observation at least a few times each week, teachers were unsure of how to record their observations as evidence of assessment, and how to use their observations to make decisions about teaching and learning. Teachers requested greater advice on the use of different assessment methods and resources and methods of reporting information about children's learning to parents.

**Resources:** The NCCA launched the document *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools* in November 2007. In responding to teachers' requests for information on recording and reporting children's progress with the curriculum, the NCCA developed Report Card Templates for primary schools. In order to help schools with the process of reporting to parents the NCCA also developed leaflets for parents explaining the meaning of standardised test scores.

### Associated Material

- Report Card Templates
- Standardised Testing in Compulsory Schooling - Leaflet for Parents

### Invitational seminar, *The Primary Curriculum in Schools*

An Evaluation of Curriculum Implementation in English, Visual arts and Mathematics was also completed by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science (DES) in Spring 2005. On May 11th, 2005, the NCCA and the DES presented findings from both reports to the education partners at an invitational seminar in Dublin entitled, *The Primary Curriculum in Schools*.

Summary findings from both the NCCA's review and the evaluation by the Inspectorate, DES, were published in a booklet (September, 2005) and distributed to all primary schools. Click on the following link to access the booklet: *The Primary Curriculum in schools: Insights from Curriculum Implementation Evaluation and the Primary Curriculum Review (Booklet for Schools)*

## Report Card Templates

### Select a report card template: Junior Infants to mid-term 6th Class

-  Template 1
  -  Template 2
  -  Template 3
  -  Template 4
  -  Template 5
  -  Template 6
  -  Template 7
  -  Template 8
  -  Template 9
-  Complete your report card template. detailed instructions can be found below in User Guide 1
  -  Print a blank template and handwrite your reports. User Guide 2
  - Download and save a blank template, type your reports, then save and print them.

### Use the 6th Class Report Card template: End-of-year

 [Go directly to the 6th Class Report Card Template](#)

From 2014/2015, schools should use this end-of-year 6th Class Report Card. The report card was developed to support the dual purpose of reporting to parents and transferring pupil information to post-primary schools.

The report card is part of the Education Passport materials developed to support schools in sharing information about children's learning with the relevant post-primary schools.

-  User Guide 1: Saving and printing the 6th Class Report Card template to complete in handwriting
-  User Guide 2: Saving and printing the 6th Class Report Card template to complete on computer
-  Completing report cards: Guide for primary teachers [Completing the 6th Class Report Card: Guide for primary teachers](#)

## Standardised testing

Standardised tests are used to measure a child's reading and mathematical achievement, and to determine children's progress in those areas. Information from the tests is important given the vital role of literacy and numeracy in enabling children to access the full curriculum.



All primary schools are required by the Department of Education and Skills (Circular 0056/2011) to administer standardised tests. Arrangements for standardised testing are set out below.

- English medium schools are required to administer standardised testing in English reading and Mathematics during the period May/June for all students in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes on an annual basis with effect from 2012 onwards.
- Irish medium schools are required to administer standardised testing in Irish reading, English reading and Mathematics during the period May/June for all students in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes on an annual basis with effect from 2012 onwards.

## Support materials



### Information sheets for parents

The information sheets for parents entitled *Your Child and Standardised Testing* explain the meaning of standardised test scores and answer other frequently asked questions about standardised testing. Separate information sheets for STen and standard score are available in a range of languages.



In accordance with the Department of Education and Skills (Circular 0056/2011) schools should provide parents with copies of the explanatory information sheet when issuing written reports.



### Standardised testing and infant classes

Many schools opt to administer standardised tests for children in classes in addition to 2nd, 4th and 6th. Whole class standardised testing is inappropriate for infant classes. The results of whole class standardised tests are unreliable for children at this early stage in their learning and development.

[Click here](#) for more information including suggestions on screening and diagnostic tests that teachers of infant classes may find useful.

## Support materials



### Standardised test analysis tool for schools

The easy to use Excel tool for schools was developed by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and supports the analysis of standardised test scores. The graphed scores promote discussion and analysis of the whole-school data in support of decisions about actions that may need to be taken to improve achievement levels.

This link takes you to the Standardised test analysis tool on the PDST website.



### More Information

Find out more about standardised tests and how they are part of a continuum of assessment methods used by teachers in making decisions about a child's progress and achievement. The extract is taken from *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools* (2007)



*Supporting Assessment: Standardised Testing in Primary Schools*, Circular letter 0018/2012. Department of Education and Skills, 2012

## Standardised testing - parent information sheets

### 1. Understanding Standard Scores: information for parents

This information is available in multiple languages:



English



Gaeilge



Polski



中国语言



Român



Русский язык



Français



ةيبرعلا



Português

### 2. Understanding STen scores: information for parents

This information is available in multiple languages:



English



Gaeilge



Polski



中国语言



Român



Русский язык



Français



ةيبرعلا



Português

## Context for developing the information sheets

In July 2004, the NCCA was requested by the then Minister for Education and Science to provide *advice on standardised testing in compulsory education*. The NCCA's advice presented in *Advice on Standardised Testing in Compulsory Schooling (2005)*, examined different purposes for standardised testing and outlined particular issues associated with this method of assessment.

The document made recommendations for supporting and promoting good practice in assessment, and for reporting including the development of Report Card Templates for reporting children's progress to parents.

Building on the advice to the Minister, the NCCA included standardised testing as one of a continuum of assessment methods in *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools (2007)*. The purpose of the guidelines is to support teacher's knowledge and understanding of assessment, and they show how a variety of assessment methods including standardised testing can be used to support assessment of children's progress and achievement, and to extend and enrich their learning. The guidelines present examples of how standardised testing can be used for these purposes using sample activities from classrooms.

# ASSESSMENT IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

## Guidelines for Schools



NCCA

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment  
An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curraíaim agus Measúnachta

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>		<b>03</b>
<b>Section 1</b>	<b>Re-envisioning assessment</b>	<b>06</b>
	What is the purpose of assessment in the <i>Primary School Curriculum</i> ?	07
	What does assessment involve?	07
	How has assessment developed since the publication of the <i>Primary School Curriculum</i> ?	08
<b>Section 2</b>	<b>Classroom assessment methods</b>	<b>12</b>
	Self-assessment	14
	Conferencing	24
	Portfolio assessment	30
	Concept mapping	36
	Questioning	42
	Teacher observation	46
	Teacher-designed tasks and tests	54
	Standardised testing	60
<b>Section 3</b>	<b>A closer look at AfL and AoL</b>	<b>70</b>
	Gathering assessment information	70
	Recording assessment information	70
	Interpreting assessment information	71
	Using assessment information	71
	Reporting assessment information	71
<b>Section 4</b>	<b>School policy on assessment</b>	<b>76</b>
	Content of the assessment policy	77
	Why should children's learning be assessed?	77
	What should be assessed?	77
	When should children's learning be assessed?	77
	How should children's learning be assessed?	78
	Where should assessment information be recorded?	79
	How should assessment information be recorded?	79
	With whom should assessment information be shared?	80
	How should assessment information be shared with others?	80
	For how long should assessment information be stored?	80
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>Appendix A</b>	
	Further information on classroom assessment methods	84
	<b>Appendix B</b>	
	Photocopiable resources	91
	<b>Appendix C</b>	
	Legislative requirements of schools in relation to assessment policy	95
	<b>Appendix D</b>	
	Roles of external organisations in supporting children's learning	97
<b>Bibliography</b>		<b>99</b>

# Introduction

This document, *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools*, has been developed to support teachers' knowledge and understanding of assessment, and to assist schools in developing and implementing an assessment policy. The guidelines provide examples of how teachers gather information about children's progress and achievement, use this information to enrich teaching and learning, and report this information to all those concerned with children's education.

The document contains four sections. Section 1, *Re-envisioning assessment*, presents two approaches to assessment—assessment for learning (AfL) and assessment of learning (AoL). These approaches build on the four purposes of assessment outlined in the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) - formative, summative, evaluative and diagnostic. The section briefly describes AfL and AoL with further detail provided in Section 3.

Section 2, *Classroom assessment methods*, outlines a range of methods teachers use in assessing children's learning. Descriptions of how teachers use these methods to support children's learning, and their own teaching, are also included.

Section 3, *A closer look at AfL and AoL*, compares and contrasts the two approaches to assessment. It uses five assessment activities—gathering, recording, interpreting, using, and reporting—to show what the two approaches look like in practice.

Section 4, *School policy on assessment*, provides advice on developing the school's assessment policy. It highlights the legislative requirements for recording and reporting information about children's progress and achievement.

Appendix A presents further information on classroom assessment methods to supplement Section 2 with photocopiable resources for some of these methods contained in Appendix B. Appendix C outlines legislative requirements that affect schools in relation to assessment policy. Appendix D summarises the roles of various organisations in supporting children's learning.



***SECTION 1***

***RE-ENVISIONING  
ASSESSMENT***



# Section 1

## Re-envisioning assessment

### Sample activity 1

#### Assessment in action

<b>Curriculum area/Subject</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>
<b>Strand</b>	<b>Measures</b>
<b>Strand unit</b>	<b>Length</b>
<b>Curriculum objective</b>	<b>The child should be enabled to estimate, compare, measure and record length using non-standard units.</b>
<b>Class level</b>	<b>First and second classes</b>
<b>Strand</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>Strand unit</b>	<b>Operations—Addition</b>
<b>Curriculum objective</b>	<b>The child should be enabled to add numbers without and with renaming within 99.</b>
<b>Class level</b>	<b>First and second classes</b>

Ms. Coffey organises her twenty-six first and second class children into four groups—three groups of five children in second class and one larger group of eleven children in first class. Building on practical work over the previous days to add numbers with and without renaming within 99, Ms. Coffey presents each group of second class children with a series of number problems and a basket of resources (lollipop sticks, unifix cubes, stick-a-bricks, and number strips). The children work together solving the problems.

Meanwhile, Ms. Coffey works with the first class children to develop their skills in measuring length using non-standard units. After discussing why knowledge of length is important, and linking this to everyday activities, she demonstrates measuring the length of a book using matchboxes, the length of a desk using paintbrushes, and the length of the classroom using footsteps. Ms. Coffey invites the children to work in pairs (with one group of three children) to measure the length of objects including their maths copybooks, schoolbags, their arm-spans, and the class library. During these activities she observes the children at work and talks to them about their findings. She reminds the children about important strategies when measuring, for example placing the measuring units end-to-end, positioning the first unit at the edge of the object being measured, and pointing to the measuring units as they count them.

When the children have completed their measuring tasks, Ms. Coffey invites them to share their findings as a group. Providing feedback through discussion, she helps them to explore reasons for significant differences in their findings. These arise mainly from the children not placing the measuring units end-to-end while a few are caused by counting errors. Noting that a number of the children require more experience in measuring accurately, Ms. Coffey plans to provide similar tasks the following day.

This account of one teacher's classroom practice shows how, as the *Primary School Curriculum* suggests, *assessment is integral to all areas of the curriculum and it encompasses the diverse aspects of learning* (*Primary School Curriculum, Introduction*, p. 18). In this example, the assessment process provides the teacher with the information she needs in order to make important decisions about the teaching and learning process—selecting curriculum objectives, identifying appropriate teaching methodologies, designing learning activities, choosing suitable resources, differentiating learning, and giving feedback to children on how well they are doing. These everyday activities place assessment at the very heart of teaching and learning.

### What is the purpose of assessment in the Primary School Curriculum?

Assessment is about building a picture over time of a child's progress and/or achievement in learning across the *Primary School Curriculum*. Information about **how** the child learns (the learning process) as well as **what** the child learns (the products of learning) shapes the picture. The teacher uses this information to identify and celebrate the child's current learning, and to provide him/her with appropriate support for future learning.

### What does assessment involve?

For the teacher, assessment involves gathering information to understand better how each child is progressing at school and using that information to further the child's learning. Assessment, therefore, goes far beyond just testing. It concerns the daily interactions between the teacher and each child that include moment-by-moment conversations, observations and actions.

Assessment is the process of **gathering, recording, interpreting, using, and reporting** information about a child's progress and achievement in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Whether the teacher is questioning and listening to children, observing children working on a task, or using the results of a weekly test to inform teaching and learning, assessment involves many overlapping and often simultaneous activities—gathering, recording, interpreting, using, and reporting information. These activities can happen within a few seconds or, in contrast, over a period of days or weeks depending on the purpose of the assessment and the methods used. The information gathered enriches the teacher's understanding both of what and how the child learns. The teacher uses that information to plan learning experiences based on appropriate objectives from the curriculum, and on the child's previous learning: *Through assessment the teacher constructs a comprehensive picture of the short-term and long-term needs of the child and plans future work accordingly* (*Primary School Curriculum, Introduction*, p. 17). Using assessment information in these ways, the teacher supports and extends the child's learning.

Assessment is, therefore, part of what the teacher does on a daily basis in his/her classroom, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Assessment as part of classroom practice



### How has assessment developed since the publication of the Primary School Curriculum?

The *Primary School Curriculum* emphasises, in general terms, the importance of assessment in enabling the teacher to extend and enrich children’s learning across all curriculum areas. In recent years, research, theory and practice in teaching and learning have highlighted more specifically **how** the teacher can use assessment to make learning more enjoyable, more motivating, and more successful for each child. Drawing on these developments, these guidelines describe a *re-envisioning of assessment* in the primary school and provide the teacher with information and examples to show how assessment can translate into daily practice in the classroom.

The curriculum describes assessment as having four functions—formative, summative, evaluative and diagnostic. In re-envisioning assessment in the primary school, these guidelines build on these functions, and focus on two principal approaches to assessment:

- Assessment for Learning (AfL)
- Assessment of Learning (AoL).

These interrelated and complementary approaches emphasise two aspects of assessment that are central to the teacher’s work:

- The teacher uses evidence on an ongoing basis to inform teaching and learning (AfL).
- The teacher periodically records children’s progress and achievement for the purpose of reporting to parents<sup>1</sup>, teachers and other relevant persons (AoL).

<sup>1</sup> Throughout these guidelines, the term *parents* refers to the child’s primary caregivers and educators. These include the child’s father and mother and/or guardians.

## Assessment for Learning (AfL)

The concept of assessment for learning (AfL) extends the potential of formative assessment. It emphasises the child's active role in his/her own learning, in that the teacher and child agree what the outcomes of the learning should be and the criteria for judging to what extent the outcomes have been achieved. In essence, AfL helps teachers and children to focus on three key questions:

- **where are children now** in their learning?
- **where are children going** in their learning?
- **how** will children get to the **next point** in their learning?

Providing feedback to children is therefore central to AfL. This feedback is based on evidence of how and what the children are learning. Feedback focused on the learning or task in hand, can help children identify and celebrate their progress and achievements, pinpoint challenges they experience, and decide what the next steps should be. This level of involvement in shaping their own learning can heighten children's awareness of themselves as learners and encourage them to take more personal responsibility for, and pride in, their learning.

AfL does not generally happen at the end of a particular piece of work or a period of time. It usually takes place in the day-to-day minute-by-minute interactions between teachers and children. Everything children do, say and make—asking questions, working on a project or a task alone or collaboratively, playing, designing or making a model, and so on—has the potential of providing the teacher and the children themselves with information about what they do and don't understand and what they can and cannot do. Using AfL, the teacher interprets this information and uses it to support children in their work and to plan ahead. In this way, the teacher can integrate AfL into teacher-child interactions and children can come to regard it a natural part of how they learn in school.

The teacher can also use information from AfL to evaluate his/her teaching. Based on information gathered from children, the teacher can make changes to his/her planning, organisational strategies, and teaching methodologies in order to make learning more successful for the children.

## Assessment of Learning (AoL)

In contrast, assessment of learning (AoL) focuses more on medium- and long-term assessment. AoL generally involves assessing a child's learning at the end of a given period, such as the end of a unit of work, a week, a term, or a year. The emphasis in AoL is on measuring a child's cumulative progress towards curriculum objectives. A grade or a score is often the only feedback a child receives. While these results are useful to the teacher they can be of limited value to the child, unless the teacher identifies the essential information they provide about the child's progress and achievement and communicates this to the child. AoL also helps the teacher to plan future work, to set new targets, and to provide feedback and information for end-of-year assessment.

The teacher uses information from AoL for reporting, particularly to parents and other teachers. The Department of Education and Science (DES) inspector may access assessment records to ascertain literacy and numeracy standards, and/or to assess progress in curriculum implementation as part of the Whole School Evaluation process. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) psychologist may also access the information gathered through AoL in order to work with schools in meeting the learning needs of individual children.

Section 3 of these guidelines presents **AfL** and **AoL** in more detail and highlights the acronyms in bold to help distinguish between the two. It compares and contrasts the two approaches using the five activities in the assessment process: gathering, recording, interpreting, using, and reporting information about a child's progress and achievement.



## SECTION 2

# CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT METHODS



# Section 2

## Classroom

### Assessment Methods

This section introduces a variety of methods for gathering and using information about how well children are learning across the curriculum. The methods range from observation and questioning as part of daily teaching and learning to the more formal and structured method, standardised testing. By using a combination of methods over time, the teacher gathers evidence of children's progress and achievement. Based on this evidence, he/she plans how future learning can be supported most effectively.

Not everything a child learns can be assessed or needs to be assessed. In partnership with colleagues, the teacher can use the *Primary School Curriculum* to prioritise what the child should be enabled to do and understand in terms of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and dispositions. He/she will sometimes focus on the child's learning in a particular subject but at other times look at the child's learning across different subjects. Having decided **what** is to be assessed, the teacher considers **how** it will be assessed and **how** the assessment information will be used.

Much of the teacher's assessment is done intuitively while some is planned for particular purposes. Intuitive assessment and planned assessment are complementary and both are necessary if the teacher is to gain a comprehensive picture of each child's progress and achievement. For example, in helping a group of senior infants to draft a story about their visit to the nearby park, the teacher notices that one child forms an 'a' incorrectly and that another child does likewise with a 'c' and a 'd'. This can prompt the teacher to plan some focused observation with these two children over the following few days. Through focused observations the teacher can identify the need to support one of the children in forming the 'c, o, a, d and p' family of letters. By interpreting much of the information children share through their words, their silences, their actions, and their interactions the teacher can balance intuitive and planned assessment in order to benefit each child as a learner.

This section supports the classroom teacher in answering the questions:

- How will I **assess**?
- How will I **use the information I gather**?

It provides information on eight assessment methods and shows how these methods can be used for AfL and AoL. (See Sections 1 and 3.) The methods are self-assessment, conferencing, portfolio assessment, concept mapping, questioning, teacher observation, teacher-designed tasks and tests, and standardised testing.

While there are many more assessment methods that teachers can and do use, the guidelines use these eight to demonstrate the diversity of assessment methods and the benefits that can accrue from using a combination of methods. No one assessment method, of itself, will provide sufficiently useful information to the teacher. Indeed any one method usually involves using other methods to a greater or lesser extent, for example a teacher-designed task may also involve questioning and observing children.

In these guidelines, each method is described in response to questions such as the following:

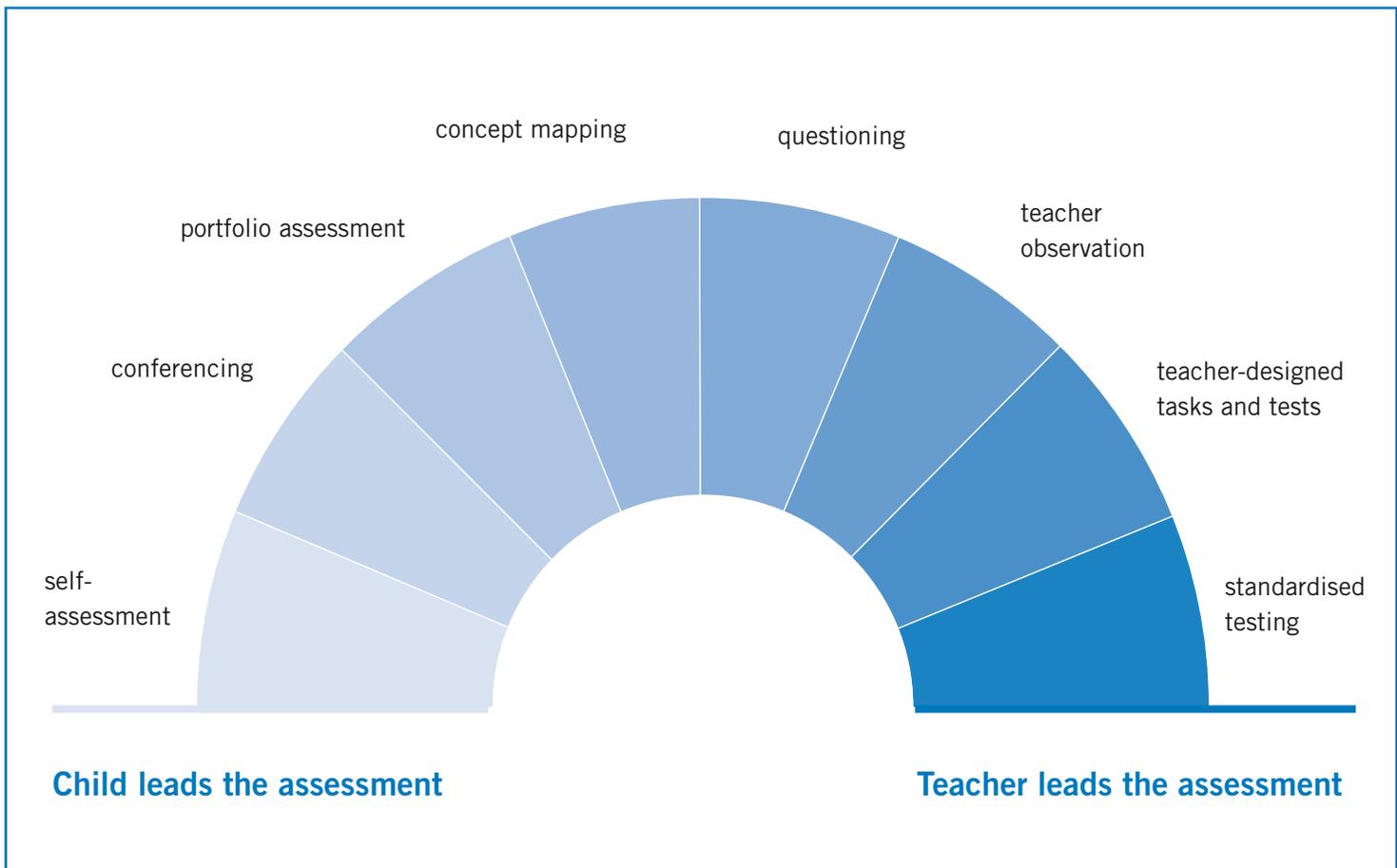
- **What is the purpose of this assessment method?**
- **How is the method used?**
- **What information is recorded?**
- **How is this information used?**

The methods are illustrated by examples from practice. These examples, referred to as **sample activities**, help to show how the methods operate in actual classrooms. The sample activities focus on particular subjects or areas of the curriculum and on particular class levels. However, many of the methods can be used with other subjects or curriculum areas and can be adapted to other class levels.<sup>2</sup> The sample activities begin with an outline of the relevant curriculum area, subject, strand, strand unit, curriculum objective(s), and class level(s) in the *Primary School Curriculum*, which can be downloaded from or viewed at <http://www.curriculumonline.ie>. In the case of sample activities which focus on English, a '/' sign is used to present the relevant strand(s) and strand units(s). This strategy takes account of *English: Additional Support Material* published in 2005.

The eight assessment methods are presented on a continuum in Figure 2. Methods positioned towards the left are those in which the child plays a leading role in assessing his/her own work; towards the right of the continuum the teacher plays a greater role in leading the assessment. While no single assessment method is exclusive to AfL or AoL, those towards the left of the continuum (the child in a leading role) generally have a stronger AfL focus while those to the right generally have a stronger AoL focus.

<sup>2</sup> In the case of some of the sample activities, teachers are referred to using first names while in other sample activities they are referred to using their last name. This reflects the variety of practice across primary schools in Ireland.

Figure 2: A continuum of assessment methods



The discussion of assessment methods in this section follows the order shown in Figure 2. Each method is presented as a fold-out from the main document.

- Self-assessment page 14
- Conferencing page 24
- Portfolio assessment page 30
- Concept mapping page 36
- Questioning page 42
- Teacher observation page 46
- Teacher-designed tasks and tests page 54
- Standardised testing page 60.

# Self-assessment

## What is self-assessment?

Children are involved in self-assessment when they look at their own work in a reflective way, identify aspects of it that are good and that could be improved, and then set personal learning targets for themselves.

Self-assessment involves metacognition—the process of being aware of and reflecting on one’s own learning. Self-assessment skills include effective questioning, reflection, problem-solving, comparative analysis, and the ability to share thoughts in a variety of ways. Self-assessment can be used by children of all ability levels and in all areas of learning. In age-appropriate ways, it can be used throughout the primary school and across subjects. Whole class discussions, group situations or one-to-one conferencing are all platforms for self-assessment.

In looking at examples of self-assessment across the curriculum, the child can use self-assessment skills in drafting, revising, editing and publishing a piece of his/her own writing. He/she can use the skills in choosing the best samples of his/her work to include in a portfolio for Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE), Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) or Arts Education. (See Section 2, pp. 30-33 for more information on portfolio assessment.) Self-assessment can also play a critical role in creating, talking about, and recording musical compositions. Keeping a portfolio as a personal record of progress and reviewing its contents encourages the child in self-assessment by helping him/her to clarify objectives and set new learning targets. It can be used to foster reflection, both verbal and non-verbal, and higher-level thinking skills. A learning log can be used to document the child’s self-assessment and reflection on his/her work samples or collections.

## What is its value as an assessment method?

Self-assessment is an essential part of AfL. It enables the child to take greater responsibility for his/her own learning. The child can use different strategies when thinking about what he/she has learned and use a set of criteria to make judgements about it. The most successful criteria are those that are agreed beforehand by the teacher and the class. Self-assessment helps the child to recognise the next steps in his/her learning and to become more independent and motivated. As the child develops self-confidence he/she can feel more secure about not always being right. In this way, self-assessment contributes to a positive classroom climate in which making mistakes is considered central to the learning process. The results of the child’s self-assessment (for example, learning logs, portfolios, pieces of writing) can be shared with his/her parents during parent/teacher meetings. This can give parents more information about the child’s learning from the child’s own perspective.

## How is self-assessment used?

The skills of self-assessment need to be learned over time. This involves a long-term, continuing process that is planned at class and school level. The skills the child needs can be taught or modelled by the teacher and practised by the child until he/she feels comfortable using them independently.

The teacher can encourage the child to think about his/her own work using guiding questions, tools or aids. These include, for example, rubrics, *Know, Want to know, Learned* (KWL) grids, *Plus, Minus and Interesting* (PMI) diagrams, ladders, traffic lights, talk partners/buddies, checklists and webs. (See Appendix A, pp. 84-85 for more information on self-assessment tools.) The teacher can incorporate learning targets and success criteria into classroom discussions. The child can then learn to assess his/her work against these targets or criteria. By giving positive, informative feedback to the child the teacher can support him/her in recognising and taking the next appropriate steps in learning.



## Sample activity 2.1

### Using a rubric for self-assessment

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Arts Education</b>
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Visual arts</b>
<b>Strand</b>	<b>Construction</b>
<b>Strand unit</b>	<b>Looking and responding</b>
<b>Curriculum objective</b>	<b>The child should be enabled to look at and talk about his/her work and the work of other children.</b>
<b>Class level</b>	<b>Third and fourth classes</b>

The children in Mr. Byrne's third and fourth classes are given the task of building a model of a bridge. They have learned about many kinds of bridges over a few lessons. Mr. Byrne wants them to show that they understand the essential functions of a bridge, its construction, and its features. The children have to show the plan they have drawn of the bridge, and they have to tell why the bridge is built in this way. They can use any kind of suitable materials to make it. The teacher has discussed the important elements in planning and building this model with the class. The following rubric is used after the model is built.

#### A sample rubric

Feature	1	2	3
Plan	I made out a plan for my model with a few details.	I made out a plan of my model with quite a few details.	I made out a very detailed plan for my model.
Design	I didn't show the important features of the bridge.	I showed some of the features in my model.	I showed a lot or all of the features in my model.
Materials	The materials I used to make the bridge were not suitable.	I used some suitable materials.	All the materials I used were very suitable.
Why the bridge was built like this	I didn't explain this.	I partly explained it.	I explained it very well.
Appearance	My bridge looks OK.	My bridge looks good.	My bridge looks great.

The children complete the rubric by ticking or colouring the appropriate level of quality they judge their model to show. Differentiating according to the children's ability, Mr. Byrne helps some children use the rubric by reading the statements and talking to the children about what they think of the quality of their bridges.

Variations on this rubric include extending the range of quality to perhaps four levels. For example, for children who have more experience of using assessment rubrics this could include familiarising the children with the expected standards or levels of quality before beginning the model work, and demonstrating what such levels would look like by showing similar work done by other children.

## Sample activity 2.2

### Using questions for self-assessment

Curriculum area/Subject  
Strand  
Strand unit  
Curriculum objective  
Class level

**Mathematics**  
**Shape and space**  
**3-D shapes**  
**The child should be enabled to explore the relationship between 2-D and 3-D shapes.**  
**First and second classes**

The school where Ray teaches is working on self-assessment with children from junior infants to sixth class. Because his first and second classes have been working on self-assessment for some time now and are comfortable with the process, Ray often encourages them to work in pairs or small groups to discuss how they feel about their learning. He sometimes works with all the children together.

At the end of a maths lesson on shape in May, he encourages the children to think and talk about their learning. He models some prompt questions for them, as follows:

#### Prompt questions

- Where did I get stuck?
- What did I do?
- What helped me best?
- Who did I ask?
- What new thing did I learn?

He suggests some possible answers and then gives the children two minutes to think. Working with the whole class, Ray listens to the children's responses to each question.

**Ahmed** (Has good mathematical ability): *I think it's hard to remember the difference between 2-D and 3-D shapes.*  
**Tom** (Works with the learning support teacher): *Some of the names are hard to say.*  
**Ciara** *Well, I checked the 3-D shapes in the Maths Corner for the names I couldn't remember.*  
**Shane** *I just asked Dara.*  
**Marie-Claire** *I learned the word cuboid.*  
**Anna** *A cuboid is very like a cube.*

Considering the children's comments, Ray orders more books on shape for the classroom library. He also adds more computer programs on mathematics to the class software collection. He encourages the children to search the books and the programs for answers to some of their questions.

Ray pins the five self-assessment questions in large letters to the notice-board at the top of the class. Over the following weeks, he gives the class some time after each maths lesson to reflect on the questions. As the children respond, he makes sure that the more-able children are allowed time to say what they found difficult so that everyone in the class understands that anyone can experience challenges while learning and that's ok!

## Sample activity 2.2 (continued)

Ray usually asks the children to give their responses orally. He sometimes asks them to write their answers but he is aware that the children's self-assessment might be reduced to what they find easy to write. Sometimes he chats with individual children about their assessment of their own work. He might mark a checklist he has already prepared. (See example below.)

### Sample checklist

Date: 01.10.07 Naming 2-D shapes				
Name	square	rectangle	circle	triangle
<b>1st Class</b>				
Ciara	✓	✓	✓	✓
Noor	confuses square and rectangle		✓	✓
<b>2st Class</b>				
Juli	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pat	confuses square and rectangle		can't name	can't pronounce
Jess	✓	✓	✓	✓

The checklist helps to guide Ray's classroom planning and it helps him remember what he wants to discuss with the children's parents when they call to the school later in the year.

## Sample activity 2.3

### Using an evaluation sheet for self-assessment within a group

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE)</b>
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Geography</b>
<b>Strand</b>	<b>Natural environments</b>
<b>Strand unit</b>	<b>Land, rivers and seas of my county</b>
<b>Curriculum objective</b>	<b>The child should be enabled to become familiar with the names and locations of some major natural features in the county.</b>
<b>Class level</b>	<b>Third and fourth classes</b>
<b>Strand</b>	<b>Natural environments</b>
<b>Strand unit</b>	<b>Physical features of Europe and the world</b>
<b>Curriculum objective</b>	<b>The child should be enabled to learn about a small number of the major natural features of Europe.</b>
<b>Class level</b>	<b>Fifth and sixth classes</b>

Mrs. Cunningham teaches in a school in County Galway. She teaches twenty children in four class groups – third, fourth, fifth and sixth. Third and fourth classes have been learning about some of the physical features of Co. Galway. Her fifth and sixth classes have been learning about the physical features of Europe. Both groups have opportunities to use a digital projector and an interactive whiteboard to zoom in and out of features on relevant maps. The third and fourth class children enjoy zooming into an aerial photograph of their school as part of their work on their county.

To find out what the children in the different classes have learned Mrs. Cunningham sets differentiated tasks for them. The more junior classes work in groups to locate Galway Bay, Lough Corrib, the Maamturk Mountains, the Partry Mountains, the Aran Islands, Inishbofin, and four other physical features of their choice of Co. Galway on a blank map. The older children also work in groups to locate most of the features they have learned about on a blank map of Europe. The children can use the classroom computer to help with their tasks. Mrs. Cunningham asks the groups to display their work appropriately. Before the classes begin their tasks they discuss what the success criteria will be. With some help from Mrs. Cunningham, they agree on three:

#### Sample success criteria

- The features must be correctly placed.
- The maps must be easy to read.
- The maps must be colourful.

The classes begin working in small groups.

## Sample activity 2.3 (continued)

When each group has displayed its work, Mrs. Cunningham gives the children a short time to reflect on what they have learned, how they have worked together in groups, and to what extent they have met their success criteria. She then distributes an evaluation sheet and allows the children time to complete it. She works with some of the younger and some of the less-able children. She discusses their ideas with them and helps them to record them. (See the evaluation sheet completed by Aoife.)

### Sample evaluation sheet

Name:	Aoife O'Sullivan.	Date:	16-7-07
1. What have you been learning about in geography?	I've been learning about <u>London</u>		
2. List three things you learned about this topic.	<u>London is on the river Thames. The thing we did highest mountain range in the world is in Italy.</u>		
3. Were you a good team member?	<u>Yes</u>		
4. Give a reason for your answer.	<u>I did research on the web while the other did different research</u>		
5. What could your team do better the next time?	<u>We could label the map more clearly</u>		
Teacher comments:	<u>Well done on your project work, Aoife. Your team's map was so easy to read.</u>		

Mrs. Cunningham reads all the evaluation sheets before the end of the week. On Friday morning she returns them to the children and allows them time to read her comments. While her class are doing some personal reading Mrs. Cunningham encourages children who so wish to discuss the comments with her on a one-to-one basis.

## Sample activity 2.4

### Using a KWL grid for self-assessment

<b>Curriculum area/Subject</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>
<b>Strand</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>Strand unit</b>	<b>Fractions</b>
<b>Curriculum objective</b>	<b>The child should be enabled to express improper fractions as mixed numbers and vice versa and position them on the number line.</b>
<b>Class level</b>	<b>Fifth and sixth classes</b>

Iníon Uí Mhurchú teaches fifth class. There are twenty-seven children in the class. Many of the children in the class have a low ability level in mathematics. They find abstract concepts particularly challenging. One Friday morning Iníon Uí Mhurchú explains that the class will work on fractions during the following week. She revises what the class has already learned in this area. At the end of the revision session she encourages her class to fill in their KWL grids.

Some of the children's KWL grids are shown below.

Séan's KWL grid

Name: Séan

Date: Friday 14th

Subject: Maths - Fractions

K (What I know already)	W (What I want to know)	L (What I have learned)
<p>Teachers give smaller than one.</p>	<p>I want to know about improper fractions. Zita knows a lot about them.</p>	

Complete at the start of the lesson      Complete at the end of the lesson

Addi's KWL grid

Name: Addi

Date: December 31

Subject: Maths - Fractions

K (What I know already)	W (What I want to know)	L (What I have learned)
<p>Fractions are to do</p>	<p>I don't understand what a mixed number is</p>	

Complete at the start of the lesson      Complete at the end of the lesson

Iníon Uí Mhurchú reads quickly through the completed grids when planning her mathematics lessons for the following weeks. She ensures that she has included many of the items in the wanted sections of the grids, for example identifying mixed numbers in the children's environment (shoe sizes, food packaging) and exploring what they mean. During the week she encourages each child to work on the item he/she wants to know more about. Some bring in examples from home, some check computer programs, others go online to find information, while others read library books and textbooks. Some ask Iníon Uí Mhurchú or a classmate. Before Iníon Uí Mhurchú finishes the work on fractions she asks each child to complete his/her grid recording at least one thing he/she has learned.

## Sample activity 2.4 (continued)

Some of the children's KWL grids are shown below.

21

Séan's KWL grid

Name: Séan

Date: November 11

Subject: Maths - Fractions

K (What I know already)	W (What I want to know)	L (What I have learned)
Fractions are smaller than one	I want to know about improper fractions. I know a bit about them.	I learned that some fractions are bigger than one & it is bigger than one. It is an improper fraction.
Completed at the start of the lesson		Completed at the end of the lesson

Addi's KWL grid

Name: Addi

Date: November 11th

Subject: Maths - Fractions

K (What I know already)	W (What I want to know)	L (What I have learned)
Fractions are added up to one.	I don't know what a mixed number is.	Real numbers are everywhere. I can't think of a mixed number. It is made up of a whole and a fraction.
Completed at the start of the lesson		Completed at the end of the lesson

Iníon Uí Mhurchú collects the grids. She uses the completed grids when revising fractions, setting homework, and designing differentiated tests for her class.

### Sample homework

#### Maths Homework Monday, January 14

1. Write 5 mixed numbers.
2. List 5 fractions that make one when you add them.
3. Do  $\frac{3}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  make one?
4. Are improper fractions  $> 1$ ?
5. Write 5 improper fractions.

She files the grids as part of her records on each child. She finds the grids especially helpful when chatting to parents about their children's progress and when completing report cards at the end of the school year.

# Gníomhaíocht shamplach 2.5

## Ag baint úsáide as léaráid PMI le haghaidh féinmheasúnaithe

22

Réimse curaclaim	Teanga
Ábhar	Gaeilge
Snáithe	Labhairt
Snáthaonad	Ag úsáid teanga
Cuspóir curaclaim	Ba chóir go gcuirfí ar chumas an pháiste cluichí teanga a imirt.
Leibhéal ranga	Ranganna a cúig is a sé

Tá féinmheasúnú mar chuid de ghnáthshaol SN Ballynogue. Ó na laethanta is luaithe spreagtar na daltaí le measúnú a dhéanamh ar a gcuid oibre féin, ar bhealaí atá oiriúnach dá n-aois, chun a gcéad chéimeanna eile a phleanáil. Dá bhrí sin, tá na h-árdranganna sa scoil ar a gcompórd leis an bpróiseas measúnaithe seo. Míníonn a múinteoir, Síle, rialacha chluiche béil teanga do ranganna a cúig is a sé. Iarrtar orthu treoracha simplí béil as Gaeilge a leanúint. Má leanann na daltaí na treoracha go cúramach ba chóir go mbeadh pictiúr de chruth matamaiticiúil acu ar deireadh. Pléann siad na focail a bheidh de dhíth orthu. Molann na páistí focail atá ar eolas acu cheana - díreach, líne, fada, ar dheis, ar chlé. Le cuidiú ón mhúinteoir cuireann siad na focail a leanas leis an méid sin: tarraing, níos faide, gearr, níos giorra. Scríobhann Síle roinnt frásaí úra ar an gclár dubh-cas, nócha céim, cosúil. Míníonn sí na frásaí. Sula dtosaíonn said, pléann Síle agus a rang na critéir rathúla a ghlacfar leo don tasc áirithe seo. Comhaontaíonn siad ar cheithre chritéar. Scríobhann Síle ar an gclár dubh iad.

### Ceithre chritéar

- Éist go cúramach – cuimhnigh gan cur isteach ar dhaoine eile.
- Scríobh trí fhocal ar a laghad a chloiseann agus a thuigeann tú.
- Scríobh aimn an ruda thíos faoi.
- Déan an litriú a seiceáil (i bhfoclóir, i leabhair, ar chairteacha nó ar líne).

Go mall, léann Síle amach na treoracha le dronuilleog a tharraingt. Cuireann sí na critéir rathúla i gcuimhne do na daltaí agus iad ag obair. Nuair a bhíonn críochnaithe ag na páistí, iarrann Síle orthu a gcuid oibre a thaispeáint. Tá dronuilleog déanta ag cuid acu agus d'éirigh leo an focal dronuilleog a aimsiú i bhfoinsí éagsúla tagartha atá sa seomra ranga. Scríobh tromlach na bpáistí cuid de na focail a d'úsáid Síle. Díreach sula dtéann na páistí ar sos tugtar cúig nóiméad dóibh lena gcuid oibre a mheasúnú agus léaráidí PMI á n-úsáid acu. Díríonn Síle a n-aird ar na critéir rathúla atá ar an gclár dubh. Dáileann sí léaráidí simplí PMI. Iarrann sí ar gach páiste rud dearfach agus rud diúltach faoin obair a chur san áireamh (rud amháin a bhfuil dúil aige/aici faoina c(h)uid oibre agus rud amháin nach bhfuil dúil aige/aici faoina c(h)uid oibre). Iarrann sí orthu leis rud amháin suimiúil faoin obair a lua. Scríobhann Zita ina cóipleabhar Bheadh mo phictiúr níos fearr dá mbeadh peann luaidhe géar agam. Níor thuig mé chuid mhór dá raibh á rá ag an múinteoir ach chuala mé 'arís' agus 'líne' agus litrigh mé i gceart iad! Scríobhann Máirín Sheiceáil mé an litriú ar chuid de na focail ar líne ach bhí Simon ag iarraidh an ríomhaire a úsáid agus ní raibh mé ábalta teacht ar an Ghaeilge ar 'rectangle'. Is í 'cearnóg' an Ghaeilge ar 'square' áfach! Scríobhann Dean Níor scríobh mé ach dhá fhocal – níl sé sin ró-mhaith – ach tá a fhios agam gur litrigh mé 'dronuilleog' mar is ceart. D'aimsigh mé é san foclóir! Bheadh mo chuid oibre níos fearr dá n-éistfinn níos cúramaí!

Bailíonn Síle pictiúir agus léaráidí PMI na bpáistí. Cuireann sí i gcomhad iad d'fhonn comparáid a dhéanamh le ceacht atá ar intinn aici a thabhairt níos déanaí sa bhliain. Mar chuid dá n-obair bhaile an tráthnóna sin iarrann Síle ar na páistí trí abairt a scríobh ag úsáid focail a scríobh siad taobh lena bpictiúir.

# Conferencing

## What is conferencing?

Conferencing in the context of assessment means that those concerned with the child's learning share their knowledge and understanding of the child's work, its processes and outcomes during a planned or intuitive meeting. At designated times during the school year the child's work and progress can be the subject of meetings between the child and his/her teacher, or the teacher and parents, or teacher and teacher, or all parties together.

## What is the value of conferencing as an assessment method?

Conferencing provides an opportunity to share information in order to increase understanding about the child's learning. The conference is an assessment activity. When the conference is between teacher and child, about the work in a portfolio for example, the teacher talks to the child about his/her strengths and achievements and makes suggestions about where and how learning can be improved. Through conferencing the teacher listens to the child's ideas about what he/she finds easy or difficult in learning, and encourages this kind of openness in the child. This is an example of AfL; the outcome of the conference will inform the teacher's planning for next steps in the child's learning, and will help the child to see how his/her work can be improved.

## How is conferencing used?

### **Teacher/child conferencing**

The teacher sets aside a certain time for the conference, which might be termed a review, or a meeting, or simply a conversation. If conferencing is done regularly, for example weekly, the teacher will probably be able to devote only a few minutes to each child. If children are new to the process this might be a useful way to start. The duration or frequency will not matter as much as the child participating in and valuing the exercise.

The subject of the conference might be a single product of learning (a written story, a drawing, a project), or general learning experiences, such as using ICT or taking part in a drama or a field sport. The conference should be informal and non-threatening. It is essentially a conversation about school-work. At a later stage, or with older children, the teacher may use the conference to assign a grade to a particular piece of work the child has completed. Discussion of criteria would be essential: *What is it that makes this a good piece of work? How might it be improved?* A simple assessment rubric would be useful for this activity. A rubric is an assessment tool which describes varying levels of quality in a specific piece of work. (See Appendix A, p. 84 for more information on rubrics.) Sample activity 2.6 on the following page is an example of how a rubric might be used with sixth class children to assess pieces of their writing.

The classroom climate is a significant factor in the conferencing process. Children need to know and accept that they are not under examination in a conference with the teacher, and that they are free to say what they feel about their own performance in an activity or area of learning. The conference is more likely to succeed in a classroom culture that respects children's opinions and encourages them to express them. Children also need to see the conference as an opportunity to learn something about themselves as learners. Sample activity 2.7 on page 26 presents a conversation as part of a teacher/child conference in a supportive classroom environment.



## Sample activity 2.6

### Using an assessment rubric as part of conferencing

25

<b>Curriculum area</b>	Language
<b>Subject</b>	English
<b>Strand</b>	Competence and confidence in using language / Writing
<b>Strand unit</b>	Writing: developing competence, confidence and the ability to write independently Competence and confidence in using language: developing competence, confidence and the ability to write independently
<b>Curriculum objectives</b>	The child should be enabled to write, without redrafting, on a given or chosen topic within certain time constraints. The child should be enabled to observe the conventions of grammar, punctuation and spelling in his/her writing. The child should be enabled to help others in editing their writing.
<b>Class level</b>	Fifth and sixth classes
<b>Strand</b>	Receptiveness to language / Writing
<b>Strand unit</b>	Writing: creating and fostering the impulse to write Receptiveness to language: creating and fostering the impulse to write
<b>Curriculum objective</b>	The child should be enabled to receive and give constructive responses to writing.
<b>Class level</b>	Fifth and sixth classes

Sixth class children use the rubric below to assess a story they have written. The particular elements in the rubric are based on what makes a good story as discussed and agreed by the children and their teacher beforehand (the criteria for success in writing the story). Another rubric might be used in subsequent writing to assess punctuation, for example the use of quotation marks, exclamation marks, and so on.

#### Sample rubric

Feature	I didn't do well	I made a good effort	I made a very good effort
Structure and plot	My story doesn't have a clear beginning, middle and end.	My story has a structure and plot but some of it is not clear.	My story has a clear structure and plot.
Paragraphs	I have too many (or too few) paragraphs, or they are not beginning in suitable places.	Some paragraphs are in the right places, but some aren't.	My paragraphs begin at change points in the story and help the reader to follow the story better.
Interest	My story is not that interesting.	My story is fairly interesting.	My story is very interesting.
Characters	I have described no strong character in the story.	I have described at least one strong character in the story.	The characters in the story are described well.

Each child's reflection on his/her own piece of writing helps to develop his/her skills of metacognition (reflecting on one's own learning). A key outcome of each conference is that both the teacher and the child can understand something more about the child's learning and the next steps that need to be taken in supporting learning. In addition, the individualised nature of the conference means that the teacher can differentiate support appropriate to each child's abilities and needs.

## Sample activity 2.7

### A teacher/child conference

26

<b>Curriculum area</b>	Language
<b>Subject</b>	English
<b>Strand</b>	Competence and confidence in using language / Writing
<b>Strand unit</b>	Writing: developing competence, confidence and the ability to write independently Competence and confidence in using language: developing competence, confidence and the ability to write independently
<b>Curriculum objectives</b>	The child should be enabled to experience varied and consistent oral language activity as part of the pre-writing process. The child should be enabled to write independently through a process of drafting, revising, editing and publishing.
<b>Class level</b>	Fifth and sixth classes

Mr. Swift uses conferencing regularly with his twenty-six fifth and sixth class children. He makes time for small groups of the children to talk with him on a Friday before lunch. In this way, the children get to talk about their work for about three or four minutes every third week. Here he is talking with Shane about a piece of writing the class had done earlier in the week: *A UFO Landed Here Yesterday*:

- Mr. Swift** *Well Shane, what do you think about what you have written here? Are you happy with it?*
- Shane** *I don't know ... It's a bit short, I suppose.*
- Mr. Swift** *Well to me it's not too short. But what about the story? Did you read it to your buddy?*
- Shane** *I did. He thought the beginning was exciting but the ending was boring.*
- Mr. Swift** *And what do you think?*
- Shane** *Yeah, I think he's right. I had a few good sentences at the start - the short sentences we talked about before we started to write ... to make more suspense.*
- Mr. Swift** *I agree. You made the opening very interesting. And you used some of the scary words we had on the list. But I wonder had you a plan for how it would end? I think it finished too quickly.*
- Shane** *Yeah, it did. I just ran out of ideas. So I just finished it off.*
- Mr. Swift** *OK, so would you have another go at the ending? Remember that someone reading this story wants to know what happened to the two main characters. So make up a new last paragraph with a bit more information, just to bring the story to an interesting conclusion. If you get stuck come back to me tomorrow, and we'll look at it again.*
- Shane** *OK teacher, I've just thought of a better ending!*

During the conference, Mr. Swift directs Shane in identifying what could be improved in his story. There are a number of other things the teacher could dwell on but he uses this conference to highlight the story's ending, as work was done with the class recently on building structure in a story. Shane will now write up a second draft of the story. There may be some further small changes before the final draft is completed.

Mr. Swift has also used a buddy system in the class to have children read each other's work constructively. Each child is required to note one strength and one idea for improvement in the work of the partner buddy. Each teacher/child conference takes just a few minutes, the whole group taking 50-55 minutes of class time. Mr. Swift is confident that the time spent on conferencing is well spent, given the real improvement he has seen in the children's work.

## Conferencing for AfL and AoL

Conferencing is a valuable exercise in AfL when it happens on an on-going basis during the school year. Then, steps can be taken to offer more focused support to the child. An end-of-year conference is more likely to support AoL when all parties consider the progress the child has made during the period of learning, often the full school year. This might involve talking about the outcomes of standardised tests, if they have been administered during that year.

## Other types of conferencing

### ***Parent/teacher conferences***

Assessment information is also shared at parent/teacher meetings. Some of these are scheduled; others are unplanned meetings between the teacher and the child's parents. For both teacher and parent the meeting is an opportunity to learn more about how the child learns at home and at school, and to consider ways in which that learning can be supported. Such a meeting is also a chance to talk about the child's special interests, anxieties or misunderstandings concerning schoolwork or homework.

### ***Teacher/teacher conferences***

Teachers can meet each other to look at children's work within and across schools. This type of conferencing can help teachers to

- design more effective assessments
- develop common standards through a shared understanding of the quality of children's work
- gather and reflect on ideas for revising classroom practice.

In conferencing of this kind teachers identify criteria for judging the quality of work in different curriculum areas/subjects at different class levels by using samples of children's work as a basis for discussion.

# Portfolio assessment

## What is a portfolio?

From an early age children can develop self-assessment skills, gradually taking more responsibility for the quality of their own work. Creating a portfolio is a useful way to promote these skills. A portfolio is a collection of the child's work, reflecting his/her learning and development over a period of time. It can provide evidence of progress in learning in a curriculum area, a subject, a strand, or across a number of these, using a topic or theme as the focus. The *Primary School Curriculum* recommends the use of portfolios as well as work samples and projects for assessing learning in a number of subjects: Gaeilge, English, mathematics, SESE, SPHE, visual arts, music and drama.

Depending on its purpose, the portfolio can be used over a year, a term, or a shorter period. Portfolios also provide opportunities for collaborative assessment whereby the teacher and child together look at and talk about the child's work, identifying positive features and points for improvement.

Portfolios can exist in hard copy and/or electronically. An electronic portfolio, also known as an e-portfolio or digital portfolio, is a collection of a child's work created using word processing, presentation, multimedia authoring, concept mapping, database and/or spreadsheet software, and is assembled by the child. Simple text-and-illustration entries can be created by very young children. E-portfolios also provide scope for connecting work within the portfolio (for example, linking a video file to a document) and external to the portfolio (for example, linking a website to a presentation). The NCCA's guidelines, *ICT in the Primary School Curriculum* (2004) note that the range of electronic work samples will increase as children become more familiar with developing and maintaining their e-portfolios. *This will stimulate their interest in using ICT for learning, and foster their ability to assess their own work* (p. 35). E-portfolios can be updated and managed online, which facilitates sharing the child's work with others and storing assessment data within the classroom and school. An example of an e-portfolio is described in sample activity 2.9 which follows.

## What might the child put in a portfolio?

The portfolio's contents depend on the portfolio's purpose(s). The teacher decides on the purpose(s) of the portfolio *before* beginning to use it. Examples of purposes might be: to show improvement in children's work, to show a range of work, to show children's strengths and interests, or to show their best work. The portfolio can represent both AfL and AoL. Depending on its purpose(s), the portfolio might contain samples of the child's work across the curriculum or in a particular subject including:

- Examples of written work at different stages of development (stories, letters, poetry)
- Project work in science, history or geography
- Work samples in visual arts
- Charts or diagrams from mathematics or science
- Photographs or video-recordings of the child's participation in a physical education activity
- Recordings of musical work.

## How does the portfolio work as an assessment method?

Once the teacher has decided the purpose(s) of the portfolio, he/she explains the concept to the children. The teacher provides folders or containers of suitable size, or the child might make his/her own. The teacher arranges for storage (paper-based and/or electronic). The teacher or child (or both together) periodically select a piece of work for the portfolio using the agreed purpose(s) and criteria. The child attaches a short written statement explaining why this piece was selected. (The emphasis should be on what the child has learned.) The teacher and child can assign a grade or comment to each piece of work based on criteria related to learning goals or outcomes, but it is important that the teacher is aware that assigning grades rather than comments to items in a portfolio changes the assessment role of the portfolio.

The class could organise a display of portfolios in conjunction with a parent/teacher meeting. Some children might like to talk about their portfolios, what the work in it means to them, and what they have learned from it.

## Questions a teacher should ask when planning to use a portfolio

- Why am I using the portfolio?
- What kind of learning will I assess?  
Which subject(s)/skills/concepts/dispositions will I assess?
- How will the portfolio contribute to my assessment of the child's progress and achievement?
- What period of time will it cover—a term, a month, the full year? (Shorter periods will suit younger children.)
- What size will the portfolios be? Where will I store them? Is electronic recording possible?
- Who will select the content for the portfolio, and how frequently?
- If I plan to assign grades or comments to items in the portfolio, what criteria will I use to assign these? How will the children know what these criteria are?
- What will happen to the portfolio at the end of its use? Will the portfolios be shown to a wider audience (for example parents, other children in the school, at a school assembly or open day/evening)?

## Sample activity 2.8

### Creating a writing portfolio

<b>Curriculum area</b>	Language
<b>Subject</b>	English
<b>Strand</b>	Receptiveness to language / Writing
<b>Strand unit</b>	Writing: creating and fostering the impulse to write / Receptiveness to language
<b>Curriculum objectives</b>	The child should be enabled to express and communicate reactions to reading experiences. The child should be enabled to experience interesting and relevant writing challenges. The child should be enabled to see his/her writing valued.
<b>Class level</b>	Fifth and sixth classes
<b>Strand</b>	Competence and confidence in using language / Writing
<b>Strand unit</b>	Writing: developing competence, confidence and the ability to write independently
<b>Curriculum objectives</b>	Competence and confidence in using language The child should be enabled to observe the teacher improving writing.
<b>Class level</b>	Fifth and sixth classes

Ms. Kennedy teaches fifth class and uses portfolios to assess the children's work in English during the year. She gets the children to make up the folders (A3 size) and design the covers. She tells the children at the outset that the purpose of the portfolio is to show others and themselves how their English work improves during the year. About every two weeks Ms. Kennedy gives the class some time to look at their pieces of work and asks them to select what they think is a good piece. On the back of it they write one or two sentences explaining what is good about it. These features/qualities of good work are written on posters by Ms. Kennedy and displayed on the classroom wall so that she and the children can refer to them. They provide the basis for useful discussions.

Over the months the collection of work in each portfolio grows. By the end of the year, each portfolio has about fifteen items including poems, pieces of writing (some descriptive and some in story form), the re-telling of news items discussed in class, and accounts of holidays and school events. There are also word puzzles and quizzes, jokes and cartoon strips. The children store the portfolios on a shelf in the class library.

Ms. Kennedy is surprised at how well the children look after their portfolios. At the end of the year the class have a portfolio presentation whereby each child has a minute to talk to the class about his/her work and select their best piece. Many of the children are able to say how their work in English improved over the year. The portfolios are of great interest to parents when they meet the teachers and receive their children's reports.

## Sample activity 2.9

### Creating e-portfolios

32

<b>Curriculum area/Subject</b>	Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)
<b>Strand</b>	Myself
<b>Strand unit</b>	Self-identity
<b>Curriculum objectives</b>	The child should be enabled to develop an appreciation of and talk about personal strengths, abilities and characteristics. The child should be enabled to recognise and reflect on choices that are made every day.
<b>Class level</b>	First and second classes
<b>Strand</b>	Myself
<b>Strand unit</b>	Taking care of my body
<b>Curriculum objectives</b>	The child should be enabled to explore the various things the body can do. The child should be enabled to develop and practise hygiene skills.
<b>Class level</b>	First and second classes

In the first school term, children created portfolios of their learning about farm animals. Mrs. Farrell worked with children to create and maintain different kinds of portfolios. Some portfolios were presented in ring-binders with plastic pockets or file folders while others used pizza boxes.

To promote children's use of ICT for learning, Mrs. Farrell plans to use e-portfolios for assessing children's learning in SPHE with children in first class. Her purpose is to document children's growing awareness and understanding of their bodies as well as their skills at making good choices.

Mrs. Farrell begins by helping the children to create a new folder on the desktop of the classroom PC. They use their own names for their folders. Using word processing software, Mrs. Farrell creates a one-page introduction to the e-portfolio (as shown below) which she helps each child to complete and save in his/her folder.

#### Introduction to the e-portfolio

Welcome to my first e-portfolio. It is all about me.

My name is .....

I am in ..... class.

I like to .....

I feel happy when .....

## Sample activity 2.9 (continued)

Mrs. Farrell and the children use the digital camera to take photographs of each child which they paste into each e-portfolio introduction.

To help children name and remember body parts, the children's next portfolio entry focuses on inserting the correct words beside a diagram of the body with blank labels. Over the following weeks each child continues to add samples of work to his/her e-portfolio including photographs of things the child likes to do, a list of things the child wants to learn to do, an audio file of a short story about a good choice that the child made, and some scanned artwork of children looking after their bodies.

Children become more familiar with finding and opening their own folders on the desktop of the classroom PC and adding new work sample files. During the term, each child shares his/her portfolio of work with other children in the group, discussing what they like about their work samples, and things they would like to improve on. Mrs. Farrell assesses the children's skills in presenting their own work to others. She sees from the range of skills the children demonstrate that further work and encouragement are needed for the shyer children in the class and she reorganises the portfolio groups to support these children.

At the end of the term Mrs. Farrell will provide time for children to present their portfolios and talk to the class about what they have learned about themselves. Mrs. Farrell plans to record children's presentations as short video files which provide evidence of children's reflections on their learning and their portfolios. These will be the final entries in the e-portfolio for each child.

# Concept mapping

## What is concept mapping?

Concept mapping (also known as semantic networking) is a process used to make spatial representations of ideas and the relationships between these ideas. The concept maps (or semantic networks) are similar to graphs containing ideas and labelled lines which describe the relationships between them. The purpose of the maps is to help the child show what and how he/she thinks about an idea. While there are different kinds of concept maps, they all help the child to organise and represent his/her thinking. In this way, the maps are graphic organisers or picture summaries of the child's understanding of ideas and the relationships between ideas.

## What is the value of concept mapping as an assessment method?

Children constantly take in information about the world around them. They use this information to construct theories about why things are the way they are and why things happen as they do. These theories can change over time as a result of children's experiences and interactions with their environment and with other people. Concept mapping helps the teacher to see inside the children's thoughts. This information can give rich insights into what and how children are learning—the connections they are making between ideas. Concept mapping is also very beneficial to the children themselves. The process engages children in more meaningful learning by helping them to integrate new information into prior knowledge and provide evidence of this understanding. Children can also use concept maps as study guides.

The information the teacher gathers through concept mapping can provide important starting points and check-in points for teaching and learning. Constructing a concept map helps children to draw together the information they already have and understand about a particular topic or idea, and incorporate new information in their thinking as they learn. Concept maps can also improve children's understanding of individual concepts and help them to see connections between concepts. They can be especially useful for children with reading and writing difficulties since the children represent what they are learning graphically. Using evidence of children's learning from concept maps, the teacher can identify teaching strategies, activities and experiences to modify their learning where misunderstanding exists, and/or further develop their thinking.

Concept mapping is particularly useful in assessing children's learning in science, history and geography. It can be used with children across the different class levels but does require more teacher input with younger children.

## How is concept mapping used?

Concept mapping begins with a discussion on the relevant idea or concept. Through this discussion, the teacher or children record(s) key words which represent the children's understanding of the idea or concept. These words become the basis for creating the concept maps, with the idea or concept the central focus of the map. Concept maps can be 3-D or 2-D. Making 3-D maps requires resources such as paper or card and string or wool, while 2-D maps can be created using paper and pencil or computer software such as word processing or concept mapping software.

Whatever format is used, the teacher sets the children the task (individually, in pairs or in groups) of organising the words or **concepts** in a way which enables them to describe relationships between concepts and sub-concepts. The number of concepts represented in a child's concept map provides evidence of the breadth of the child's understanding of the topic or area of study. The levels of concepts represented (concept, sub-concept, sub-sub-concept) suggests the depth of the child's understanding.

The children use lines to represent the **relationships** across the concepts and sub-concepts with arrows indicating the direction of the relationship. The teacher encourages children to show as many relationships as possible. The number of relationships represented in the child's map provides evidence of the extent of the child's integration of ideas within the topic or area of study. The teacher asks children to describe the relationships using as few words as possible. The accuracy of the child's description of relationships provides a further indicator of the extent of his/her understanding.

Some children, particularly those with strong visual-spatial abilities, learn to use concept maps quickly. Others can take longer to develop competence and might need to begin with simpler forms of graphic organisers and picture summaries.

## When should concept mapping be used as an assessment method?

At the beginning of a unit of work concept maps can give information to teachers about children's current level of understanding (and misunderstanding) about a particular concept. This information enables the teacher to identify what knowledge he/she needs to focus on to meet the children's immediate learning needs, thus using concept mapping for AfL. During or at the end of a period of learning, concept mapping can provide evidence of how experiences or activities have modified or extended children's thinking. To do this, the teacher can invite the children to revisit their maps and adjust them as they would like, or the children can be given the opportunity to construct new maps based on the same concept. In this way, concept mapping can be used for AoL. Through this information, the teacher can also evaluate the effectiveness of his/her teaching in supporting children's learning.

## Sample activity 2.10

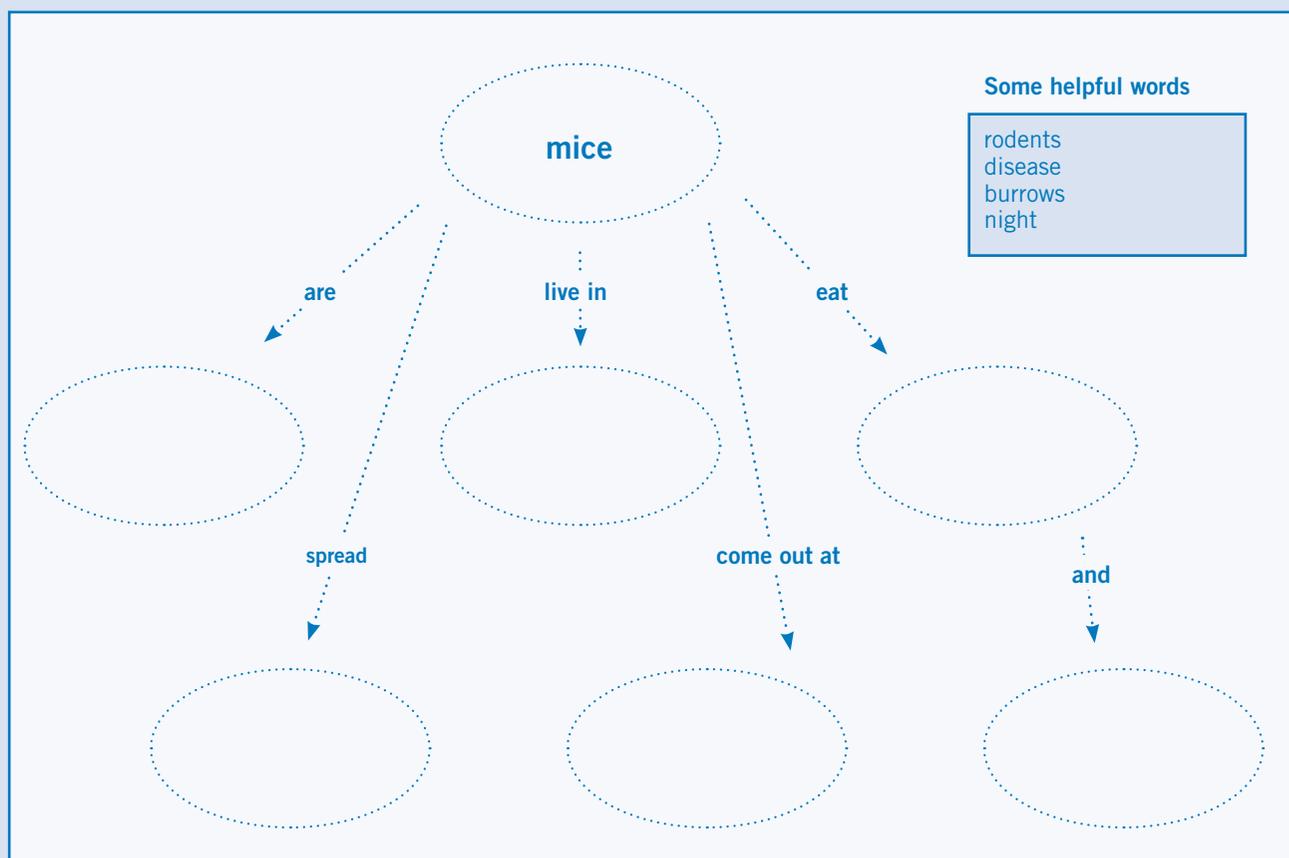
### Using concept mapping for AoL

<b>Curriculum area</b>	Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE)
<b>Subject</b>	Science
<b>Strand</b>	Living things
<b>Strand unit</b>	Plant and animal life
<b>Curriculum objective</b>	The child should be enabled to develop an increasing awareness of plants and animals from wider environments.
<b>Class level</b>	Third and fourth classes

There are twenty-seven children in Ms. Daly's third class. The children are learning about rodents in Ireland and abroad. Ms. Daly organises a show and tell session and invites the children to take part. Yuri brings his pet hamster to school and Síle brings the guinea-pig that her grandfather bought her for her birthday. The class interviews the local vet and pet-shop owner, uses on-line research as a homework task, reads books from the classroom and local library, prints and labels pictures from a CD-ROM using the computer in the classroom, and develops information leaflets on their pets for other children to read.

In assessing the children's learning Ms. Daly differentiates the concept mapping task by using two spider concept-maps. In a spider concept-map the central idea is placed towards the centre of the map while other sub-ideas radiate from it. She distributes the first map (see below) to a group of six children who experience difficulties with literacy. She asks the children to look and think about the map while she distributes a different concept map to the rest of the class. As soon as the children are settled and working independently on the task she returns to work with the first group. Ms. Daly helps them with key words or phrases and scribes for David who has Down's Syndrome.

#### Sample concept map template

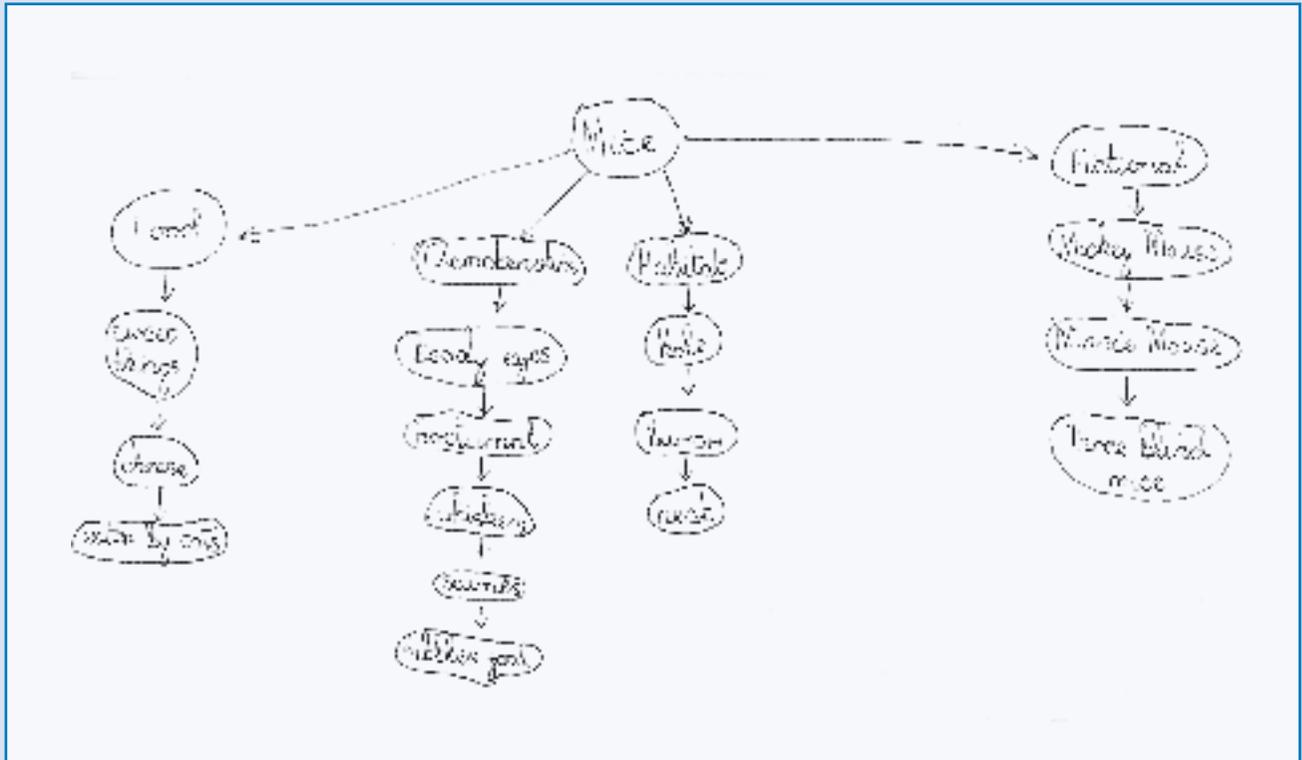


## Sample activity 2.10 (continued)

38

The second map (see below) is completed by the rest of the class without assistance. This map requires the children to identify sub-ideas and also to indicate the relationship between these and the main idea.

### Sample of a child's concept map



Reviewing the maps, Ms. Daly notes the extent of some of the children's learning and in particular, the children who have literacy difficulties. She writes this information in her day-to-day records for the class. She stores the concept maps in the children's central files and plans to share these with parents at the upcoming parent/teacher meetings.

# Sample activity 2.11

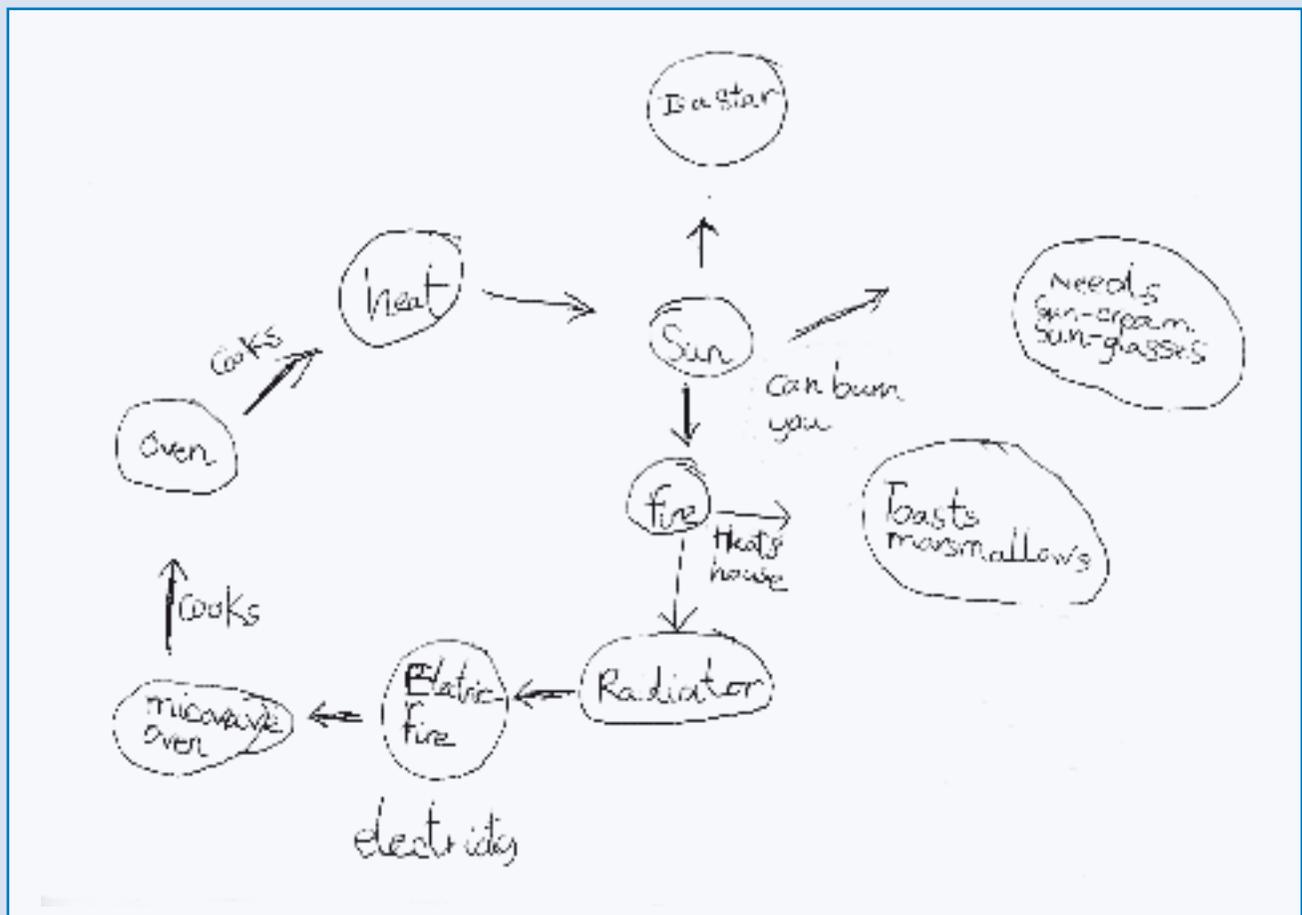
## Using concept mapping for AfL

Curriculum area	Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE)
Subject	Science
Strand	Energy and forces
Strand unit	Heat
Curriculum objective	The child should be enabled to become aware of different sources of heat energy.
Class level	First and second classes

Henry is using concept mapping with his twenty-four first and second class children. All the children sit on the carpet to have a class discussion about heat. As the children raise big ideas related to heat, Henry writes these on the whiteboard.

The following day Henry gives each group of five children a set of cards with the big ideas printed on them. The children read the words with Henry. Henry moves from group to group, helping the children arrange the cards on their tables so that words that are connected to each other are placed together. The children stick the cards on to a large sheet of paper leaving enough space between the cards to draw connecting lines. They draw lines between the words they think are related. On each line they write a word about the nature of the relationship between the two words. Where necessary, Henry scribes for the children. One group of three more able children use the class computer to create their concept map. When the maps are almost completed the children check any cards they have not yet used, and add any that they think now do fit on the map. They add new lines and relationship words. The groups name and display their maps.

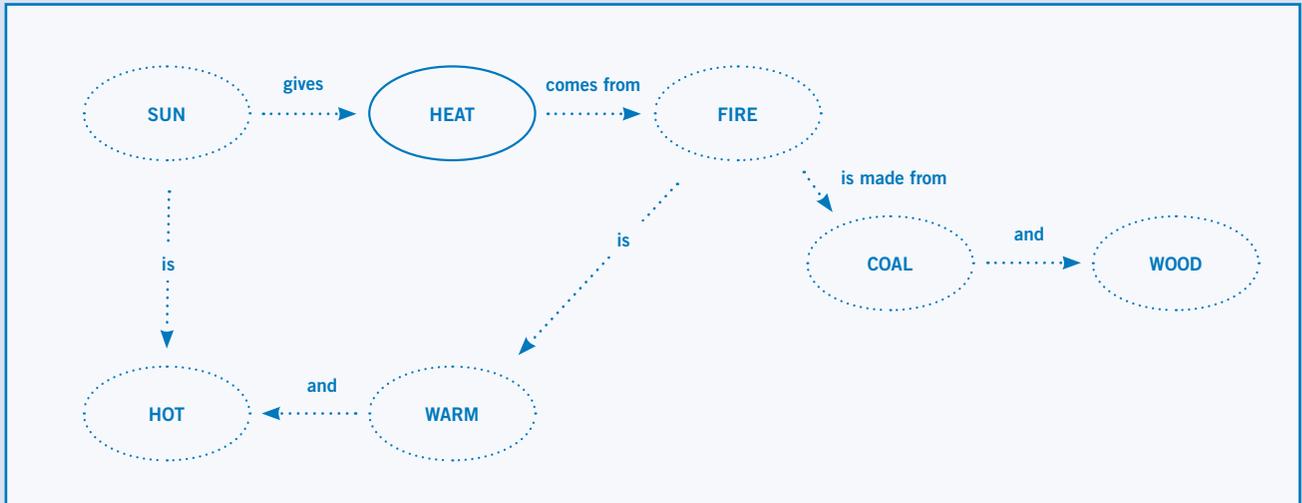
Sample of a child's concept map (created using word cards and by writing)



## Sample activity 2.11 (continued)

40

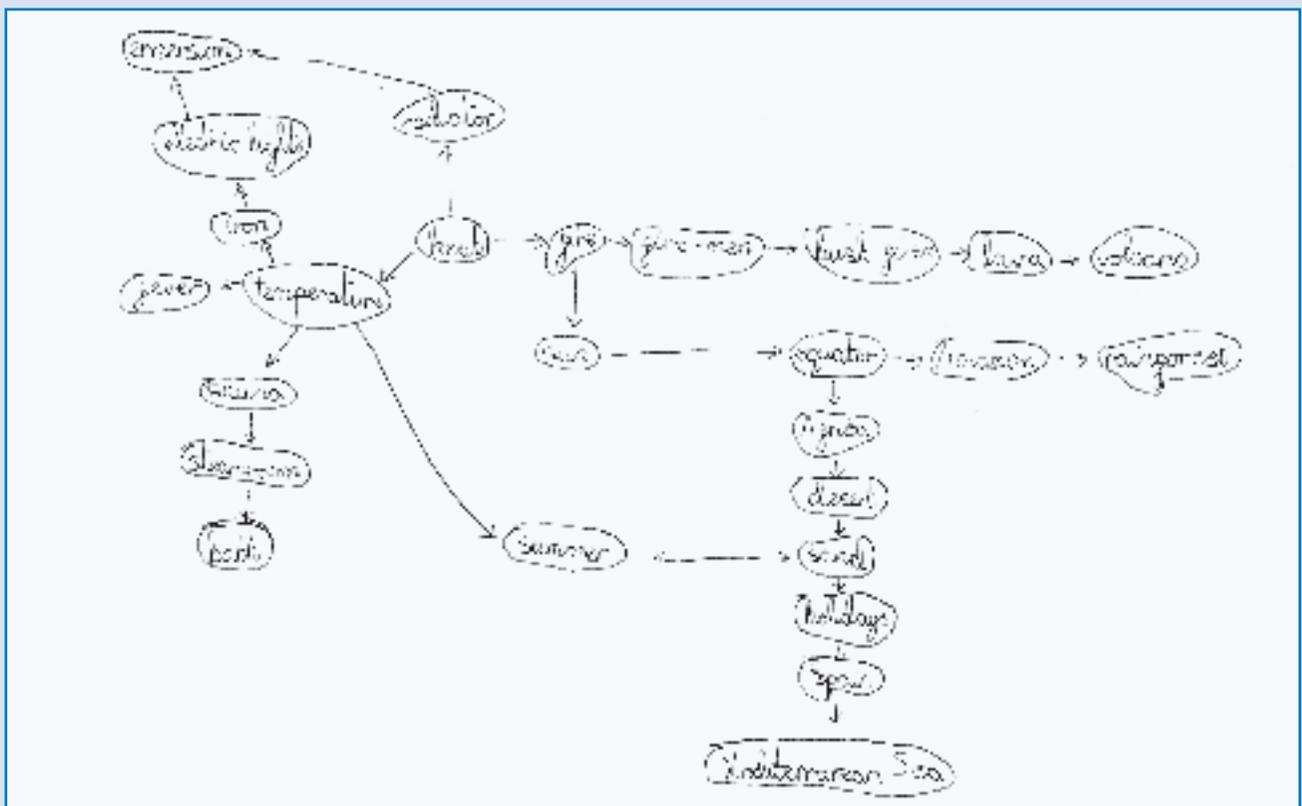
Sample of a child's concept map (created using the class PC)



Over the next few days Henry interprets the children's concept maps and notes that some children have not yet fully grasped the relationship between warm and hot. (They don't include these words in their maps.) It is also unclear from the maps how children perceive the relationship between heat and the sun, especially in the case of children in first class. In further work on heat Henry uses investigations in the classroom to explore the concept of temperature and to compare temperatures inside and outside the classroom, including investigations which show that the sun is a source of heat.

By the end of the term the concept maps are more sophisticated (see below) as the children become more competent at constructing them.

Sample of a child's concept map



# Questioning

## What is teacher questioning?

Questioning underpins all classroom assessment methods. Teachers regularly ask children oral questions about their work to find out what they have done and why. Teachers use these questions to assess knowledge and understanding and to guide children in their learning. Children also use questions to help them to learn, for example they ask their teacher and their peers questions. Part of the teacher's work in using questioning as an assessment method is to model good questioning. This in turn helps children to become more skilful at asking good questions to aid their own learning. (See Self-assessment, p. 16.)

There are many different types of oral questions. These range from closed questions in which the teacher anticipates a single, factual answer to open-questions which encourage a more critical, analytical response, and which facilitate multiple solution paths. (See Appendix A, pp. 86-87 for more information on types of questions.) Questions can also be used to assess learning (AoL) and to assist learning (AfL) although the distinction is not clear cut and questions may perform both functions to some degree. The following paragraphs explore some examples of oral questioning techniques.

## What is the value of questioning as an assessment method?

Teachers' questions can assess children's depth of learning by encouraging them to elaborate on an answer, whether it be their own or another child's. This is called **probing**. Probing involves questioning children about how they have reached a solution to a problem or how they are presently working on a task. Probing can elicit clarification, solicit additional information, or redirect a child's response in a more fruitful direction. Probes include questions like, *How did you get that?* and *Why is that?* When using probing as an assessment method it is a good idea to ask if any of the probes can be more effective in determining children's current understanding and if so, how.

Teachers' questions can also take the form of **prompts**. Prompts involve asking children to consider aspects of a task with the aim of helping them to reach a correct solution or to use a more appropriate method. Prompts include questions like, *Does that work for all even numbers?* and *Suppose the shape was a rectangle, would that make any difference?*

Here are a number of questions to keep in mind if you are using prompts as an assessment method:

- Do the prompts address the common difficulties likely to be encountered by the children? If not, how might the prompts be altered?
- Do any of the prompts go too far, to the extent that you are, in effect, telling children what they should be doing rather than guiding them to reconsider their plans?

## Answering questions

The examples above focus on the teacher asking questions. Encouraging the children to ask questions of the teacher can also provide information to support AoL and AfL. This can be achieved by:

- **Giving the children opportunities to ask questions:** Pause after making an important point or explaining a topic, or ask, *Any questions?* or *Do you want me to say more?* Give the children time to formulate their questions before going to the next point.
- **Trying not to postpone answering a question or not ignoring a child's question:** If one child tends to monopolise class time try saying, *Let's take questions from people we haven't heard from, or Vincent, I've already answered several of your questions, let's hear from some of the others first.*
- **Answering the child's questions adequately:** If the teacher does not wish to answer the question directly then he/she could try
  - repeating the question or paraphrasing it to ensure that the entire class hears the question.
  - redirecting the question to another child or to the class in general, asking for an answer or comment, or an elaboration of the issue.
  - responding to the child's question by directing his/her attention to things that may only be implied in the answer, and so help the child answer his/her own question.
- **Listening to the question:** Look at the child when he/she is talking; show that you are following by nodding; check whether you really understand what he/she is saying by rephrasing the question.
- **Promoting a discussion among the children:** Involve the majority of the class in trying to answer some questions.

## Sample activity 2.12

### Questioning to support AoL

43

Curriculum area/Subject

Mathematics

Strand

Number

Strand unit

Fractions

Curriculum objective

The child should be enabled to identify fractions and equivalent forms of fractions with denominators 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10 and 12.

Class level

Third and fourth classes

Bean Uí Bhriain teaches twenty-seven fourth class boys and girls. The children have been spending a week working on fractions during maths class. She wishes to probe their understanding of fractions by asking the following questions of the whole class. She begins with a starter question to elicit prior knowledge.

**Bean Uí Bhriain** *What is a fraction?* (She waits for five seconds before eventually calling on Anna to give the answer.)

**Anna** *A fraction is a small number.*

**Bean Uí Bhriain** (Echoes Anna's answer) *A fraction is a small number.* (She then poses a question to clarify Anna's answer.) *Can anyone tell me what Anna means by a small number?* (Again she waits for a further five seconds. This time she calls on Luke who doesn't have his hand up to answer.)

**Luke** *A fraction is a small number because you don't have the complete thing.*

**Bean Uí Bhriain** (Invites Luke to elaborate on his response by asking) *Can you give me an example?*

**Luke** *Like if you go to a birthday party and there is a birthday cake, well, the cake would have to be shared among all the children that are there, so everyone only gets a fraction of a cake.*

**Bean Uí Bhriain** *Right! So why are there two numbers in a fraction?* (She signals a non-verbal invitation from Pierre to respond using eye-contact.)

**Pierre** *Well if there is one cake, then this would have to show as 1 divided by the number of children it has to be shared between. Say for example, if there were eight children it would have to be shown as  $\frac{1}{8}$  (one-eighth).*

**Bean Uí Bhriain** (Nods in agreement with Pierre. She then encourages the children to reflect on the topic by saying) *Now I would like you to think about this question and write down the answer. Are you all ready? If Anna got  $\frac{2}{16}$  of the cake and Luke got  $\frac{1}{8}$  of the cake, which child would have more?*

**Úna** *I think that Anna got more because 16 is bigger than 8.*

**Bean Uí Bhriain** *Is Una's right?*

**Tadhg** *No, Una's isn't right because  $\frac{2}{16}$  and  $\frac{1}{8}$  are the same.*

**Bean Uí Bhriain** *That is an interesting observation Tadhg.* (She presents a task to encourage the children to offer their own information and observations on the topic of fractions.) *This time I would like you to work in your groups. The question I would like each group to answer is: How can you tell when two fractions are equal? You have paper and pens in front of you. You have ten minutes in which to prepare your responses in the form of a television presentation. Each group will be asked to present for the rest of the class.*

## Sample activity 2.13

### Questioning to support AfL

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE)</b>
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Science</b>
<b>Strand</b>	<b>Energy and forces</b>
<b>Strand unit</b>	<b>Sound</b>
<b>Curriculum objective</b>	<b>The child should be enabled to design and make a range of simple percussion instruments.</b>
<b>Class level</b>	<b>First and second classes</b>

Mr. Traynor is teaching the topic of sound to twenty-two first and second class children. He starts with attention-focusing questions. He taps a spoon on the side of an empty jam-jar.

**Mr. Traynor** *What sound can you hear? Is it a high sound or a low sound?*

**Mario** *It is a high sound.*

Mr. Traynor half fills the jam-jar with water and taps the jar again. This time he uses a comparison question.

**Mr. Traynor** *Is the sound higher or lower than last time?*

**Sarah** *Lower!*

**Mr. Traynor** *What do you think will happen to the sound if more water is added to the jam-jar?*

The children are invited to predict the outcome. This process is repeated a number of times adding more and less water. When the children are familiar with the possibilities of the various levels of water in the jam-jars Mr. Traynor decides that they are now ready for problem-solving questions. He sets one group of six children a task of trying to compose a tune using only jam-jars and water. To another group of six children he gives a selection of elastic bands and cardboard boxes. To the third group he gives a variety of beaters (spoons, rulers, and so on) and common classroom objects to investigate sounds made using different materials.

At the end of the activity each group presents its findings, and Mr. Traynor is able to assess what each member has learned using further questioning and observation.

# Teacher observation

## What is teacher observation?

Teacher observation, spontaneous or planned, can happen any time a teacher and child interact. Observations made by the teacher in the classroom provide some of the most immediate and accurate information about a child's learning. When teacher observation is compiled as a written record it allows the teacher to describe a child's learning in context. These records can make the planning of further work for an individual, group or whole class more focused and systematic.

## What is the value of teacher observation as an assessment method?

By recording details of what a child says, does or makes, and, more importantly, how the child says, does or makes things the teacher can gather important information about a child's learning. He/she can identify the child's learning needs and preferences and can gauge how effectively those needs are being met in class. Teacher observation provides the teacher with information about how the child interacts and works with others. It also helps the teacher to assess not only the child's ability to transfer skills and knowledge across the curriculum but also his/her ability to use learning materials and resources.

Observation helps the teacher to find out the varying degrees of success with which a child acquires and masters different skills and knowledge and then to adjust teaching and learning contexts accordingly. Some of the knowledge and skills acquired by the child are best observed in action, and so teacher observation may often be the only way to assess a child's progress accurately.

The *Primary School Curriculum* recommends the use of teacher observation in *all* subjects. There are several, similar ways of doing teacher observation. (See Figure 3 on p. 47.)

## How is teacher observation used?

Teacher observation is part of classroom work. It includes listening and watching, and requires the teacher to notice, recognise and respond to the child's thinking and actions. Observation may focus on an individual child or on a group, but not all children will need the same level of observation at all times. Teacher observations occur spontaneously as children engage in learning activities and those observations may be recorded. More effective and purposeful monitoring of a child or a group involves teacher observation that is planned and recorded in a structured and focused way.

## When should teacher observation be used?

Teacher observation can be used at any time in a classroom. For example, a teacher may decide to observe the discussion within a particular group in the classroom or the work of a child with learning difficulties. He/she makes suitable arrangements to observe the child or group, which may include organising group work for other children, securing the co-operation of a colleague, and/or drawing up checklists. Observation usually takes place over a short period of time. The teacher observes the child or group as they carry out planned tasks or assignments and he/she records the relevant information. Subsequent observations allow on-going monitoring of the child or group.



Figure 3: Some teacher observation methods

**Target child observation**

focuses on one child. A series of observations combine to give a picture of the child's unique development.

**Event samples**

are recorded observations of particular events that build up a pattern of a child's behaviour over a period of time.

**Time samples**

are short, repeated, focused observations of a child's development. They can be used to collect precise data over a long period of time.



**Anecdotal observation**

spontaneous or planned, is a written narrative of interesting instances of a child's development or behaviour.

**A shadow study**

is a recorded, planned systematic observation of aspects of learning or behaviour. It can involve an individual child, a group within a class, an entire class, or the school.

## Sample activity 2.14

### Target child observation

<b>Curriculum area</b>	Language
<b>Subject</b>	English
<b>Strand</b>	Competence and confidence in using language / Oral language
<b>Strand unit</b>	Oral language: developing competence and confidence in using oral language
<b>Curriculum objective</b>	Competence and confidence in using language
<b>Class level</b>	The child should be enabled to choose appropriate words to name and describe things and events. Infant classes

Áine is four and a half. Her teacher, Siobhán, is concerned about Áine's language development, in particular her colour recognition skills. She plans to observe Áine and her best friend, Katie, as they enjoy some free-play the following day. Siobhán knows that Áine and Katie like dressing up so she provides lots of very colourful clothes for them to try on. Katie picks a bright blue coat from the rail. She opens the buttons and puts on the coat. She closes the buttons carefully and admires herself in the mirror. *I like blue*, she tells Áine who is struggling with a fluffy pink jumper. Áine pulls the jumper over her head but can't get her arms into the sleeves. Siobhán asks her if she needs help. *No, pants Áine, do it myself*. Katie laughs and helps her to pull the jumper on the right way around. *What colour is your fluffy jumper?* asks Siobhán. *Is green*, she says. *No*, says Katie, *your jumper is pink! We look pretty!*

When her class have gone home that afternoon Siobhán makes an entry in her folder on the classroom PC. She opens the file marked Katie.

Scrolling to the end of the document she types:

#### Sample teacher record on Katie

**October 21**

Manages buttons well.  
Knows the colours blue and pink.  
Is helpful to her friends.

In Áine's file she types:

#### Sample teacher record on Áine

**October 21**

Shows some language delay.  
Needs help with dressing.  
Not sure of colours pink or green.  
Likes to do things independently.

Siobhán saves the new information and closes the files.

## Sample activity 2.14 (continued)

Before the end of the week Siobhán works with her class on the colours she has already taught. Through further questioning, she realises that she needs to differentiate between the children who are familiar with many colours and those who still struggle with the ones already covered in class. She discovers that Katie and three others recognise and can name all the colours she has planned to teach her class that year. While these children work in pairs on a computer program about colours Siobhán revises the colours taught so far. She pays extra attention to Áine who still struggles. She encourages her to name and use colour words as often as possible.

As Siobhán continues to observe and record Áine's use of oral language she realises that Áine's language development is delayed. She speaks to the school principal and they agree to discuss Siobhán's concerns with Áine's mother. She, in turn, agrees to encourage Áine to use more extended forms of language. Siobhán lends Áine's mum books that focus on colour from the class library. They decide that Áine might need specialised help with language and agree to monitor her progress over the next few months.

Siobhán often checks the children's files when doing her classroom planning. Before the school's parent/teacher meetings Siobhán refers to the files she has built up over the weeks on each child. She finds the files especially helpful when she is completing report cards on the children at the end of the year.

## Sample activity 2.15

### A shadow study

Curriculum area	Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE)
Subject	History
Strand	Local studies
Strand unit	My locality through the ages
Curriculum objective	The child should be enabled to study a period or periods in the history of the local village, town, city area, townland, parish or county.
Class level	Third and fourth classes

There are twenty-four children in Mr. O'Grady's third and fourth class group. In September, Mr. O'Grady divides his class into teams to carry out a history trail in the local museum. Each team is of mixed ability and has at least one child from third class and one child from fourth class. The teams have to follow clues, work out answers, and find certain exhibits in order to complete the worksheets Mr. O'Grady has prepared. Over the following weeks the teams will construct models of some of the museum's exhibits and they will report on designing and making the model. Mr. O'Grady invites the parent of a child in his class to accompany them to the museum. A transition year student from a local post-primary school, who is on work experience, also goes along with the class.

Mr. O'Grady has planned to observe one team at work. As it is early in the school year he wants to study the team members' social interaction to see whether they can work well collaboratively. He plans to observe their individual learning preferences too. Mr. O'Grady notes that Gráinne emerges as leader during the early stages of the project. She allocates jobs and organises the recording of their findings. Another child, James, shows little interest in taking notes or reading clues. Erin, who works each day with the school's learning support teacher, is happy to follow the others in the team from exhibit to exhibit, but is slow to make suggestions of her own. Antonio asks whether he can use the school's digital camera, which Mr. O'Grady has brought to the museum for the children's use. Antonio carefully takes a short video clip of the team as they work. He photographs the exhibit the team decide to model.

James appears uninterested while in the museum. However, back in the classroom, at the design and make stage, he suggests some ways of constructing the model. After some discussion the other team members are happy to go along with his ideas. Antonio takes some further photographs as the team work on their model. With some help from the transition year student Gráinne and Antonio upload the photographs and video clip to the classroom PC, and they scan in their completed worksheets. When the children have completed the project their parents are invited to the school to see the work. Erin proudly reports to the class and parents who attend on how the team worked in the museum and on how they built the model. James points out its special features. Antonio and Gráinne run the photographs and scanned worksheets as a slide show and they play the short video clip.

## Sample activity 2.15 (continued)

Mr. O'Grady writes brief notes as the children work in the museum. He makes further notes as they work in school afterwards. He notes their different learning preferences and aptitudes. He records each child's contribution to the group's work as it reflects his/her abilities and interests.

### Sample teacher record

Gráinne	willing to take the lead – organised – good computer skills
Antonio	good computer skills – very good photographer – likes to work individually
Erin	oral presentation of ideas very good
James	seems to have little interest in reading and writing – good ideas about construction – able to take the lead too

Mr. O'Grady files the notes he has made. He encourages each child in the group to work to his/her strengths during the rest of the term. He discusses Erin's oral presentation with his colleague in learning support. They agree to help Erin to develop her verbal presentation skills while placing less emphasis, for the present, on her written work. He and James agree on alternative ways of taking notes. James is content to use concept maps which require him to do less writing in the short-term. Later in the year Gráinne helps with the publication of the school newsletter. Antonio's photographic skills are much used during the school's special events such as Sports' Day and school trips.

Mr. O'Grady plans to observe other groups as they carry out assignments through the term. He uses the notes he makes to inform his classroom planning and for reporting to parents.

## Sample activity 2.16

### Event sampling

52

<b>Curriculum area/Subject</b>	<b>Physical Education (PE)</b>
<b>Strand</b>	<b>Games</b>
<b>Strand unit</b>	<b>Sending, receiving and travelling</b>
<b>Curriculum objective</b>	<b>The child should be enabled to develop and practice a range of ball handling skills.</b>
<b>Class level</b>	<b>Third and fourth classes</b>

Liam's class, third and fourth, has been working on dribbling and passing skills in basketball for some weeks. Before moving on to other skills Liam wants to check on each child's progress.

He designs a simple checklist on the class PC. He includes the children's names, the date, and the skills he wants to monitor. He prints out the checklist and, over the next two PE lessons, he ticks the appropriate box as he observes the child demonstrating each skill. When necessary he makes very short notes to help him with his planning for the next phase of basketball lessons. (See examples below.)

#### Sample teacher checklist for 3rd class

3rd class Date: 25.09.07				
Name	dribble	overhead pass	bounce pass	chest pass
Micheál	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bryn	loses ball if he doesn't watch it all the time	✓	✓	✓
Jane	✓	✓	✓	✓
Brian	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mary	poor hand-eye co-ordination	✓	can't control the ball	✓

#### Sample teacher checklist for 4th class

4th class Date: 25.09.07				
Name	dribble	overhead pass	bounce pass	chest pass
Síle	loses ball if she doesn't watch it all the time	✓	can't control the ball	✓
Oisín	poor hand-eye co-ordination	✓	can't control the ball	✓
Claudia	✓	✓	✓	✓
Khumar	✓	✓	✓	✓
Olivia	poor hand-eye co-ordination	✓	can't control the ball	✓

He stores the checklist for use when speaking to individual children about their skill level, and for parent/teacher conferencing later in the year. He also uses the checklist when compiling written reports on the children.

# Teacher-designed tasks and tests

## What are teacher-designed tasks and tests?

Tasks and tests can take the form of written or oral assessments or practical assignments developed by the teacher to assess children's learning. They can be used throughout the school year as a basis for continuous assessment (AfL). Tasks and tests can also be used at the end of an academic year or at the end of a period of learning about a certain topic for the purpose of AoL. However, tasks and tests can serve both AoL and AfL at the same time, since teachers may firstly report the results of tasks and tests and then use the results to decide what they should teach and how they should approach each topic.

## What is the value of teacher-designed tasks and tests as an assessment method?

Tasks or tests provide opportunities for children to demonstrate their levels of understanding (or misunderstanding) and their skills, and offer valuable information that can be used to plan future work directed towards the children's needs.

## General guidelines for developing a teacher-designed paper and pencil test

- Identify the purpose of the test at the outset and design the test to meet this purpose.
- Try to formulate questions which relate to the children's own interests as this helps make the test relevant and motivating for children.
- Start with some easy questions that all the children can answer in order to help them overcome their nerves and feel confident that they can succeed.
- Include at least two types of problems in tests. When only one type of problem is contained on the page the children quickly pick up on this pattern, and it discourages them from reading and thinking about the problems. New problems can be mixed in with ones that the children can solve already in order to provide opportunities for children to show different degrees of integration of knowledge and different levels of ability.
- As far as possible write questions using a simple subject-verb-object structure, even when this may result in more words being used. For example: Instead of writing:

### Example A

*Blue paint is added to a jam-jar containing yellow coloured water.  
The colour of the water changes.  
What colour does it become?*

The question could be phrased as:

### Example B

*Laura has a jam-jar containing yellow coloured water.  
She adds blue paint to the jam-jar.  
The colour of the water in the jam-jar changes.  
What colour is it now?*

Using a child's name as in example B also allows for the use of more simple, direct sentence structures.

- Avoid using double negatives in questions.
- Think about the overall layout of the test, and how the information will be presented. For example, a single question should be contained on one page to help children follow questions more easily.
- **Give key information in bold.** The use of pictures and labelled diagrams can help to make questions more accessible.
- Vary the questions so that they assess the children's reasoning skills behind their answers and the methods they use. (See Appendix A, pp. 89-90 for more information on developing test questions.)

## How are teacher-designed tasks used?

Many teacher-designed tasks involve children working in small groups. For assessment purposes, a high level of interaction between the teacher and the group of children is recommended. In order for this to occur, the teacher may decide that it is necessary for just one group to work on the activity while the remaining children are engaged in other work that does not involve much input or supervision from the teacher. (See Appendix A, p. 88 for a guide to using a sample task planning sheet, and Appendix B, p. 94 for a photocopiable planning sheet.)

## Feedback on tasks and tests

The use of grades or external rewards such as stickers for feedback on tasks and tests is generally of limited help to children in AfL. The main purpose of providing feedback is to give information to children about where they achieved success in relation to the learning intentions and where they might improve. Children need time to read or talk about the feedback as well as time to make improvements based on it.



## Sample activity 2.17

### Using a test

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE)</b>
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Science</b>
<b>Strand</b>	<b>Living things</b>
<b>Strand unit</b>	<b>Plants and animals</b>
<b>Curriculum objective</b>	<b>The child should be enabled to group and sort living things into sets according to certain characteristics.</b>
<b>Class level</b>	<b>First and second classes</b>

Ms. Sawyers is teaching a mixed first and second class group of twenty-five children. Building on the children's experience of sorting and matching she begins the activity with the whole class on the carpet, looking at a collection of pictures of animals pinned to a display board. She asks the children to choose an odd-one-out and to give a reason for their choice. The pictures of animals are chosen to focus on particular vocabulary (for example, mammals, egg-layers, distinguishing characteristics of insects, and so on). She notices that the children find it easier to identify differences based on visual features, so she encourages them to articulate and explain what the corresponding similarities are.

She designs a quick informal test involving differentiated activities to assess the children's thinking about the characteristics relevant to scientific classification. This test provides the children with opportunities to use specific vocabulary in a way that reveals their understanding of terms that are important for classification.

For the younger and less able children in the class she introduces a game called 'In the Ring'. The children work in pairs with a hoop for sorting and sets of cards with pictures of animals. She asks them to find farm animals and put them in the hoop. She asks questions about the animals in the hoop and those out of the hoop. Ms. Sawyers then asks the children to take all the animals out and to put other animals in the hoop (for example, animals that hibernate).

She presents the older and more able children in the class with a grid (odd-one-out board) containing names of animals (see below).

#### Sample grid of animal names

squirrel	polar bear	cow
hedgehog	penguin	bat
swallow	butterfly	hen

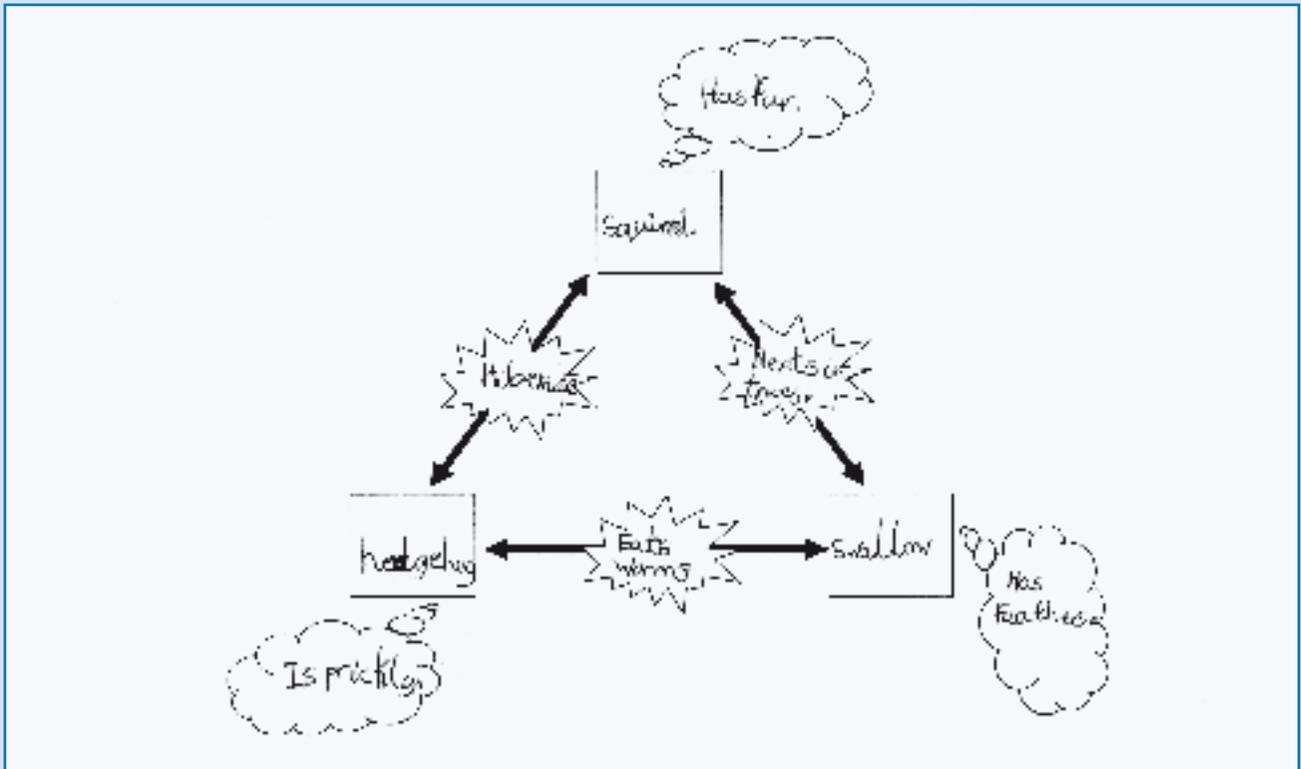
She asks the children to choose a row or a column and complete an odd-one-out template recording the similarities and differences between the animals and then to pick the odd-one-out giving a reason for their choice.

## Sample activity 2.17 (continued)

The following is a sample completed template.

56

### Sample completed template



John and Fiona complete this task quickly, so Ms. Sawyers poses a more challenging task. She asks them to make up their own odd-one-out board and to find something that is the same about two of the animals and something different about the third.

A group of six children from second class are asked to choose one animal each from the grid and to complete a report using a template Ms. Sawyers gives them. (See sample report on p. 57.) Any information that they do not know they look up on the computer. Teresa 'googles' the word squirrel and locates a number of websites with information on the animal. Ms. Sawyers observes that she is able to read and understand the information presented on the websites in order to complete the exercise.

When the tests and tasks are over Ms. Sawyers collects all the grids and reports. In her teacher records she writes brief notes about what each child did and what difficulties he/she encountered. For example, she identifies Clodagh as not performing as well as expected. While Clodagh came up with features such as colour she did not refer to any of the more scientific features which the class had been working on. Ms. Sawyers makes a note to re-emphasise some of the main classifying features of animals to Clodagh.

## Sample activity 2.17 (continued)

### Sample report

<b>Living things report</b>	
<b>Name:</b> Teresa	<b>Date:</b> 2/10/07
<b>Title:</b> The squirrel	
<b>Definition:</b>	
A squirrel is a small animal.	
It is a kind of Mammal.	
<b>Appearance:</b> What does it look like?	It is small with grey or red fur and a bushy tail.
<b>Habitat:</b> Where does it live?	It lives in nests in trees.
<b>Life cycle:</b> How is it born? How does it change?	It started life as a hair-less and tooth-less, or just long baby. It grows hair, teeth and gets bigger.
<b>Food:</b> What does it eat?	It eats nuts, seeds and fruit.
I know that they hibernate.	

Ms. Sawyers returns the grids and reports to the children, and over the next few days she takes a few minutes to talk to each child about his/her work. She returns to many of the points that arose during these teacher/child conferences to plan follow-on work on the life-cycle of animals. One observation she makes is that the children find it easier to describe the life-cycle of animals, which have distinct stages, such as a frog or a butterfly, but that they have greater difficulty with mammals. Ms. Sawyers reflects on the results of the test and adapts the next topic, the processes of life, with a view to incorporating different tasks so that more emphasis is placed on the life-cycle of mammals.

# Gníomhaíocht shamplach 2.18

## Ag baint úsáid as taisc

Réimse curaclaim

Ábhar

Snáithe

Snáithaonad

Cuspóir curaclaim

Leibhéal ranga

Teanga

Gaeilge

Labhairt

Ag úsáid teanga

Ba chóir go gcuirfí ar chumas an pháiste usáid a bhaint as leideanna éagsúla chun cabhrú le cumarsáid éifeachtach a dhéanamh.

Ranganna a haon is a dó

Tá an múinteoir ag iarraidh cumas labhartha na gcailíní i rang a haon a mheas trí dhráma beag a chumadh. Iarrann sí ar bheirt chailíní scéal beag a chumadh. Déanann siad é seo go rúnmhar le cabhair ón múinteoir agus ansin cuireann siad an dráma ar siúl go tostach ag úsáid míme chun an scéal a insint. Caithfidh na cailíní eile sa rang an scéal a insint in abairtí simplí. Is é ábhar an scéil ná go dtéann Caitriona go dtí an siopa chun seacláid a cheannach mar bhronntanas mar inniu breithlá Mhamáí.

Glaonn na cailíní abairtí amach:

*Bhí airgead ag Caitriona. Chuaigh sí go dtí an siopa. Cheannaigh sí barra seacláide. Chuir sí an tseacláid i mála. Chuaigh sí abhaile. Fuair sí paipéar agus rinne sí cárta. Ansin scríobh sí air. (Taispeánann sí a bhfuil scríofa aici don rang). Tháinig Mamaí isteach. Thug Caitriona an cárta do Mhamáí. Thug sí an seacláid di freisin. Dúirt sí, 'Breithlá Shona', a Mhamáí. Bhí áthas ar Mhamáí. Bhris sí an tseacláid agus thug sí píosa do Chaitriona.*

Cloiseann an múinteoir cuid mhaith botún á ndéanamh, go háirithe ós rud é nach bhfuil an leagan ceart de na briathra á úsáid. Ach níl sí buartha faoi seo. Ta sí sásta faoi láthair go bhfuil na cailíní ag caint, agus ag baint taitnimh as an dráma. Tugann an múinteoir faoi deara na cailíní a labhraíonn go minic agus iad siúd a bhíonn ciúin. Meallann sí iadsan chun iarracht a dhéanamh. Tugann sí seans dóibh an mhím a dhéanamh nuair a bhíonn sé ar siúl arís.

# Standardised testing

## What is standardised testing?

Standardised tests are used to measure a child's reading and mathematical skills, and to determine children's progress in those areas. Information from the tests is important given the vital role of literacy and numeracy in enabling children to access the full curriculum.

A standardised test is an assessment instrument that contains standardised procedures for its administration and scoring and for the interpretation of its results. In other words, the test is administered, scored and interpreted the same way no matter when or where it is used. A number of standardised tests available to Irish schools have been normed on the Irish primary school population. Teachers will be familiar with these. Normed means that the tests allow the teacher to compare a child's performance on the test with the performance of children of that class level or age in Irish primary schools. The test items also relate to the content of the *Primary School Curriculum*. When used in combination with information from other assessment methods standardised test results contribute to the accuracy of the teacher's monitoring, and assist in identifying the needs of individual children.

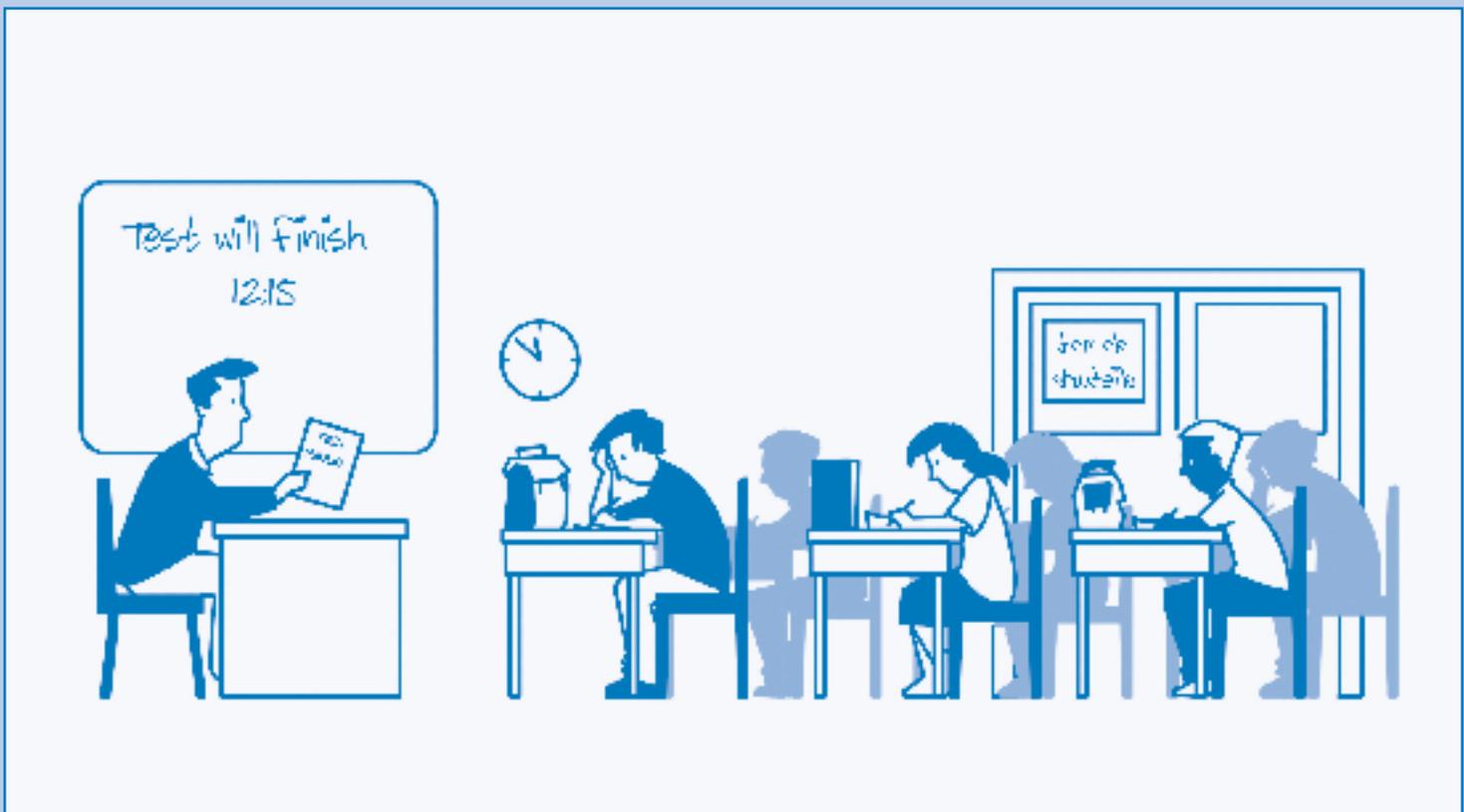
## How is assessment information gathered and recorded using standardised testing?

All Irish primary schools are required to administer standardised tests in English and mathematics to their pupils twice during their primary school years—at the end of first class or beginning of second class and at the end of fourth class or beginning of fifth class. The tests are usually administered by the class teacher under conditions specified in the test's manual, in order to ensure that the test results are valid. It is important to prepare well for the administration of the tests. The test manual provides detailed instructions in this regard, but it is of particular importance to ensure that the classroom conditions and timing are suitable, and that all necessary materials are prepared in advance.

Teachers mark and score the tests as set out in the test manual. The manual also contains a template for recording standardised test information. The individual child's test results are also recorded in his/her Pupil File. (See Section 4, p. 79 for more information on the Pupil File.) Recording these results on the child's school Report Card is discussed later in Section 4 also.

## How are the results of standardised tests interpreted?

The teacher needs to be familiar with key concepts such as raw scores, standard scores, percentile ranks, and STen scores when interpreting and recording test results. These concepts are explained in the test manual and they are also summarised in Table 1.



**Table 1: Overview of concepts associated with standardised test scores**

Name of score	What the score means
Raw score	This is a simple count of the number of items for which the child has supplied correct answers. It is of little use in reporting on a child's performance.
Standard score	Standard scores are transformations of raw scores, and usually range between 55 and 145, with an average of 100.
Percentile rank	The percentile rank indicates the percentage of the relevant class or age group which has scored equal to or lower than this child's score. It does not mean the percentage of test items the child answered correctly.
STen score	STen scores are a ten-point scale with 1 representing the lowest category and 10 the highest. These are derived from standard scores. (See Table 3, p. 63 for descriptors for explaining STen scores.)

It is important to use a range of assessment information when making decisions about a child's progress and achievement. The teacher's regular observation of the child's classroom performance and participation, as well as other recorded evidence of the child's learning, should complement the standardised test score. Teachers often (but not always) find that standardised test results confirm their judgements and observations. It is also important for class teachers to consult with relevant learning support and/or resource teachers to provide a fuller picture of the child's progress, strengths and weaknesses. This is particularly important when preparing reports for parents.

Teachers are advised against over-reliance upon a single test score. Caution is advisable because the following factors need to be considered:

- A standardised test may measure a child's performance on that test on that day, but this is not a certain measure of a child's ability.
- There is a margin of error in standardised tests which means that the result may be in error to a certain degree above or below the child's test score.
- Children's performance on tests becomes more stable over time.
- Extraneous factors can affect the child's performance on the test, for example the child may have been unwell, or particularly nervous.
- Coaching a child for the test will distort the outcomes.
- Despite the teacher's vigilance, copying can occur.
- A child's level of language development is a significant factor in test performance. For example, a child with poor reading skills may have difficulty in reading the text of mathematical questions. For children whose first language is not English, the test may be inappropriate. The test manual will provide details of the situations where the tests are not suitable. (Teachers may also refer to the DES Circular letter 0138/2006 of December 2006, *Supporting Assessment in Primary Schools*.)

### How can standardised test results be used?

The results of standardised tests are generally used in primary schools in Ireland for the following purposes:

- to identify children with learning difficulties so that appropriate supports can be put in place, including, if necessary, learning support provision. While the test outcomes may serve an initial screening function, additional diagnostic testing will be required to determine the child's specific learning needs. (Teachers should refer to *Learning Support Guidelines* (DES, 2000)).
- to identify children with exceptionally high scores so that appropriate learning experiences can be provided for them. (Teachers may find the *Guidelines for teachers of exceptionally able students*, (NCCA, 2007) useful in supporting these children.)<sup>3</sup>
- to report to parents on their children's achievement and progress.

Standardised testing is generally seen as AoL, indicating the child's performance at the end of a period of learning. Standardised tests are administered by some post-primary schools when children are transferring from primary school. In this case, the test results may be used to allocate children to class groupings or to identify children requiring supports. The advice that caution should be exercised when making decisions on the basis of a single standardised test score is even more pertinent here when the stakes are higher.

Standardised tests may also be used for AfL, providing information to the teacher that is useful in planning further learning in literacy and numeracy. For example, teachers may look at a set of class results to see whether any significant patterns or features are apparent, especially in the distribution of the scores. These patterns can provide the teacher with information to adapt his/her teaching methods, differentiation strategies, content of the learning experiences, and so on to meet the children's learning needs more effectively. School-wide results are also useful as they might indicate the need for attention to particular skills or areas of learning across different class levels.

Sample activity 2.19 on the next page shows how a particular set of standardised test results in English reading are interpreted.

<sup>3</sup> The NCCA plans to publish these guidelines in autumn 2007.

## Sample activity 2.19

### Interpreting standardised test results in English reading

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Language</b>
<b>Subject</b>	<b>English</b>
<b>Class level</b>	<b>Third and fourth classes</b>

It can happen that a child's scores in Reading Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension show apparently large differences as, for example, in Stephen O'Brien's test results shown below (from third class).

Reading Vocabulary			Reading Comprehension			Total Reading		
RS	SS	PR	RS	SS	PR	RS	SS	PR
25	109	73	14	93	32	39	102	55

Noting the difference between Stephen's scores, his teacher checked the relevant test manual to help her interpret the scores.

Although the teacher realised that such differences can occur by chance, she wondered whether this indicated that he had a reading difficulty. Yet Stephen's Total Reading Standard Score was 102, which suggested he was an average reader. Here it is useful to look at the difference between the Standard Scores. If they differ by more than 15 points—as they do in Stephen's case in Reading Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension—then a real difference in achievement is possible. Further testing may be advisable to determine whether Stephen does need support. It should also be noted that the Total Reading score can be a good indicator of a child's learning needs, as it totals the scores for both Vocabulary and Comprehension.

#### How should the results of standardised tests be reported to parents?

Reporting to parents is about sharing assessment information for the benefit of the child. It is important that teachers develop the language to make standardised test results accessible to all parents. It can be useful to express the child's performance on the standardised test as being *consistent with* or *not consistent with* the child's progress as assessed in other ways by the teacher, including tasks and tests, as well as observation. (See Section 2, pp. 14-58 for information on other assessment methods.)

A percentile rank may seem appealing for its apparent simplicity, but explaining the difference between a percentage and a percentile to parents is not always easy. A similar challenge arises in explaining the relationship between raw scores and standard scores. STen scores, which band a range of percentile scores together, may be more easily communicated and interpreted. (The term STen is derived from *Standard TEN*.) It is important that the teacher refers to the relevant test manual as it contains tables which express the child's performance in these different ways.

Verbal descriptors are useful when sharing standardised test results with parents and explaining to them what the scores indicate about their child's achievement. Tables 2 and 3 on p. 63 give overviews of test scores and what they indicate about the child's achievement. Test manuals also provide teachers with descriptors, and again it is important that the teacher refers to the relevant manual when using these descriptors. In the case of some tests the descriptors are linked to standard score ranges which teachers may be familiar with through psychologists' reports. The descriptors used in Table 2 reflect those used in the standardised tests normed on the Irish primary school population.

**Table 2: Interpreting standard scores for parents**

Standard Score Range	Descriptor	Coverage
130 and above	Well above average/Extremely high	2%
120-129	Above average/High	7%
110-119	High average	16%
90-109	Average	50%
80-89	Low average	16%
70-79	Below average/Low	7%
Below 70	Well below average/Extremely low	2%

Table 3 presents an alternative representation of scores in five rather than seven categories. Each band above and below the average denotes one-sixth of pupils while the average band in the table above represents one-third of pupils.

This approach to representing the scores has the advantage of equating the STen scores with a descriptor that may provide a familiar basis for reporting children's achievement to their parents.

**Table 3: Interpreting STen scores for parents**

Standard Score Range	STen Score Range	Descriptor	Coverage
115 and above	8-10	Well above average	Top one-sixth of pupils
108-114	7	High average	One-sixth of pupils
93-107	5-6	Average	Middle one-third of pupils
85-92	4	Low average	One-sixth of pupils
84 and below	1-3	Well below average	Bottom one-sixth of pupils

Whichever score is used for reporting, it is more important to make parents aware of the significance of the score than to provide a full understanding of the means by which it was derived.

Sample activities 2.20 and 2.21 on the following pages show how teachers might report individual children's scores on standardised tests to their parents.

## Sample activity 2.20

### Reporting standardised test results in mathematics

Curriculum area/Subject  
Class level

Mathematics  
Fifth and sixth classes

Niall completed a standardised test in mathematics in May at the end of fifth class. His scores were as follows:

Raw score	Standard score	Percentile rank	STen score
72	116	86	8

When Niall's mother called to the school to collect his end of year report the teacher, Éamonn, explained the test results to her. He told her that Niall had done very well as a STen score of 8 was a high average result. This score was consistent with the results of standardised tests over the previous years as well as with Niall's performance on classroom tests set by the teacher.

Éamonn had availed of the diagnostic element of the standardised test. He had calculated the '% correct' for each section of the test and was therefore able to identify problem-solving as an area that required some attention for Niall. This tallied with his notes of regular classroom observations. Niall's mother asked whether she could help Niall at home in any way. Éamonn explained some problem-solving strategies that Niall used in class and could be encouraged to use in his homework. He added that he would forward his advice on this, as well as the test results, to Niall's teacher for the following year.

## Sample activity 2.21

### Reporting standardised test results in English reading

**Curriculum area** Language  
**Subject** English  
**Class level** First and second classes

Ciara completed a standardised reading test in English at the end of first class when she was 6 years and 10 months old.

Class-based scores				Age-based scores				Reading age	
RS	SS	STen	PR	RS	SS	STen	PR	RS	RA
18	77	3	6	18	87	4	19	18	5.08

Mrs. Rooney checked the appropriate test manual. She discussed her concerns with the school principal. They noted that Ciara’s age-based scores were higher than her class-based scores. They realised that this happened because Ciara was younger than average for the end of first class and age-based scores take account of whether a child is younger or older than the average for their class level. The test results showed clearly that Ciara was struggling when compared nationally to other children in first class. Mrs. Rooney and the principal recognised that it was perfectly valid to concentrate on the lower of the two scores when recommending that Ciara would have further diagnostic testing. Mrs. Rooney then met Ciara’s father.

She explained the test results to him. She said that Ciara’s results indicated that she might need learning support in English as her scores would be classified as low or low average. Mrs. Rooney said that Ciara would meet with the learning support teacher after the summer holidays for diagnostic tests, which would give a clearer picture of her learning needs in this area.

## A continuum of methods

This section presented a continuum of eight assessment methods from child-led methods such as self-assessment and conferencing to more teacher-led methods, including teacher-designed tasks and tests, and standardised tests. Each of these methods can provide information to help the teacher create an accurate account of the child's learning across the curriculum for both AfL and AoL.

refers to short-term activities such as clarifying the purpose of the assessment, and to more longer-term activities such as supporting developmental processes and experiences for children. The *resources* column refers to tangible resources such as samples of children's work, as well as to organisational resources such as time. Finally, the *strengths* column presents some of the benefits of using each method.

Table 4 provides a summary of **some** of the points for consideration when using the eight methods. The *planning and organising* column

**Table 4: Some points to consider when using the eight assessment methods**

	Planning and organising	Resources	Strengths
<b>Self-assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify the purpose; decide what information will be recorded and where.</li> <li>• Agree criteria for success.</li> <li>• Develop children's self-reflection skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prompt questions and tools for children</li> <li>• time for children to reflect on their work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotes the child's independence and motivation.</li> <li>• Provides information from the child's perspective.</li> </ul>
<b>Conferencing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify the purpose; decide what information will be recorded and where.</li> <li>• Organise learning activities for the rest of the children.</li> <li>• Develop children's self-reflection skills.</li> <li>• Identify appropriate language.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sample(s) of children's work</li> <li>• time to talk to the child, parent or colleague(s)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides information from the child's perspective.</li> <li>• Builds home-school links.</li> <li>• Fosters collegiality – learning and sharing with colleagues.</li> </ul>
<b>Portfolio assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify the purpose; decide what information will be recorded and where.</li> <li>• Develop children's self-assessment and conferencing skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• materials and/or software to create the portfolios</li> <li>• storage space</li> <li>• time to talk to each child about his/her portfolio</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotes the child's independence and motivation.</li> <li>• Supports self-assessment.</li> <li>• Provides samples of children's work as evidence of learning.</li> <li>• Provides information from the child's perspective.</li> </ul>
<b>Concept mapping</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify the purpose; decide what information will be recorded and where.</li> <li>• Develop children's concept mapping skills.</li> <li>• Select appropriate maps.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• materials and/or software to create the concept maps</li> <li>• time to interpret the maps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides visual representations of how and what children think.</li> <li>• Provides evidence of changes in children's thinking over time.</li> </ul>

	Planning and organising	Resources	Strengths
<b>Questioning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify the purpose; decide what information will be recorded and where.</li> <li>• Formulate different types of questions.</li> <li>• Decide the timing of questions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• questions which support higher-order thinking</li> <li>• time to use different types of questions with different children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides immediate feedback on children's learning.</li> <li>• Usually requires few tangible resources.</li> <li>• Models good questioning for children.</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher observation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify the purpose; decide what information will be recorded and where.</li> <li>• Plan suitable tasks for the children being observed.</li> <li>• Organise activities for the children not being observed, which minimise interruption to the teacher.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• observation templates or checklists</li> <li>• time during class to observe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides immediate feedback on children's learning.</li> <li>• Can be planned or spontaneous.</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher-designed tasks and tests</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify the purpose; decide what information will be recorded and where.</li> <li>• Prepare test questions and tasks which demonstrate particular understanding or skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• resources for teacher-designed tasks and tests</li> <li>• time during class to observe tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides evidence of learning in context (tasks).</li> <li>• Provides samples of children's work as evidence of learning (tests).</li> </ul>
<b>Standardised testing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify the purpose; agree when during the year the tests will be taken; decide what information will be recorded and where.</li> <li>• Read the test manual.</li> <li>• Choose the appropriate day and time, and organise the class.</li> <li>• Plan activities for children not taking the test.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• test booklet per child</li> <li>• test manual</li> <li>• time to administer the test</li> <li>• time to mark and interpret the results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicates achievement compared to performance nationally.</li> <li>• Helps to identify children's individual learning strengths and weaknesses.</li> </ul>



## SECTION 3

# A CLOSER LOOK AT AFL AND AOL



# Section 3

## A closer look at AfL and AoL

This section compares and contrasts the two approaches to assessment (presented in Section 1), **AfL** and **AoL**, according to the activities included in the definition of assessment in Section 1 and below. As outlined in Section 1, these activities overlap and often happen simultaneously.

Assessment is the process of **gathering, recording, interpreting, using, and reporting** information about a child's progress and achievement in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Samples of classroom practice are included in this section along with references to the assessment methods described in Section 2. Discussion begins with the first assessment activity, *gathering assessment information*.

### 1. Gathering assessment information

Gathering information for **AfL** is generally part of the classroom routine, and does not break the flow of teaching and learning. To the child, a question and answer session with the teacher can be a conversation, but the skilled teacher can glean valuable assessment information from it about what and how the child is learning. A learning support teacher for reading explains, *I am constantly observing and listening to the children and I regularly make changes to my plans to take account of what I have seen and heard*. In the following examples teachers describe how they gather assessment information unobtrusively, and use it to further children's learning.

*During the second lesson on the notation of tenths as decimals I asked the children to shade in point five on their worksheet figure. When I had reviewed a selection of attempts I realised that the majority of the class had not grasped the concept. I proceeded to revise the basic concept using labels applied to coloured cardboard strips. This was much more effective, as I discovered from later questioning.* (Teacher, Third class)

*In reading the children's written English work I noted some grammatical errors that were being made by a number of children. I planned a series of activities aimed at correcting these errors, targeting one error each week.* (Teacher, Fifth class)

*Noticing the poor nutritional quality of some children's lunches, I planned a series of lessons integrating SPHE and Science—designing and creating a healthy snack.* (Teacher, Senior infants)

**AfL** also involves the learner actively. The teacher can share the learning intention with the children, which involves the children discussing with the teacher what it is that they are about to learn. In addition, the child can consider with the teacher what the learning criteria are. For example, they might identify the key elements of good story writing using a rubric. These elements of **AfL** offer ways of involving the child in reflecting on and assessing his/her own work.

By contrast, **AoL** generally takes place at the end of a learning period. The teacher can use a variety of assessment tools including spelling tests or standardised tests. The teacher can also use methods such as questioning and observation of a child's learning. The teacher leads the assessment and the child is aware that he/she is being assessed. Below, teachers describe some ways they gather information through **AoL**.

*After a series of lessons on the Normans I brought my fifth class to visit our local Norman castle. We had prepared for the visit and looked for some of the main details in the building. When we returned to class I asked the children to draw their impression of the castle, showing as many of these details as they could recall.* (Teacher, Fourth class)

*Tar éis sraith ceachtanna ar an saol sa chathair d'iarr mé ar na daltaí cur síos a dhéanamh ar phictiúr den sráid chun a gcumas labhartha a mheas.* (Múinteoir, Rang a sé)

*When we had worked with long multiplication for some weeks I set the class a number of problems requiring them to use the operation. It showed me that, while the majority of the class had a sound understanding of the use of long multiplication, their computation needed more work.* (Teacher, Fifth class)

### 2. Recording assessment information

The purpose of an assessment determines what and how information is recorded. The teacher can make immediate use of much of the information gathered from **AfL** in structuring and supporting the child's learning. The teacher can judge what assessment information is important for recording in his/her notes. For example, the teacher would not record the minutiae of a class discussion but might note the unexpectedly enthusiastic contribution of a child who rarely participated. Similarly, the teacher is unlikely to note detailed errors in mathematics work but might record that much of the class showed evidence of requiring additional support in computation skills. The child too can record information about his/her progress in learning, for example as part of portfolio assessment.

In the case of **AoL**, the results of tests at the end of a learning period are usually recorded by the teacher, used to write reports, and stored in the child's Pupil File. Examples of assessment information recorded in this way include standardised test results and children's scores on teacher-designed tests.

### 3. Interpreting assessment information

The teacher's knowledge of the children in his/her class informs his/her interpretation of information from **AfL**. The teacher decides what information is valuable and how it can be used to enhance the child's learning. Information gained from **AfL** can yield a detailed picture of the child's learning and enable the teacher to make more informed decisions when planning for differentiated learning.

Children and their parents can also contribute to the interpretation of assessment information. Skills of self-assessment should be developed in all children so they can assess how well they have mastered skills and knowledge. (See Section 2, pp. 14-22). When the teacher's feedback emphasises criteria for successful learning it helps the child to assess his/her own work, and gives the child direction for future work. Parents can also help build a more complete picture of the child as a learner by talking to the teacher about how the child learns at home and about interests the child pursues outside school. It can also be useful for the teacher to know the nature of homework support provided by parents.

The interpretation of information from **AoL** can depend on the nature of the particular test or assignment. In standardised tests of literacy and numeracy, for example, meanings are attached to the scores that children achieve. Statistical tables rank the individual child's score relative to national norms, or to class-related or age-related norms. The teacher uses technical knowledge to interpret these norms, as well as his/her professional judgement. In interpreting the information, the teacher makes valid and reliable judgements based on sufficient evidence. (See Section 2, pp. 60-65.) For instance, a child's score that is strongly at variance with the child's previous general performance in that subject merits closer inspection. The teacher can also seek the views of colleagues in interpreting test scores. Helping parents to understand the information is another of the teacher's professional responsibilities.

### 4. Using assessment information

The principal use of information from **AfL** is to improve the child's learning on a daily basis. When the teacher notes a child's difficulties as they occur, or gains insight into a child's preferred ways of learning, the teacher can use this information to adapt his/her teaching to suit the child, as illustrated below:

*I find that when I watch the children at work I learn something about their learning. It may be that Ciara opts out when I set groups to work, or Shane's question tells me he hasn't understood what I have just taught. I might plan to spend more time with Shane during a follow-on activity in the next lesson.*  
(Teacher, Second class)

**AfL** should actively involve the child as well as the teacher. In addition to sharing the learning intention and sharing the learning criteria, the teacher also provides feedback to the children. Feedback that focuses on the learning or task in hand indicates next steps, points to achievement and challenges, and has a positive impact on children's learning.

*When I get my work back from Mrs Ryan she always marks something good I have written, but as well, she tells me some way I can make my writing better the next time. I like to know how I can improve my work.* (Cathy, Fourth class)

Developing the skills of self-assessment in children is a gradual process that can begin at an early age. When the teacher asks children in an infant class what they like about their work or the work of other children he/she is taking the first steps in developing the children's assessment skills.

All assessment information should lead to improvement in the child's learning. Just how the information is used is related to the original purpose of the assessment activity. The purpose of **AoL** is often used to determine the extent to which curriculum objectives have been met. The teacher can use this information in different ways in planning the next steps in the child's learning. For instance, the assessment information may indicate that revision of content is required in a particular mathematical concept, or that greater emphasis needs to be placed on comprehension skills. This information is useful to the teacher when it is gathered during the course of the school year. Information gathered at the end of the year is also useful to the teacher in planning the programme for the next year. Aggregated information from standardised testing can inform whole-school planning in literacy and numeracy. A principal comments:

*I reviewed the results of the standardised tests carried out in maths along with the staff member who has responsibility for the Mathematics Curriculum. It was clear that computation skills were not strong across the school so we invited in the Cuiditheoir who helped us as a staff to formulate strategies to improve the situation. We are implementing these this year, focusing intervention on first to third classes.*

Information from **AoL** is used to compile a child's report, which can inform discussion between teacher and parents about the child's learning strengths and weaknesses.

### 5. Reporting assessment information

Teachers and children often share information from **AfL** on a daily basis. Children constantly communicate information to teachers. It can be a challenge for teachers to tune in to children's multiple channels of communication and understand what the information means for each child. Developing self-assessment skills and regular use of portfolios, rubrics and learning logs, empowers children as communicators of assessment information—information to which teachers can respond. (See Appendix A, pp. 84-85.)

For example, some of this information is communicated to parents through homework and this can promote continuity in learning between home and school. Teachers can highlight for parents some ways in which they can support the child's learning at home, particularly through activities in literacy and numeracy. Teachers can also communicate assessment information regularly to children, parents, other teachers, and other relevant professionals.

**AoL** information is generally communicated through parent/teacher meetings, report cards, staff meetings, and so on. Teachers can interpret assessment information for parents, highlighting how it can be used to improve the child's learning. Likewise, parents can respond to the outcomes of assessment. Thus there is a two-way process between teacher and parent.

*There is a continuing process through which the child's formal learning experience in school interacts with the less formal developmental experience of the home and the family.*  
(*Primary School Curriculum, Introduction*, p. 21)

This section has defined and described two complementary approaches to assessment, Assessment for Learning and Assessment of Learning, which build on the assessment information presented in the *Primary School Curriculum*. Together, the two approaches provide teachers with evidence of children's progress and achievement in learning. This information enables teachers to make decisions about adjusting teaching to meet children's learning needs more effectively. In essence, **AfL** and **AoL** enable teachers to create the most supportive learning environments in which children are more motivated to learn.



## **SECTION 4**

# **SCHOOL POLICY ON ASSESSMENT**

# Section 4

## School policy on assessment

The purpose of this section is to assist schools in constructing their policy on assessment. The Education Act (1998) places a statutory obligation on every school to draw up a school plan.

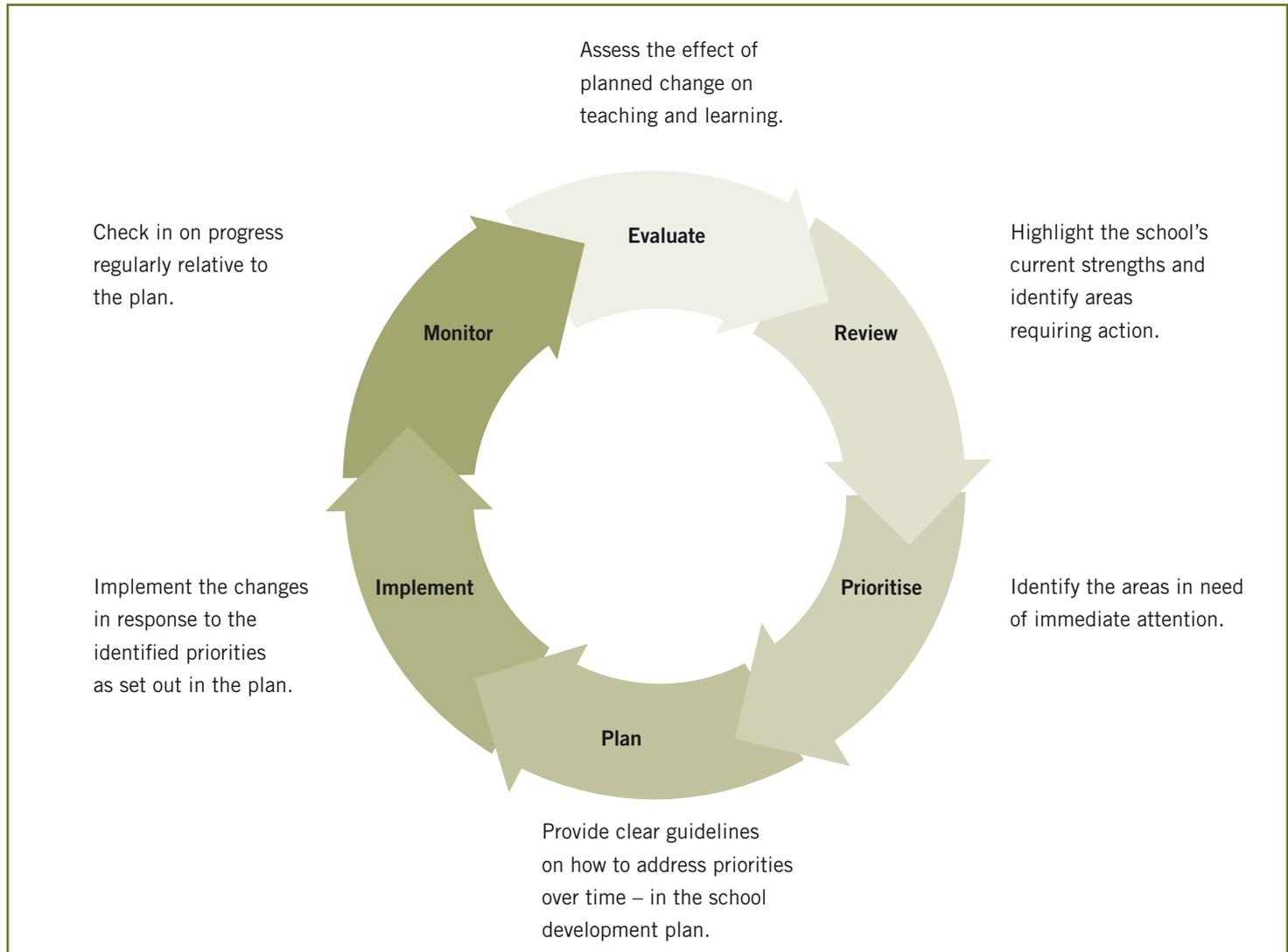
*The School Plan is a statement of the educational philosophy of the school, its aims and how it proposes to achieve them. It deals with the total curriculum and with the organisation of the school's resources ...* (Department of Education and Science, 1999, p. 8)

Therefore, the development of school policy on assessment is set in the wider context of school development and planning, and follows the School Development Planning model as shown in Figure 4. Further information on this model is available on the website of the School Development Planning Support (Primary) (SDPS) at <http://www.sdps.ie>.

The planning process is cyclical, enabling schools to enter the process at the stage relevant to their own unique situation. Some schools will have already developed an assessment policy and may be at the stage of reviewing their policy in light of these guidelines. Others may be at the design stage.

It is important that all members of the teaching staff are involved in developing, implementing and reviewing the assessment policy. It is also important that the policy formulated by schools is evaluated and reviewed regularly so that it can continually meet the changing needs of schools and their children. Parents should also be involved in the assessment policy. This creates a sense of ownership around the policy and allows for more effective implementation. Like all policies, a school policy on assessment reflects the core values and ethos of the school.

Figure 4: School Development Planning model



## Content of the assessment policy

The Education Act (1998) requires schools to *regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to the students and their parents*. In fulfilling this requirement, schools develop assessment procedures, which provide an accurate account of children's progress and achievement. The how, when and where of these procedures are outlined in the school's assessment policy.

Broadly speaking, the school's assessment policy contains a written statement of aims, and outlines how the school will use assessment to meet the needs of children, teachers, parents, and other relevant parties. It may include an outline of

- **how the policy was developed**
- **the policy's relationship to the school's mission statement and ethos**
- **the purpose of the policy**
- **staff roles and responsibilities for the policy**
- **the policy content—the assessment process in the school**
  - the purposes of assessment
  - assessment methods (gathering assessment information)
  - interpreting, recording, using, and reporting assessment information
- **implications for staff training and resources**
- **review and evaluation procedures.**

This is adapted from *Prompt questions towards drafting an assessment policy* on the website of SDPS (Primary) at [www.sdps.ie/policies/Assessment.doc](http://www.sdps.ie/policies/Assessment.doc).

The assessment policy also needs to clarify when and how the school will use ICT in assessing children's learning, in recording and storing assessment information, and the rationale that governs this process.

Prompt questions that can facilitate the drafting of an assessment policy are available on the website of SDPS (Primary) at <http://www.sdps.ie>. It is important that the policy refers explicitly to all of the aspects highlighted above. The detail of the assessment process in the school should be a key element of the policy. (See the fifth bullet above.) In this regard, the policy needs to answer the following questions about the school's practices in assessing children's learning:

- **Why should children's learning be assessed?**
- **What should be assessed?**
- **When should assessment happen?**
- **How should children's learning be assessed?**
- **Where should assessment information be recorded?**
- **How should assessment information be recorded?**
- **With whom should assessment information be shared?**
- **How should assessment information be shared with others?**
- **For how long should assessment information be stored?**

The remainder of this section of the guidelines responds to these questions. The implications of legislation for policy and practice are highlighted throughout. (See Appendix C, pp. 95-96 for a detailed summary of the implications of the different Acts for schools.)

## Why should children's learning be assessed?

As outlined in Section 1, assessment is part of good teaching and learning. It provides the teacher with information to make decisions about what and how the child is learning. This information in turn enables the teacher to identify the next steps in progressing the child's learning and adapt his/her teaching strategies and/or the learning activities, as appropriate. Using assessment information to inform teaching and learning in this way can make learning a more enjoyable and challenging experience for the child, and can contribute to a more enriching and rewarding professional experience for the teacher.

## What should be assessed?

The school's assessment policy should address each curriculum area/subject of the *Primary School Curriculum*, and encompass the knowledge the child acquires, the skills the child learns, the attitudes and values the child develops and the dispositions the child shows. It is important that all curriculum areas/subjects are assessed by appropriate methods. Certain methods are more suited to certain assessment purposes and to certain subjects as is noted in Section 2 of these guidelines.

Deciding what to assess is based on the curriculum objectives in each curriculum area/subject and on what the teacher intends to help the children to learn. The teacher uses appropriate assessment methods to measure the extent to which children have achieved these objectives. (See examples of assessment methods in Section 2.)

## When should children's learning be assessed?

Assessment is an ongoing process throughout the child's primary school experience. This process is shaped by the child's age and stage of learning and development. The child's perspective on the world and on his/her experience of learning is more holistic in the early years of primary school. At this stage, the separation of learning into different subjects is largely irrelevant to the child. The curriculum highlights the importance of connected learning experiences for the young child and recognises that, as children get older, subject based learning becomes more meaningful for them. A school policy on assessment should reflect this growth and change in how children approach and experience learning, and the assessment methods the school uses should vary at different stages of children's development. The policy should also ensure that judgements of children's learning and development are made over a period of time rather than sporadically, and that assessment information is used to provide intervention and support appropriate to the child's stage of learning.

Arising from the Education Act (1998) and the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004), the school needs to ensure that the educational needs of all children, including those with a disability or other special educational needs are identified and provided for. The school's assessment policy should therefore also refer to the role of diagnostic assessment, and specify the diagnostic instruments to be used as well as the timescale of interventions. Similarly, the school's procedures in identifying and responding to the needs of exceptionally able children should be specified. Under the terms of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) each child assessed with a special educational need should have a personal Education Plan. The school's assessment policy should indicate the procedures for drawing up and using this plan to support the child's learning. The child's parents, the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) with responsibility for the school concerned and *such other persons as the principal considers appropriate* (EPSEN Act, 2004, Section 9 (a)) must be consulted in the preparation of the Education Plan.

### Assessment in the 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.

Because the early years provide the foundation for subsequent learning it is important to identify children who experience learning difficulties as soon as possible. To facilitate this, the school should implement a screening policy in the second school year, preferably by February of the second term. Screening involves teacher observation of children and the administration of group and individual tests of early literacy, numeracy and developmental skills. The information acquired through screening tests, together with day-to-day observation by the infant class teacher, facilitates a more accurate assessment of the child's learning strengths and needs. This is particularly important in the case of younger children when learning does not necessarily follow a sequential pattern.

Screening facilitates the early identification of learning difficulties and allows for effective communication with the child's parents. Early identification enables the teacher to organise appropriate supports based on the *Staged Model of Intervention* (National Educational Psychological Service) (see p. 97). This model involves the teacher working with the child's parents, consulting with the NEPS psychologist, and, where necessary, organising learning support or resource teaching and/or access to various therapies for the child. *The Learning Support Guidelines* (2000) provide information on the development of a whole-school plan for learning support, and emphasise the importance of implementing early intervention programmes.

More detailed guidelines on assessment in the early years will be published as part of the *Framework for Early Learning* in 2008.

### Assessment in middle and senior classes

As with younger children, assessment methods used with children in the middle and senior classes should be set out in the school policy. In addition, the school's standardised testing arrangements should be documented. **Schools must meet the minimum requirement of administering standardised tests in literacy and numeracy at the end of first class/beginning of second class and at the end of fourth class/beginning of fifth class.** The assessment policy should state what tests will be used, when these tests will be administered, and how the results will be used.

The timing of the tests, whether at the end or at the beginning of the relevant class, will be dictated by the purpose of the tests. In general, the earlier an assessment is conducted for diagnostic purposes the more likely it is to lead to intervention that will benefit the child. Testing at the beginning of the year enables schools to develop appropriate interventions for certain children, while testing at the end of the year allows schools to make placement and progress decisions based on assessment results. Although the variation in the timing and sequencing that teachers choose when covering different elements of the curriculum with different classes can pose challenges in deciding when tests should be administered during the school year, the purpose of the assessment will be the overriding consideration.

### How should children's learning be assessed?

Using information gathered from a variety of assessment methods, over a period of time, can help the teacher to create a detailed picture of a child's progress and achievement. As already noted, this is particularly relevant in the case of younger children as their learning can be highly contextualised, resulting in less reliable assessment information (including from test scores) than is the case with older children. Knowledge of the context in which the assessment takes place enriches the teacher's interpretation of the information gathered. This makes it easier for him/her to understand the learning process from the child's perspective.

Section 2 of these guidelines provides schools with information on a broad range of assessment methods. It is important that the methods selected are appropriate to the purpose of the assessment and to the children's ages and developmental stages. The Equal Status Act (2000) also has implications for schools in making this selection. This Act promotes equality and prohibits certain kinds of discrimination, for example discrimination on the grounds of religion, age, disability, or membership of an ethnic community. Therefore, the methods of assessment used to gather information on children must not in any way discriminate against them. Schools need to be aware of the effects of context, culture and language on assessment and seek to ensure that assessments are carried out in circumstances that are appropriate for children. For example, staffs need to identify and address aspects of assessment that are particularly relevant to children with special educational needs, and provide appropriate alternatives as required. In the case of some children, the teacher may have to explore ways of recognising

progress and achievement that are sufficiently sensitive to each child's level of ability. This might involve placing a greater value on how the child experiences and responds to an activity, or providing the child with additional time to complete an activity. Alternatively, it might involve the child requiring less support to complete an activity. More information on assessment for students with general learning disabilities is available in *Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities – Introduction* (NCCA, 2007), and on the NCCA website at [www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Publications/SEN\\_introduction.pdf](http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Publications/SEN_introduction.pdf).

### Where should assessment information be recorded?

In fulfilling the requirements of the Education Act (1998) schools create and maintain individual records of children's learning while they are attending school. They provide parents with assessment reports which contain accurate and clearly accessible information about their children's progress and achievement. Three kinds of records are maintained by the school:

- the teacher's day-to-day records
- the Pupil File
- the Report Card.

#### Teacher's Records

The teacher normally keeps his/her own day-to-day record of observations, remarks, incidents, etc. as they occur in the classroom and playground. This kind of record provides the teacher with additional information about the child, which helps him/her to meet the needs of individual children more effectively. It also informs the teacher's classroom organisation.

#### Pupil File

The Pupil File is used by teachers to record information on all aspects of the child's learning and development. The File provides a concise educational history of the child's progress and achievement during the course of each school year. One file per child should be maintained. It should be used to store documents filled in by the class teacher, the learning support teacher, and the resource teacher (where applicable). The main functions of the Pupil File are to

- support both teachers and children in monitoring and structuring learning
- provide information for teachers when preparing reports for parents
- provide information for teachers who will have subsequent responsibility for the child's education.

The Pupil File takes account of the child's strengths and needs, the progress he/she has made, and any areas of learning and development that need particular attention. Other useful and pertinent information may also be stored in the Pupil File, such as home contact details, enrolment data, school attendance record,

medical history (where appropriate), information concerning experiences at pre-school (if made available to the school on transfer), and the products of assessment (for example, completed standardised test booklets). The school may choose to create the Pupil File in written form (hard-copy) or in electronic form. If it is stored electronically the file should be backed up with a hard copy.

#### Report Card

The Report Card is an important element of the Pupil File in which salient information about the child's educational progress and achievement (including interests, strengths and needs) is recorded. The key purpose of the Report Card is to share assessment information with parents in an accessible format so that they can use the information to help their children to learn, and thus strengthen the link between school and home.

The Report Card allows for the recording of assessment information twice a year. The cards are completed by all who teach the child during the course of his/her primary school education. The results of children's assessments are recorded to facilitate the sharing of the most relevant and useful information about a child's progress and achievement with parents, teachers, and other professionals concerned with the child's education. The NCCA is currently working with schools to develop national report card templates.

### How should assessment information be recorded?

Assessment information can be recorded in different forms, including marks, grades, checklists, profiles, and narrative comments. (See Section 2.) Teachers need to bear in mind that comments should be objective and instructive. It is recommended that comments entered in the Pupil File and in the Report Card should be phrased in a positive manner in order to support further learning and development. Schools should keep the possible readership of these documents in mind when completing them.

The assessment information contained in the Pupil File and on the Report Card should be readily accessible and comprehensible to all relevant interests. This will entail clarity and consistency in recording and reporting assessment information from teacher to teacher within the school and in reporting to parents at the different stages of their children's primary school education. Similar consistency and clarity is needed in sharing assessment information between schools, especially so given the increasing mobility of the school population.

## With whom should assessment information be shared?

The Data Protection (Amendment) Act (2003) establishes parents' rights to regular information on the progress and achievement of their children under the Education Act. The Act entitles the parents of students under the age of eighteen (and students themselves when aged eighteen or older) to access all personal data relating to these students, whether stored in any electronic form or in hard and/or manual copy in a structured filing system in the school. (Any assessment information or personal data recorded by the school, including both formal school records and less formal records, whether in automated or manual form, comes under the terms of this Act.)

Legislation also requires the school to report assessment information when requested to other teachers, other schools and the children themselves, where appropriate. The school is also obliged to share assessment information with other individuals who are involved in the child's education. These include DES inspectors, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) psychologists, Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), and Education Welfare Officers, as well as other professionals such as speech and language therapists and occupational therapists. This sharing of information between professionals enriches the child's educational experiences. In developing their policy on assessment schools need to outline how they will ensure that a full and accurate summary of the progress and development of each child is available to the relevant people referred to above.

Appendix D (p. 97) outlines the roles of various organisations in working with the school to support children's learning.

## How should assessment information be shared with others?

Assessment information presented should be accessible to all relevant parties. When formulating the school's assessment policy, the school needs to bear the following in mind:

- **To whom will the school report assessment information?**
- **How will assessment information be reported?**
- **How frequently will assessment information be reported?**
- **What terminology will be used to report assessment information (that is, what terminology is familiar to members of staff and also to parents)?**

Assessment results should be reported to parents **twice during each school year. One of these events should include a written report, preferably at the end of the school year.** The other can include a meeting or a meeting and a written report. The school can decide the most appropriate times for these reports and meeting, and include this timetable in the assessment policy. Outside these formal meetings, teachers may also meet parents informally. The assessment policy should outline clearly the decisions the school takes concerning the frequency and mode of reporting.

Schools may find it useful to agree a format for parent/teacher meetings. A *Meeting guide* could be developed to support teachers in conducting the meetings. This could address issues such as making best use of the time available, presenting the child's report in as positive and constructive a light as possible, using language that all parents understand and avoiding the use of technical or specialist terms, and providing guidelines to parents on ways they can support their children's learning. In supplementing the DVD for parents, *The What, Why and How of children's learning in the primary school* (NCCA, 2006), the NCCA will develop a resource for schools to help parents understand and use assessment information to support their children's learning. This resource will include information on understanding standardised test scores.

The principal should approve access to assessment information by persons other than the child's parents (as referred to in the previous subsection). Such access may need to be accompanied by commentary or interpretation by a teacher or by the principal.

Finally, procedures for transferring relevant information between primary schools (if the child changes primary schools), as well as transferring relevant information between primary and post-primary schools, should also be incorporated into the policy.

## For how long should assessment information be stored?

The school's assessment policy should outline how and where assessment information on individual children is stored. Children can request assessment information for a number of years (not yet specified in legislation) after they leave schools. It is important, therefore, that schools store this information safely to facilitate access to it by former pupils at any stage until their twenty-first birthday. The assessment information could be requested of schools under the Data Protection (Amendment) Act (2003). Information stored on computers must be protected so that there is restricted access to it. Back-ups of the information need to be created, clearly labelled, and, likewise, stored safely.



# APPENDICES & BIBLIOGRAPHY



# Appendix A

## Further information on classroom assessment methods

This appendix presents supplementary information on self-assessment, questioning, and teacher-designed tasks and tests as outlined in Section 2. This includes information on

### Self-assessment

- Rubrics
- Thumbs up/thumbs down
- Traffic lights
- Plus, Minus and Interesting (PMI) diagrams
- Talk partners/buddies
- Ladders

### Questioning

- Types of questions

### Teacher-designed tasks and tests

- Planning for a classroom based task
- Types of test questions.

Appendix B provides some photocopiable resources for use with self-assessment, portfolio assessment, and teacher-designed tasks and tests. The NCCA's ongoing work in supporting assessment in the *Primary School Curriculum* will be published online on the ACTION (Assessment, Curriculum, and Teaching Innovation On the Net) website accessed at <http://www.ncca.ie>.

### A scoring rubric - writing to express personal ideas

Points	What the points mean
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Development</i>: consistently develops ideas into a complete, well-developed whole</li> <li>• <i>Organisation</i>: sequences in a logical and effective manner</li> <li>• <i>Focus on audience</i>: anticipates and answers the audience's needs and questions</li> <li>• <i>Language</i>: consistently uses language that enhances writing.</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Development</i>: partially develops ideas but does not provide a complete, well-developed whole</li> <li>• <i>Organisation</i>: purposely orders ideas for the reader to follow</li> <li>• <i>Focus on audience</i>: usually anticipates and answers the audience's needs and questions</li> <li>• <i>Language</i>: frequently uses language to enhance the writing.</li> </ul>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Development</i>: rarely develops ideas, produces poorly-developed and incomplete ideas</li> <li>• <i>Organisation</i>: usually orders ideas but some interruptions in the flow</li> <li>• <i>Focus on audience</i>: occasionally anticipates and answers the audience's needs and questions</li> <li>• <i>Language</i>: sometimes uses language to enhance the writing.</li> </ul>
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Development</i>: no development of ideas into a complete whole</li> <li>• <i>Organisation</i>: rarely evidences logical ordering of ideas</li> <li>• <i>Focus on audience</i>: does not attempt to anticipate and answer the audience's needs and questions</li> <li>• <i>Language</i>: fails to use language to enhance the writing.</li> </ul>

## Self-assessment

### Rubrics

Section 2 provides examples of a rubric being used for self-assessment (p. 15) and for conferencing (p. 25). In brief, a rubric is an assessment tool which describes varying levels of quality in a specific piece of work. It can be used to assess simple learning activities as well as more complex tasks. It can also be adapted for use across class levels.

A rubric can be designed by the teacher himself/herself or collaboratively by the teacher and the children. When a rubric is introduced initially to a class it should be in a simple form, and be used with a particular area of learning until the children become familiar with it and how it is used. Simple rubrics using faces or other symbols to indicate 'levels of satisfaction' can be used with infant classes. Children can be helped to assess their own work in very simple ways by verbally commenting on what they have done, saying whether they are pleased with it, what they like or don't like about it, or what they would like to do better next time. Rubrics can also be used by the teacher to inform the children of the criteria by which their work will be judged.

A rubric has two essential features: (1) a list of criteria, i.e. the important elements of the work, and (2) levels of quality, i.e. what the elements of the work look like at each of the levels of quality. Below is an example of a rubric developed by Airasian (2000) for scoring pieces of children's writing.

### Thumbs up/thumbs down

Thumbs up/thumbs down involves children indicating their level of understanding or their feelings by showing their thumbs pointing up or down.

### Traffic lights

Traffic lights are similar to thumbs up/thumbs down. They can help children to indicate their level of understanding or feelings by showing the appropriate coloured card:

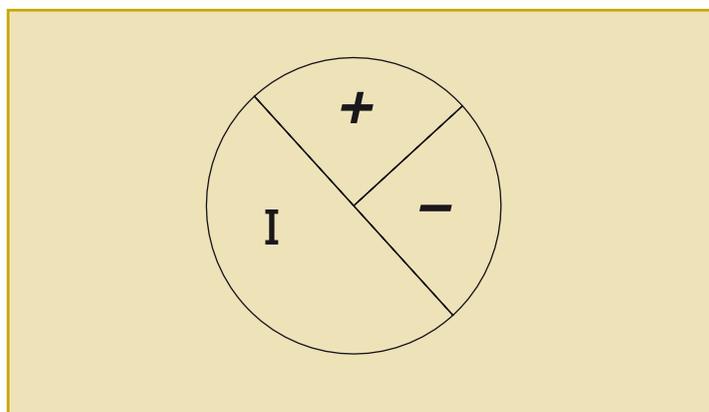
- red card = I don't understand.
- amber card = I'm not quite there yet.
- green card = I've got it!

The children can use the traffic lights at any time during a lesson. This technique is particularly useful during group work and whole class sessions, and also with young children.

### Plus, Minus and Interesting (PMI) diagrams

PMI diagrams can be used by children to assess their own work by identifying plus, minus and interesting elements of their work. This technique can help them to identify what worked and what did not work so well for them in their learning. PMI diagrams can be drawn as graphs, charts or tables. Below is an example of a PMI chart.

#### Sample PMI chart



### Talk partners/buddies

Using talk partners/buddies involves children sharing information with each other about their own learning. For example, children might identify three new things they learned, what they found easy, what they found difficult, and something they would like to learn in the future with their talk partners/buddies. Ideally the talk partner/buddy would be someone with whom the child is confident and happy to share his/her thoughts and ideas.

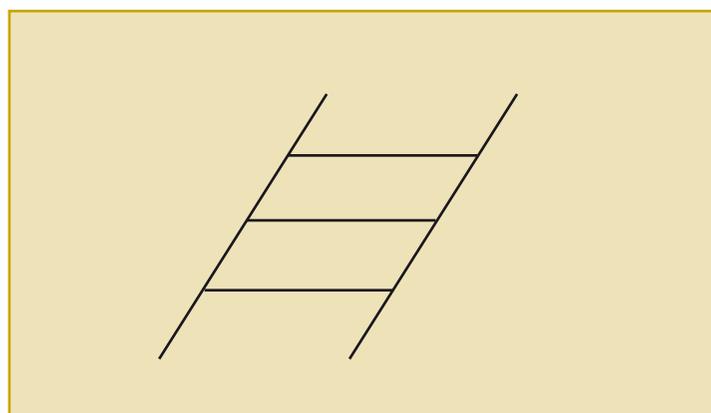
### Ladders

A ladder is a self-assessment tool that can help children to rank, prioritise, identify areas of clarity and parts of their work where they are experiencing difficulty. Children make decisions about their learning by responding to questions such as:

- What part of the work was the most important?
- What part of the work did I understand best?
- What part of the work did I not understand?
- What part of the work was difficult?

They rank the responses to these questions on the ladder.

#### Sample ladder



## Questioning

The following tables outline different types of questions based on Bloom's taxonomy (Krathwohl, 2002), and provide samples of each type.

### Bloom's taxonomy of questioning

Evaluation
Synthesis
Analysis
Application
Understanding
Knowledge

#### Knowledge

Question cues		Sample questions
tell	list	What happened after ...? How many ...?
define	name	Who was it that ...?
when	where	Can you name the ...? Describe what happened at ...
identify	show	Who spoke to ...? Can you tell why ...?
state	locate	Find the meaning of ... What is ...?
relate	who	Which is true or false ...?

#### Understanding

Question cues		Sample questions
retell	summarise	Can you write in your own words ...? Can you write a brief outline ...?
describe	explain	What do you think could have happened next ...? Who do you think ...?
discuss	interpret	What was the main idea ...? Who was the key character ...?
outline	predict	Can you distinguish between ...?
restate	compare	What differences exist between ...? Can you provide an example of what you mean ...?
estimate	contrast	Can you provide a definition for ...?

## Application

Question cues		Sample questions
solve	show	Do you know another instance where ...? Could this have happened in ...?
use	illustrate	Can you group by characteristics such as ...? What factors would you change if ...?
construct	complete	Can you apply the method used to some experience of your own ...?
examine	classify	What questions would you ask of ...?
apply	demonstrate	From the information given, can you develop a set of instructions about ...?
calculate	modify	Would this information be useful if you had a ...?

## Analysis

Question cues		Sample questions
analyse	distinguish	Which events could have happened ...? If ... happened, what might the ending have been?
compare	contrast	How was this similar to ...?
investigate	categorise	What was the underlying theme of ...? What do you see as other possible outcomes ...?
identify	separate	Why did ... changes occur? Can you compare your ... with that presented in ...?
order	explain	How is ...similar to ...? What was the problem with ...?
connect	infer	What evidence can you list for ...?

## Synthesis

Question cues		Sample questions
create	invent	Can you design a ... to ...? Why not compose a song about ...?
compose	predict	Can you see a possible solution to ...? If you had access to all resources how would you deal with ...?
plan	construct	Why don't you devise your own way to deal with ...?
design	imagine	What would happen if ...? How many ways can you ...?
propose	devise	Can you create new and unusual uses for ...? Can you develop a proposal which would ...?
formulate	combine	

## Evaluation

Question cues		Sample questions
judge	select	Is there a better solution to ...? Judge the value of ...?
choose	decide	Can you defend your position about ...? Do you think ... is a good or a bad thing?
justify	debate	How would you have handled ...? What changes to ... would you recommend?
verify	argue	What would you predict/infer from ...? How effective are ...?
recommend	assess	What do you think about ...? How would you create/design a new ...?
rate	prioritise	

## Teacher-designed tasks and tests

### Planning sheets

Planning sheets can be useful when preparing to use tasks as an assessment method. A sample planning sheet is shown below with a photocopiable version provided in Appendix B, p. 94.

Class(es)	Date	Subject(s)	Curriculum objectives
What class(es) are the children in?	What date will the children complete the task(s)?	What subject(s) is being assessed?	Which curriculum objectives are being assessed through the task(s)?
Resources	Time	Organisation	Actions
What resources do the children need?	How long will it take to complete the task(s)?	What classroom organisation (whole-class, group, pair, or individual) is most suitable from the point of view of children's involvement and the need to carry out teacher assessment effectively and efficiently?	What are the main actions that the teacher needs to take from the initial presentation to the children, through the various stages of the task(s), to the conclusion?
<b>Teacher's notes:</b>			

## Sample test questions

Examples 1-11 below illustrate a range of question types which teachers may find useful in designing paper and pencil tests.

### Example 1: Closed test questions

Closed test questions are usually used to elicit a specific response that is either correct or incorrect, as in the following sample.

Sample closed test question: 2, 4, 8, ... What will the next number be? The answer 10 might indicate that the connection between the numbers was thought to be a simple increase of 2, instead of doubling the last one.

### Example 2: Open test questions

Open test questions allow a wider range of responses than closed questions as shown in the following sample.

Sample open test question: Name one of the Loughs on the River Shannon.

### Example 3: Multiple-response questions

Multiple-response questions elicit a range of responses and can be solved in a variety of ways as in the following sample.

Sample multiple-response question:  +  = 9

### Example 4: Free response questions

Free response questions allow an even wider range of responses than multiple-response questions. Questions which require narrative responses can provide the teacher with information about the depth and breadth of the child's understanding, the child's thinking, and the areas where he/she may benefit from further support or work.

Sample free response question: Write a paragraph about the purpose of the soup kitchens in the Great Famine.

It is advisable to structure the question in order to identify whether the child displays real understanding of the topic or issue addressed in the question, rather than encouraging an unstructured reply that may hide gaps in the child's knowledge, for example:

Sample free response question: Name three factors that contributed to the development of the Great Famine.

### Example 5: Correcting responses

An interesting variation of test questions is for the teacher to prepare well-written but conceptually flawed responses or answers for the children to correct and edit. These responses may contain common misunderstandings, correct but incomplete responses, or completely incorrect facts and ideas.

### Example 6: Matching

The matching format is an effective way to test the child's recognition of the relationships between words and definitions, events and dates, categories and examples, and so on.

### Example 7: Multiple-choice questions

Responses to multiple-choice questions provide information on the child's ability to discriminate between the correct response and incorrect alternatives. As such, the child's response demonstrates his/her ability to recognise the correct response rather than to produce it.

Sample multiple-choice question:

**297 + 352 = 649**

The number fact in bold text is true.

Which one of the following number facts is true?

- a)  $397 + 362 = 659$
- b)  $649 - 352 = 317$
- c)  $29.7 + 35.2 = 6.49$
- d)  $287 + 342 = 629$

### Example 8: True-false questions

True-false questions can be used to gather information about common misconceptions by children.

Sample true-false question:

Look at the sum. Is the answer true or false?

Put a tick (✓) in the box if you think **yes, the answer is true.**

Put an X in the box if you think **no, the answer is false.**

18  
+23  
---  
311

The teacher may add an 'explain' column in which the child writes one or two sentences justifying his/her response.

**Example 9: Questions presented in a novel way**

Presenting questions in an unconventional form can be used to test children's understanding of a particular concept.

Sample question presented in a novel way:

To assess a child's understanding of place value present him/her with misaligned columns of numbers.

$$\begin{array}{r} 4 \\ 35 \\ +24 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

Ask him/her to read the numbers and then to write the answer. When finished ask the child to read the answer aloud. Ask him/her to justify the answer using a probing question, such as *does that sound right?*

**Example 10: Scales**

Scales can be used to help children respond to open questions. This provides some structure for children while still enabling them to choose from a range of responses.

Below is an example of a scale to help children respond to a piece of art.

Tulips by Afternoon Light, unknown.



Look carefully at this painting. Record your response to it on a 1-7 scale by circling a number. For example, what time of the day is it in the painting? If you think it is morning, give it a 1. If you think it is night, give it a 7. If you think it is somewhere in between, choose a 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6. Write down a reason for your answer after you have circled a number.

What kind of light is in the painting?

Bright? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Dark?

Give a reason for your score.

Are the edges of things

Clear and sharp? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Soft and fuzzy?

Give a reason for your score.

Is the paint

Thin? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Thick?

Give a reason for your score.

Is the mood of the picture

Happy? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Sad?

Give a reason for your score.

## Appendix B

### Photocopiable resources

This appendix provides some photocopiable resources which can be used with self-assessment, portfolio assessment, and teacher-designed tasks and tests. These include

- A **Know, Want to know, Learned (KWL) grid**. By completing the grid over time the child focuses on what he/she already knows, what he/she would like to know, and what new things he/she learns. (See Section 2, pp. 20-21 for information on self-assessment.)
- A **reflection template** which can be used by the child to help him/her decide whether or not to include a particular piece of work in his/her portfolio. (See Section 2, pp. 30-33 for information on portfolio assessment.)
- A **planning sheet** which can be used by the teacher to help him/her prepare for using tasks to assess children's learning. (See Section 2, pp. 54-58 for information on teacher-designed tasks and tests.)

<b>Child:</b>		<b>Date:</b>
<b>K</b> (What I <b>k</b> now already)	<b>W</b> (What I <b>w</b> ant to know)	<b>L</b> (What I have <b>l</b> earned)



Complete at the start of the lesson



Complete at the end of the lesson

**Teacher's notes:**

<b>Child:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<p><b>Description of the work:</b></p>          <p><b>What I tried to do:</b></p>          <p><b>What I did:</b></p>          <p><b>What I learned:</b></p>          <p><b>What I like about this piece of work:</b></p>          <p><b>What I would need to work on:</b></p>          	

<p><b>Teacher's notes:</b></p>          
------------------------------------------------------------------------

Class(es)	Date	Subject(s)	Curriculum objectives
Resources	Time	Organisation	What to do

**Teacher's notes:**

## Appendix C

# Legislative requirements of schools in relation to assessment policy

In developing a school assessment policy, schools must be guided by various legislative requirements. **At the time of publication** these are enshrined in

- the **Education Act (1998)**
- the **Data Protection (Amendment) Act (2003)**
- the **Equal Status Act (2000)**
- the **Education (Welfare) Act (2000)**
- the **Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)**
- the **Freedom of Information Acts (1997, 2003)**.

This appendix highlights the requirements for schools, **at the time of publication**, arising from each of these pieces of legislation.

### Education Act (1998)

The **Education Act (1998)** requires principals and teachers to *regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to the students and their parents*. The implications of this requirement for teachers and schools include

- developing assessment **procedures** which provide an accurate account of children's progress and achievement
- creating and maintaining individual **records** of children's progress and achievement while they are attending the school
- providing parents with assessment **reports** which contain accurate and clearly accessible information about their children's progress and achievement.

The Education Act also places a responsibility on schools to ensure *that the educational needs of all students, including those with a disability or other special educational needs are identified and provided for*. Specific responsibilities for schools include identifying and responding to pupils with learning difficulties by liaising with the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), where appropriate, and co-ordinating the monitoring of pupils' progress and achievement (by the class teacher, the learning support teacher, the resource teacher, and other professionals).

### Data Protection (Amendment) Act (2003)

Any assessment information or personal data recorded by the school, including both formal school records and less formal records, whether in automated or manual form, is subject to the terms of the **Data Protection (Amendment) Act (2003)**. The right of parents to regular information on the progress and achievement of their children under the Education Act is supported by the Data Protection (Amendment) Act (2003). The latter entitles parents of

students under the age of eighteen (and students aged eighteen and over) to access all personal data relating to the students, whether stored in any electronic form or in hard and/or manual copy in a structured filing system in school. Information on these entitlements is available on the website of the Data Protection Commissioner at <http://www.dataprivacy.ie>. In addition, under the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003, parents have a right to all assessment information about their children in intelligible form and they have the right to know the source of the assessment information, for example the class teacher or learning support teacher.

The following designated persons are also entitled to direct access to individual, group or class assessment information:

- the child's class teacher
- the class teacher, within the same school, to whom the child is transferring
- the principal
- learning support and resource teachers
- the DES inspector
- the NEPS psychologist
- the Education Welfare Board and its officers
- other relevant professionals (including a Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO), an occupational therapist, a speech and language therapist, a teacher of deaf children).

In addition, assessment information on an individual child may be provided to another school, primary or post-primary, to which the child is transferring.

Further implications of the Data Protection (Amendment) Act (2003) require schools to state in their assessment policy

- what information is being gathered, for example a percentile on a standardised reading test at the end of each school year
- why the information is being gathered, for example to identify children who would benefit from learning support
- how the information will be gathered, for example through the use of standardised reading tests and/or diagnostic reading tests
- how the information will be stored, for example in hard copy or electronically.

The school policy also needs to identify where the files will be stored and for how long.

A basic checklist to ascertain if a school is fulfilling the requirements of the Data Protection (Amendment) Act (2003) is available on the website of the Data Protection Commissioner at <http://www.dataprivacy.ie/ViewDoc.asp?fn=/documents/responsibilities/3k.htm&CatID=55&m=y>.

## Equal Status Act (2000)

The **Equal Status Act (2000)** has implications for the assessment policy in schools in that it promotes equality and prohibits certain kinds of discrimination, for example discrimination on the grounds of religion, age, disability, or membership of an ethnic community. Therefore, the form of assessment used to gather information on children must not in any way discriminate against them. Teachers need to be aware of bias when English language intelligence tests are administered with children whose first language is not English. Schools need to be aware of the effects of context, culture and language on assessment and seek to ensure that the processes of assessment are carried out in circumstances that are appropriate for children. For example, staffs need to identify and address any barriers to assessment for children with special educational needs, and provide appropriate alternatives as required. Schools also need to ensure that the chosen methods of assessment are appropriate, given the ages and developmental stages of children.

Further information on the Equal Status Act (2000) is available on the website of the Equality Authority at <http://www.equality.ie>.

## Education (Welfare) Act (2000)

Section 28 of the **Education (Welfare) Act (2000)** places a responsibility on the principal of a school to pass on information regarding the welfare of a child to other professionals involved in supporting his/her education. The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 (Section 28) (Prescribed Bodies) Regulations 2005 ensures that information can be shared in the following instances when the purpose of sharing the information is to monitor and further the child's learning:

- between schools when a child transfers (primary to primary and primary to post-primary)
- between a school and the National Council for Special Education when seeking the Council's assistance
- between a school and the National Education Welfare Board, the DES Inspectorate, the National Educational Psychological Service, and so on.

## Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)

Under the terms of the **Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)** schools are required to assess children who are judged not to be benefiting from the education programme provided by the school, in order to understand the reasons for this. If the assessment establishes that the child has special educational needs the principal is responsible for preparing *an education plan for the appropriate education* of the child. He/she prepares the plan in consultation with the child's parents and can consult with the local Special Educational Needs Organiser.

The Act outlines the content headings that the school should use in developing the education plan. These include

- the nature and degree of the child's
  - abilities, skills and talents
  - special educational needs and how those needs affect his/her educational development
- the present level of educational performance of the child
- the special educational needs of the child
- the special education and related support services to be provided to the child to enable the child
  - to benefit from education and to participate in the life of the school.
  - where appropriate, to make the transition effectively from pre-school education to primary school education or from primary school education to post-primary education.

The education plan should also include the goals which the child is to achieve over a period not exceeding twelve months.

## Freedom of Information Acts (1997, 2003)

In supporting children's learning and development schools store assessment information and personal data on each child in both formal school records and less formal records. Under the terms of the **Freedom of Information Act (1997)** and the **Freedom of Information (Amendment) Act (2003)** information held about an individual must be made available to that individual on request. In addition, the person has a right to have the information relating to himself/herself amended where it is found to be incomplete, incorrect or misleading. He/she also has a right to obtain reasons for decisions affecting himself/herself. Schools are not currently included under the terms of the Freedom of Information Acts (1997, 2003). Were this to change, these Acts would have implications for a school's assessment policy and practices, particularly in the case of recording and storing assessment information.

## Appendix D

### Roles of external organisations in supporting children's learning

In developing an assessment policy, schools should consider the roles of a number of organisations in supporting children's learning. These include

- the **National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)**
- the **National Council for Special Education (NCSE)**
- the **National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB)**.

#### National Educational Psychological Service

The **National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)** assists the school in providing *education to students which is appropriate to their abilities and needs ...* (Education Act (1998) p. 9). A close working relationship between the school and the relevant NEPS psychologist is therefore essential. Schools need to name their NEPS psychologist in their school policy and elaborate on assessment approaches and referral procedures outlined in the NEPS guideline documents. The referral process ought to be included in the assessment policy with copies of the forms, which NEPS supplies, filed with the policy. Reasons for referrals need to be specific and clear.

NEPS has developed a three-stage model in order to help schools accommodate children with special educational needs. (See Table 5.) This model should be included in the school policy so that all involved are aware of their responsibilities with regard to children.

**Table 5: Staged model of intervention**

Three Stages, One Process		
Stage 1 Whole Class Stage	Stage 2 School Support Stage	Stage 3 Consultation/ Assessment Stage
Parents	Parents	Parents
Teacher(s)	Teacher(s)	Teacher(s)
Child	Child	Child
Consultation with NEPS psychologist	Support Teacher(s) Consultation with NEPS psychologist	Direct involvement of NEPS psychologist  Other Professionals
Following consultation with the NEPS psychologist acute cases may be fast-tracked to Stage 3.		

Further information on the work of the NEPS is available on the website of the Department of Education and Science at <http://www.education.ie>.

#### National Council for Special Education

The **National Council for Special Education (NCSE)** liaises with schools to make sure that children with special educational needs have access to education and related support services, using a network of Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs).

SENOs work with schools and parents in supporting the education of children with special educational needs in the following ways. They

- process schools' applications for resource teacher support and decide on the level of support appropriate to the school
- process schools' applications and decide on the appropriate level of special needs assistant support for children with disabilities
- examine schools' applications for special equipment/assistive technology
- examine schools' applications for transport arrangements for children with disabilities and make recommendations to the Department of Education and Science
- identify the appropriate educational setting for individual children with special educational needs.

Further information on the work of the NCSE is available on the organisation's website at <http://www.ncse.ie>.

#### National Educational Welfare Board

The **National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB)** is the national agency with responsibility for encouraging and supporting regular school attendance. The Board was established to ensure that every child attends school regularly, or otherwise receives an education or participates in training. The Board works with schools to assist them in meeting their obligations under the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) through a network of Education Welfare Officers.

In carrying out their work, these officers may require access to assessment information held by the school on a particular child.

Further information on the work of the NEWB is available on the organisation's website at <http://www.newb.ie>.

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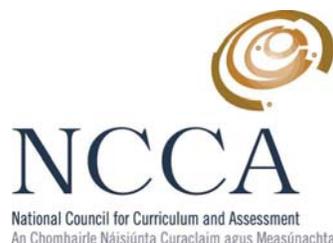
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NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CURRICULUM AND  
ASSESSMENT



# SUPPORTING ASSESSMENT IN SCHOOLS - 1

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ASSESSMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

**DRAFT**

APRIL 2005

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Primary School Curriculum (1999) describes assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning. This document, *Assessment in Primary Schools*, provides further information for teachers, principals and boards of management on the functions of assessment in the primary school and considerations in developing a school policy on assessment. The introduction presents the background to the development of this document. The two main sections to the document are summarised below:

Section 2 (Re-envisioning Assessment) describes two functions of assessment in primary schools: assessment *of* learning and assessment *for* learning.

Section 3 (Developing a school policy on assessment) provides recommendations on developing a school policy on assessment including managing assessment information

### **Section 2: Re-envisioning Assessment**

- The term *assessment* derives from the Latin word *assidere* which means *to sit beside*. It reminds us that there should be a positive rather than a negative association between assessment and the process of teaching and learning in schools.
- Classroom assessment may be defined as the process of gathering, recording, interpreting, using, and communicating information about a child's progress and achievement during his/her development of knowledge, concepts, skills, and attitudes.
- Assessment *for* learning generally focuses on using assessment information to provide feedback to the child and to plan learning experiences which meet the child's learning needs.
- Assessment *of* learning generally focuses on providing a record of the child's progress and attainment at the end of a given period of learning (at the end of a unit of work, at the end of a term, or at the end of a year).
- These two functions of assessment (assessment *for* learning and assessment *of* learning) are not mutually exclusive. Information gathered for both purposes enables the teacher to create a cumulative record of a child's progress and attainment.

### Section 3: Developing a school policy on assessment

- The school's assessment policy should specify how teachers will
  - gather information about children's progress for the purpose of assessment *for* learning and assessment *of* learning.
  - assess different dimensions of the child's learning and development including the cognitive, the creative, the affective, the physical and the social.
  - ensure that the school's assessment policy and practice promotes equality and prohibits discrimination against individual children.
  - use diagnostic assessment to identify children with learning difficulties at the earliest possible stage so that appropriate support and intervention can be put in place.
  - record significant observations of children in day-to-day learning activities and details of children's performance in tasks and tests.
  - report the results of the assessment of children to their parents at least twice a year, use one of these reports, to meet parents and discuss their children's progress and ensure that a formal record of an individual child's progress is available to the next teacher to whom the child will transfer.
  - manage assessment records including providing access to records, transferring records, and keeping records secure.

The NCCA will continue to support teacher professional practice in classroom assessment, by providing further practical advice for teachers on assessment in the Primary School Curriculum. The conclusion to this document outlines priorities for the NCCA in the ongoing developmental work on assessment in primary schools.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	i
SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION	1
SECTION 2: RE-ENVISIONING ASSESSMENT	3
SECTION 3 DEVELOPING A SCHOOL POLICY ON ASSESSMENT	11
SECTION 4 CONCLUSION	23



## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The Education Act (1998) gives the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) responsibility for advising the Minister for Education and Science on curriculum and assessment in primary schools. The publication of the Primary School Curriculum in 1999 marked a milestone for the NCCA's work in curriculum and assessment at primary level.

The Primary School Curriculum provides the educational rationale for assessment, and presents initial advice for teachers on assessment in the primary school. The curriculum describes assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning. It notes that assessment in the primary school should concern both the process and product of learning and should provide information on the child's cognitive, creative, affective, physical and social development. The curriculum outlines the purposes of assessment for each curriculum area and it recommends a variety of assessment methods and tools which teachers can use in each curriculum subject. These range from "*informal tools such as teacher observation, classwork, homework and discussion with pupils to more formal tools such as diagnostic tests and standardised tests*" and also include projects, portfolios and curriculum profiles.

This document provides further information for schools on developing and implementing a policy on assessment which meets their statutory obligations and which is informed by more recent research and development on assessment internationally. The Education Act (1998) provides the starting point for this document. It places a statutory obligation on principals and teachers to "*regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to the students and their parents.*" The implications of this requirement for teachers and schools include:

- developing assessment **procedures** which provide an accurate account of children's progress and attainment
- creating and maintaining individual **records** of children's progress and attainment while they are attending the school

- providing parents with assessment **reports** which contain accurate and clearly accessible information about their children’s progress and attainment.

The Education Act also places a responsibility on schools to “*ensure that the educational needs of all students, including those with a disability or other special educational needs, are identified and provided for.*” Specific responsibilities for schools include identifying and responding to pupils with learning difficulties by liaising with the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), where appropriate and co-ordinating the monitoring of pupils’ progress and attainment (by the class teacher, learning support teacher, resource teacher(s), and other professionals).

While the Education Act presents the educational imperative for assessment in primary schools, more recent legislation has enabled the NCCA to identify, in practical terms, the precise implications of these requirements for schools. Similarly, while the Primary School Curriculum provides the educational rationale for assessment, ongoing research and developments in assessment have provided the NCCA with an opportunity to re-envision assessment in the primary school and to translate this vision into practical support for teachers and principals. This document provides information on both the theoretical and practical implications of legislation and recent thinking on assessment for schools. It comprises two main sections as follows:

- Section 2: Re-envisioning assessment
- Section 3: Developing a school policy on assessment

Section 3 focuses on the statutory requirements placed on schools in storing and securing assessment information, providing access to assessment information and transferring assessment information.

**Note to Council:**

Shaded text refers to advice contained in the document *Standardised testing in compulsory schooling* which has not yet been approved by Council.

## SECTION 2: RE-ENVISIONING ASSESSMENT

### Defining assessment

The term *assessment* derives from the Latin word *assidere* which means *to sit beside*. That simple phrase tells us a lot about the essence of assessment in the context of the primary school classroom. Its tone is non-threatening and affirming, and it suggests a partnership between participants in the teaching/learning relationship based on mutual trust and understanding. It reminds us that there should be a positive rather than a negative association between assessment and the process of teaching and learning in schools.

In the broadest sense assessment is concerned with children's progress and achievement. Classroom assessment may be defined as "*the process of gathering, recording, interpreting, using, and communicating information about a child's progress and achievement during the development of knowledge, concepts, skills, and attitudes.*" Assessment, therefore, involves much more than testing. It is an ongoing process that encompasses many formal and informal activities designed to monitor and improve teaching and learning in all areas of the curriculum.

This section describes a re-envisioning of assessment that recognises two principal functions of assessment, *assessment for learning* and *assessment of learning*. These two functions emphasise the contribution that assessment can make to the day-to-day process of teaching and learning (*assessment for learning*), while giving due weight to its role in helping to create a cumulative record of children's progress and attainment (*assessment of learning*). This new categorisation does not replace the more traditional description of the functions of assessment (formative, diagnostic, summative and evaluative), rather, they are subsumed into the new categorisation. Similarly, the references to formal and informal methods of assessment in the Primary School Curriculum are now re-envisioned in the context of the purpose of that assessment.

This description of the functions of assessment is based on a view of learning that posits the child as an active agent in constructing his/her own learning through social

interaction with peers, the teacher, and the wider community. The role of the teacher in supporting learning is central to this view of learning, so too are the functions of assessment. Through a process of assessment *of* learning and assessment *for* learning, the teacher gathers information about the child's development and progress with learning and uses that information to scaffold the next steps in the learning process. This broader view of the role of assessment envisages assessment *for* learning and assessment *of* learning as two complementary and interrelated processes.

### **Assessment *for* learning**

Assessment *for* learning is an ongoing process of recognising and responding to the child's learning in order to enhance it. This involves engaging children in their own learning through questioning, and discussion and involving children in peer and self-assessment. The child's response to rich questions and his/her dialogue with the teacher and peers provide evidence of the child's learning which can be used to direct future learning. The quality of a child's response to a question can, for example, suggest further questions which lead the child to a greater understanding of an idea or concept. Central to the idea of the assessment *for* learning is the role of feedback in promoting children's awareness of and participation in their own learning. Feedback that is focused on the learning or task in hand, that indicates next steps and that points to achievement and challenges has been shown to be integral to children's classroom progress and confidence in learning.

Assessment *for* learning includes formative assessment, as well as diagnostic and evaluative assessment. Although the term evaluative assessment is usually associated with the evaluation of schools and of educational systems, the teacher can also use assessment information to evaluate the effectiveness with which he/she is enacting the curriculum and make changes in his/her planning and teaching. A brief description of how assessment methods and tools can be used for the purpose of assessment *for* learning, is provided below. The list of assessment methods and tools is by no means exhaustive, but further illustrates the practice of assessment *for* learning.

### **Teacher observation**

By engaging in classroom observation and listening to children, the teacher can gather evidence of successes and difficulties with learning which children experience. During this process of supporting the child's learning through assessment *for* learning, it may be useful for the teacher to record significant observations that can be referred to as an *aide memoire* when reviewing and discussing the child's progress or when planning future learning experiences.

### **Questioning and discussion**

The writing process provides a good example of how teachers can use questioning and discussion to support assessment *for* learning. For example, after discussion of the subject, audience, and purpose of a piece of writing, the child's initial draft becomes the basis for a further discussion between the child and the teacher. Through questioning, discussion and suggestion, the teacher helps the child to understand how his/her writing can be improved e.g., by conveying thoughts and feelings in a more expressive form or sequencing the writing in a clearer way. The child then redrafts his/her writing using what he/she has learned from the discussion. In this way the teacher assesses writing in an interactive way with the child, and the assessment is related directly to the next stage of learning.

### **Samples of children's work**

At the end of a longer period of learning, samples of children's work, portfolios, and projects can also be used to inform the teacher's observation of the child, and the different tasks, tests and activities the child has completed.

### **Self-assessment**

A crucial element of assessment *for* learning is the extent to which the child is actively involved in the assessment process. It is important that the child understands the purpose of his/her learning and assessment. The use of good questioning and quality feedback is vital to enabling the child to develop effective strategies for self-assessment. If this practice is incorporated as a consistent feature of assessment throughout the primary school, children should become reasonably good self-assessors by the time they reach sixth class.

### **Standardised tests**

Standardised tests are most often associated with the summative aspect of assessment, or assessment *of* learning. However, the value of standardised tests lies not just in their potential to quantify a child's performance. They also provide information on the child's performance on individual test items. An item by item analysis of a child's performance on a standardised test can sometimes enable the teacher to identify areas of particular difficulty.

### **Diagnostic tests**

In general, diagnostic tests in reading or mathematics are more appropriate (than standardised tests) for identifying learning difficulties and designing appropriate interventions for children. Like standardised tests, diagnostic tests can confirm conclusions drawn on the basis of the teacher's own informal assessments.

Finally, parents have an important contribution to make to assessment *for* learning. Their knowledge of their own children's personalities, strengths, learning styles, home experience, and any difficulties they may be experiencing will help to inform the teacher's own assessments. This will guide the teacher in developing a more robust picture of each child's learning needs and in constructing learning experiences that best promote the child's development.

### **Assessment *of* learning**

Assessment *for* learning and assessment *of* learning differ in the purposes for which assessment is used. The teacher's purpose in assessment *for* learning is to use assessment information to provide feedback to the child and to plan learning experiences which meet the child's learning needs. In contrast, assessment *of* learning provides a record of the child's progress and attainment, whether at class or school level, at the end of a given period of learning (at the end of a unit of work, at the end of a term, or at the end of a year). Examples of activities for the purpose of assessment *of* learning include:

- reviewing a child's written work for a term, making an overall judgement according to agreed and specified criteria, and assigning a grade
- administering a group-administered standardised test of reading, and generating a standard score and percentile rank for each pupil
- reviewing a child's portfolio of work for a year, making an overall judgement, and after discussion with the child, assigning a grade.

These and other activities which the teacher engages in for the purpose of assessment *of learning*, form the basis for reporting on children's progress and attainment throughout their primary education. The use of standardised tests and diagnostic tests for the purpose of assessment *of learning* are briefly outlined below. This discussion on assessment *of learning* concludes with a focus on recording and reporting assessment information, and transition from the primary to the post-primary school.

### **Standardised tests**

Although summative records of achievement such as standardised test scores or overall grades for a term or a year may be of some value in the context of assessment *for learning*, their primary value is in assessment *of learning*. As part of the process of assessment *of learning* a great majority of Irish primary schools use standardised tests to ascertain children's attainment in literacy and numeracy. The NCCA has advised the Minister for Education that, building on current practice, all pupils in primary schools should be tested in literacy and numeracy at the end of first/beginning of second class and at the end of fourth/beginning of fifth class. Within these timeframes, schools may choose the most appropriate point for the administration of the first test taking into account the circumstances of the school and the age of the pupils.

### **Diagnostic tests**

In addition to this requirement, learning-support teachers will continue to use a variety of diagnostic tests to provide them with the particular information needed about pupils. Similarly, if a teacher believes that a child's test score is at odds with the

results of other assessments or does not seem to reflect the child's achievement the teacher should feel free to administer another test.

### **Recording and reporting assessment information**

Under the Education Act (1998), parents have a right to be informed of their child's progress. The legislative basis for recording and reporting assessment information is described in more detail in the next section which identifies the range of people to whom the school must provide access to assessment information including parents, teachers in other schools, and other professionals associated with the education of the child. It is important, therefore, that assessment information is readily communicable to such a varied audience.

In order to support teachers and schools in this regard the NCCA will develop a common template for recording assessment information and reporting such information to parents. The NCCA is also developing guidelines for parents to support their involvement in their children's learning which will include understanding assessment data from schools.

### **Transition from primary school to post-primary school**

The transition from the primary to the post-primary school can present particular challenges for the child, the teacher, and the school. To facilitate upward continuity and progression in the child's learning experiences, it is important that a reliable and informative record of the child's progress and attainments in the primary school is available to the post-primary school to which he/she transfers.

Research conducted by the ESRI for the NCCA showed that twenty-six different tests are currently administered by post-primary schools to provide them with information about pupils leaving primary schools. These tests are drawn from a variety of sources and provide schools with a range of information, depending on the test chosen. The research pointed to poor transfer of information between the two sectors, evidenced by the need so many schools felt to administer their own tests, and made clear that there was a lack of continuity and progression for students.

As part of its remit to advise on the transition between primary and post-primary schools, the NCCA will initiate a number of pilot projects to build on and consolidate good practice in transfer. The outcome of these projects will enable the NCCA to provide advice to the Minister on developing a national policy on transfer from primary to post-primary schools.

## **ICT and assessment**

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has the potential to play an integral role in both assessment *of* and *for* learning. ICT can be used as an assessment tool including the use of electronic portfolios and also as an administration and management tool for recording, storing, analysing and presenting findings from a variety of assessment methods

A number of ICT software programmes are available which provide instantaneous test-feedback and progress report information to teachers and children. Diagnostic testing software can be used to record the child's cognitive skills, including short term memory, phonological awareness, decoding skills, reading comprehension rate and fluency. The software records each child's responses and generates a graphical profile of his or her cognitive abilities using standardised norms. Teachers and children can use this test-generated information to identify gaps in their learning and to plan appropriate learning activities.

Electronic portfolios of children's work provide the teacher with a further means of monitoring children's progress and attainment. Individual children should have some autonomy in deciding what is to be included in their portfolios. This will both stimulate their interest in using ICT for learning and foster their ability to assess their own work. The earlier discussion in relation to traditional types of portfolios, work samples and projects are equally relevant to electronic portfolios.

ICT also provides teachers and schools with an effective means of recording and storing the results of assessments. Assessment records can be stored in a manageable and easily accessible form, and databases and spreadsheets can be used to analyse and

extrapolate information on the progress and attainment of individuals, groups and classes in the different curriculum areas. There are legal implications relating to the nature of such records, rights of access to them, and their transfer to another individual or body, the length of time they should be retained, and the security of records. These issues are addressed in the next section of *Assessment in Primary Schools*.

## SECTION 3: DEVELOPING A SCHOOL POLICY ON ASSESSMENT

Assessment should be included as part of the School Plan to guide assessment planning and practice in classrooms and schools. A useful assessment policy should provide information on

- assessment *for* learning
- assessment *of* learning
- dimensions of the child's learning and development to be assessed
- assessment of children throughout their primary school education
- diagnostic assessment and the early identification of learning difficulties
- recording assessment information
- reporting assessment information
- managing assessment records

### **Assessment *for* learning**

The school's assessment policy should specify how the school will gather information about children's progress for the purpose of assessment *for* learning. In preparing the policy schools should consider how best to

- **ensure that information from a broad range of assessment methods and tools is used** to plan for and support the child's learning experience in all areas of the curriculum
- **match assessment methods and tools to curriculum objectives** in order to maximise learning
- **identify practical methods for recording assessment information including** teacher observation, teacher-designed tests and tasks, standardised tests, diagnostic tests, and so forth.

- **use information derived from a range of assessments**, including standardised tests, to construct relevant learning experiences for individual children
- **provide opportunities for parents to share relevant information about their children** and incorporate this information in the process of planning for the child's learning
- **specify the kinds of opportunities they will provide for children to discuss the assessment information** as a means of motivating them to learn, and provide children with opportunities to develop self assessment skills using, for example, portfolios and learning logs
- **use the results of assessment in planning the acquisition and deployment of educational materials and resources**, taking account of the full range of children's abilities.

### **Assessment *of* learning**

Similarly, the school's assessment policy should specify how the school will gather information about children's progress for the purpose of assessment *of* learning. In preparing the policy schools should consider how best to

- **ensure that assessment takes account of the full range of learning appropriate to the child**, identifying gaps, if there are any, in the child's learning
- **use methods and tools that are particularly appropriate to assessment *of* learning**, when compiling a cumulative record of each child's progress, attainment and development

- **compile a record of children’s progress and attainment at least twice a year**, for the purpose of reporting to parents
- **be aware of the individual circumstances and requirements of children with special needs or learning difficulties**, in the assessment *of* learning and in the interpretation of the results of assessment
- **inform parents of the school’s policy on assessment**, in order to involve them as fully as possible in their children’s education
- **combine information acquired about children through assessment for learning with information acquired through assessment of learning**, taking account of all facets of the child’s progress and attainment
- **give due importance to every curriculum area in the assessment of learning.**

### **Dimensions of the child’s learning and development to be assessed**

Just as the Primary School Curriculum takes the broadest view of what is entailed in the education of the child “*the cognitive, the creative, the affective, the physical and the social*” (Introduction, 1999, p.18), the school’s assessment policy should address not only each area of the curriculum but also the different dimensions of the child’s development. In preparing the school plan, schools should consider how best to address

- **Assessment of the cognitive dimension** will take account of the child’s acquisition of knowledge, concepts and skills. It will also take account of the development of the child’s literacy and numeracy skills, and his/her mastery of higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills.
- **Assessment of the creative dimension** will take account of the development of the child’s capacity for creative expression and response. Just as creative

thinking requires going beyond accepted knowledge in order to generate new knowledge and understandings, assessment of the child's creative development will focus on the child's ability to develop insights, and interpretations in responding to his/her environment.

- **Assessment of the affective dimension** is concerned with developing the child's sense capacity for expressing ideas and emotions in artistic form. It will encompass the emotional reactions of the child to artistic expression and to human relationships. It will also take account of the moral and spiritual development of the child.
- **Assessment of the physical dimension** will take account of the child's development of fine and gross motor skills and the gradual development of his/her bodily control and co-ordination. Assessment of the child's development of psychomotor skills will not be limited to Physical Education but will be relevant to all learning experiences that involve the child in physical interaction with objects encountered in his/her learning environment.
- **Assessment of the social dimension** will take account of the child's interpersonal and intrapersonal development, including the behaviour, attitudes and social values he/she develops throughout his/her engagement with the Primary School Curriculum.

### **Assessment of children throughout their primary school education**

The child's perspective on the world and on his/her experience of learning is more holistic in the early years when the separation of different curriculum subjects or areas in learning is largely irrelevant to the child. Later, children become more conscious of the nature of their experiences with different curriculum subjects. A school policy on assessment should reflect this growth and change and provide the basis for teachers to

- **take account of the developmental variability displayed by individual children,** while being aware of the accepted milestones in children's development
- **take account of the contextual basis of a young child's learning,** and the degree to which school experience differs from home and pre-school experience
- **allow time in each classroom day for observation of children and for listening to children in addition to the normal use of observation in the learning process,** in order to construct as full a picture as possible of each child's progress and development
- **make judgements over a period of time,** and avoid snapshot judgements
- **use assessments which are appropriate to the child's age and stage of development,** at all stages *in* his/her career in primary school
- **fulfil the minimum requirement of administering standardised tests in literacy and numeracy,** at the end of first/beginning of second class and at the beginning/end of fifth class
- **ensure vigilance in identifying learning difficulties in particular children,** noting whether these relate to individual learning styles, and use assessment information in providing appropriate intervention and support
- **maintain close and consistent contact with parents,** in order to share information about children and to explore the interpretation of children's attitudes, actions and learning styles.

The school's assessment policy must also promote equality and prohibit discrimination against individual children, on the grounds of religion, age, disability or race (Equal Status Act 2000). The process of developing an assessment policy

provides schools with an opportunity to explicate the relationship between the school's context, culture and language and their assessment practices. For example, in the course of developing the school policy, principals and teachers need to identify and address any particular issues associated with the assessment of children special educational needs, or children whose first language is not English, and provide appropriate alternatives. In general, standardised tests will not serve the assessment needs of children for whom English is an additional language, or many children with special educational needs.

### **Diagnostic assessment and the early identification of learning difficulties**

It is important that assessment is used to identify children with learning difficulties at the earliest possible stage so that appropriate support and intervention can be put in place. The school's assessment policy should address the role of diagnostic assessment in this process. It is not necessary to administer formal diagnostic tests to all children. A summary of the approach to the early identification of learning difficulties recommended in the Learning-Support Guidelines issued by the DES is provided below.

- **The class teacher should understand the nature and function of diagnostic assessment**, and be familiar with a range of formal and informal diagnostic tests.
- **All class teachers should be familiar with the Learning-Support Guidelines issued by the DES.**
- **The class teacher should routinely monitor children whom he/she perceives as experiencing learning difficulties**, using monitoring activities such as running records of oral reading, identifying conceptual and computational difficulties in mathematics, and analysing individual children's learning styles.

- **The class teacher should select those children for whom further, more formal, diagnostic assessment is appropriate**, on the basis of his or her own assessments and the results of screening tests, and in conjunction with parents.
- **The learning-support teacher, in conjunction with the class teacher, should perform a formal diagnostic assessment, interpret the results of that assessment, and determine the most appropriate form of learning support for each child.**
- **Diagnostic assessment, where relevant, should lead to the development of an Individual Profile and Learning Programme for the child**, constructed by the learning-support teacher in consultation with the class teacher.
- **The learning-support teacher, in conjunction with the class teacher, resource teachers, other relevant members of staff, and parents should conduct a review of each child's progress at the end of an instructional term**, comprising
  - an assessment of the child's progress
  - an evaluation of the learning programme that has been implemented
  - a consideration of the level of learning support the child may require in the future
  - a review of learning targets.
- **The learning-support teacher and the class teacher should decide, on the basis of their assessment of an individual child, whether the NEPS psychologist for the school should be consulted by teachers and parents, as described in NEPS Model of Service document**, to consider further possible approaches and interventions including the option of psychoeducational assessment, or whether another relevant professional should be involved.

## Recording assessment results

Assessment information should be recorded in different ways as appropriate to the child's particular learning experience and the different assessment tools available. The school's assessment policy should explain how teachers will record significant observations of children in day-to-day learning activities and details of children's performance in tasks and tests. For the purposes of assessment *of* learning the record of a child's assessment outcomes needs to be more formal. As a general guide in developing a policy in relation to recording assessment outcomes

- **the school should develop a report card for recording assessment information and reporting such information to parents, based on the national report card template** developed by the NCCA.
- **the class teacher should keep a record of each child's progress and attainment, which should be updated at least twice a year**, preferably at the end of the first term or early in the second term and at the end of the school year, and used as the basis for reporting to parents and others
- **the results of assessment should be recorded in different forms**, including marks, grades, checklists, profiles, and narrative comment
- **the results of standardised tests should include a standard score and percentile rank for each child** (additionally, raw scores, reading ages, sten scores, etc. may be used)
- **the teacher should involve the children in the assessment of portfolios, work samples, and projects**, in a manner appropriate to the age of the child
- **there should be a close correspondence in the ways in which the results of assessment are recorded from class to class in each curriculum area**, both within schools and, where possible, among schools, in order to ensure consistency

- **a summary record of each child's progress should be held by the principal as part of the school records**, based on assessment information compiled by class teachers, learning-support teachers and resource teachers
- **the central record of each child's progress, attainment, and development should be updated annually**, and take account of the child's strengths and needs, the progress he/she has made, and areas of development that need particular attention
- **in recording the results of assessments the teacher should be mindful of the needs of those to whom the results will be reported**, and the results of the assessment of children should be recorded in such a way as to facilitate the provision of the most relevant and useful information about children's progress and development to other professionals concerned with the child's education.

### **Reporting assessments results**

Assessment information is central to a variety of individuals and bodies who will be involved in furthering the child's progress and development both in primary school and later. These include children themselves, parents, other teachers, other schools, and other professionals concerned with the children's education. In this context, the school's assessment policy should explain how/when schools will:

- **report the results of the assessment of children to their parents at least twice a year**, preferably towards the end of the first term or early in the second term, and at the end of the school year
- **use one of these reports, ideally the earlier report, to meet parents**, and discuss their children's progress and development, and the setting of future learning goals

- ensure that a formal record of each class teacher's assessment of individual children is available to the next teacher to whom the children transfer
- ensure that a full and accurate summary of the progress and development of each child is available to another school, primary or post-primary, to which a child is transferring, whether inside or outside the State.

### **Managing assessment information**

Recent legislation has a number of implications for how assessment is planned and managed in schools. Of particular significance are the Education Act 1998, the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003<sup>1</sup> and the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. (The Freedom of Information Act 1997 does not currently apply to schools.) The school's assessment policy should be informed by the relevant legislation concerning:

- **Nature of assessment records:** Any assessment information or personal data recorded by the school, including both formal school records and less formal records, whether in automated or manual form, comes under the terms of the Data Protection Act 2003. As already noted, ongoing reporting to parents should ensure that schools regularly share assessment information with parents.
- **Access to assessment information:** Under the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 parents have a right to all assessment information about their children in intelligible form and they have the right to know the source of the assessment information, for example the class teacher or learning-support teacher. The following designated persons are also entitled to direct access to individual, group or class assessment information:

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<sup>1</sup> The Data Protection Commissioner has published a booklet entitled *Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003, A Guide for Data Controllers*. It includes a self-help checklist, which is designed to assist organisations and individuals in examining the issues involved in data protection. This booklet is a valuable guide to principals and schools in formulating a policy in relation to the compilation, retention, and use of assessment information concerning children under their care. It is available on the Data Protection Commissioner Website at: <http://www.dataprivacy.ie/images/A%20Guide%20for%20DC's.pdf>

- the child's class teacher
  - the class teacher, within the same school, to whom the child is transferring
  - the principal
  - relevant learning-support and resource teachers, and other relevant professionals, including Special Educational Needs Officers (SENOs)
  - the DES inspector
  - the relevant NEPS psychologist
  - the Education Welfare Board and its officers
- **Transfer of assessment information:** The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 places a responsibility on the principal of a school to pass on to the principal of another school to which a child is transferring, details of the child's attendance record and, where the principal considers it appropriate, information relating to the child's progress and attainment. The 2000 Act also provides that assessment information for individual children is also available to officers of the Education Welfare Board.
  - **Length of time assessment information should be retained by the school:** The period of time for which a school should maintain records is ultimately one which each school must decide for itself. However, for litigation arising from alleged failure to educate, a period of three years after the child's eighteenth birthday will apply. For primary schools, there are arguments for keeping assessment records for at least seventeen years, i.e. from the earliest date at which a child may be enrolled in a primary school until his/her twenty-first birthday. The Data Protection Acts require personal data to be destroyed when the need for such data ceases, i.e., until the possibility of litigation ceases.
  - **Security of assessment records:** The Data Protection Acts are very specific in relation to the security of data. This is the responsibility of the *data controller*, who in the case of the school includes the Principal and any other members of

staff responsible for compiling and recording data about individual children. A data controller has certain key responsibilities, which are summarised in terms of eight fundamental rules. These are to

1. obtain and process information fairly
2. keep it only for one or more specified, explicit and lawful purposes
3. use and disclose it only in ways compatible with these purposes
4. keep it safe and secure
5. keep it accurate, complete and up-to-date
6. ensure that it is adequate, relevant and not excessive
7. retain it for no longer than is necessary for the purpose or purposes
8. give a copy of his/her personal data to that individual on request.

Of the key responsibilities listed, number 4 is concerned, in the case of schools, with ensuring that assessment and personal data on pupils, whether manually or electronically recorded, are retained in a secure environment and are protected from any inappropriate or unlawful access.

## SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

The statements on assessment in the Primary School Curriculum outline an approach to assessment for the different subjects that is general in nature. At the time the curriculum was published it was intended that these statements would be developed in greater detail in order to provide teachers and schools with appropriate support in assessing children for the purposes of both assessment *for* learning and assessment *of* learning. *Assessment in Primary Schools* constitutes an essential step in this development. It proposes a re-envisioning of assessment in terms of assessment *for* learning and assessment *of* learning and it makes specific recommendations that will support the development of a school policy on assessment.

There is firm tradition in Irish primary schools of assessing children and of reporting the results of assessment to parents. Building on current practice, and in the context of this document, the NCCA will continue to develop a range of supports that will help teachers and schools to bring greater coherence and consistency to the assessment of children. These include the development of practical guidelines on assessment including exemplars of children's work and the construction of a template for recording and reporting assessment information. [Details provided in the document *Standardised Testing in Compulsory Schooling*, to be approved by Council].

Through these initiatives, the NCCA will provide practical advice and information to support teachers in achieving a closer alignment of assessment in the process of teaching and learning, in developing a clearer picture of children's progress and attainment, and in generating effective methods of recording and reporting the results of assessment.



# The Primary Curriculum in Schools

Insights from  
the Curriculum Implementation Evaluation  
and the Primary Curriculum Review

English

Visual Arts

Mathematics



## Introduction

During the 2003/2004 school year, a year of curriculum review and consolidation, two different studies gathered information about how the Primary School Curriculum (1999) was shaping the classroom experiences of teachers and children. The **National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)** undertook a review of the curriculum, while the **Department of Education and Science (DES)** initiated an evaluation of curriculum implementation. Both studies focused on the curriculum for English, visual arts and mathematics. The NCCA Primary Curriculum Review gathered information from multiple perspectives through a questionnaire of 719 teachers and a case study of six schools (involving children, teachers, parents and principals). The DES Curriculum Implementation Evaluation is based on the evaluation of teaching and learning by the Inspectorate and information gathered from

teachers and principals in 86 schools in conjunction with the annual cycle of school inspection. Findings from both studies are synthesised in this leaflet and presented under the following five headings:

- Curriculum planning
- Methods of teaching and learning
- Involvement of parents
- Literacy
- Assessment

A preview of the NCCAs next steps in responding to the findings from the Curriculum Implementation Evaluation and the Primary Curriculum Review is provided at the end of this document.

The NCCA report is available online at: [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie) and the DES report is available at: [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

September 2005

## Curriculum Planning

The **DES study** notes that the effectiveness of whole-school plans varied across schools. Thus, almost three-quarters of schools had effective plans for the visual arts, but less than half of schools had effective plans in place for mathematics or English. Findings from the DES study show that the most effective plans result from a **collaborative and consultative planning process**, with members of the school management team sharing responsibilities for coordinating whole-school planning. These plans result in a close alignment between the approaches and content objectives outlined in the curriculum statements, whole-school plans and classroom planning. The DES study notes that some schools have devised planning documents because they are obligatory rather than in response to the need to contextualise the curriculum for the school's requirements. Such plans were reported as general in focus

and had little impact on classroom practice.

Teachers in both studies responded well to the structure of the curriculum in visual arts and mathematics. Teachers in the **NCCA review** explained, *the way it [Visual Arts Curriculum] is broken down, you know exactly where you are going; you can pick an area and go for it*. Similarly, teachers responded positively to the Mathematics Curriculum explaining, *it's well laid out ... you look at those strands and you can plan very easily throughout the year*. These findings contrast with the difficulty teachers reported using the four strands to plan for the English Curriculum. As one teacher in the NCCA study noted, *we hope we're going to be achieving the strands by doing the strand units*.

## Methods of Teaching and Learning

Findings from both studies show that to varying degrees, teachers have reported/demonstrated using the following teaching methods presented in the Primary School Curriculum.

- 1. Active learning:** The DES study notes that in two-thirds of classrooms, pupils were active learners in mathematics. In the NCCA study, practical work was identified by 58% of teachers as their greatest success with the curriculum in mathematics. One teacher in the NCCA study explained, *the greater emphasis on the use of a wide variety of concrete materials means the children have a greater understanding of maths concepts.*
- 2. Environment-based learning:** Both studies provide evidence of teachers and children using real-life (authentic) contexts for teaching and learning. Teachers in the

NCCA study reported that when they used manipulatives and everyday scenarios in mathematics, learning became more interesting and enjoyable for children. Similarly, teachers in both studies reported/demonstrated success using newspapers, magazines, and the novel to engage children in English. Teachers and children also reported successes with project-based learning across subjects. In contrast, the DES study notes that in classrooms where textbooks exerted a dominant influence on teaching and learning, teaching tended to be didactic and children were not sufficiently interested or engaged in their own learning.

- 3. Collaborative learning:** Half of the teachers in the NCCA study reported using pairwork and/or groupwork on a weekly basis. Children who were interviewed by the NCCA said groupwork was one of the things they liked most about school, *I like*

*working with other people better than working on my own because if you put two minds together you get more clever stuff.*

- 4. Differentiated learning:** Findings from the DES study show that a majority of teachers planned and provided for individual differences in pupils' ability, attainment and learning styles in English and in mathematics. In the NCCA review 48% of teachers reported that catering for children's different levels of achievement presented the greatest challenge in working with the curriculum in mathematics. To meet this challenge, teachers reported varying the structure and content of their lessons and modifying questions for individual children.
- 5. Higher-order thinking and problem-solving:** Both studies show that in general, children experienced limited opportunities in classrooms to develop their skills in

higher-order thinking and problem-solving. The DES study notes the importance of providing opportunities for children to practise the skills for examining and deconstructing problem situations.

## Literacy

The development of the child's language is a key principle of learning in the curriculum. The NCCA review shows that **oral language** was the strand unit which teachers reported finding most useful in their teaching, followed by reading, then writing. The Inspectorate evaluation notes that while a majority of teachers were successful in teaching oral language, in a significant number of classrooms the content objectives for language development were not emphasised sufficiently, and oral language was taught incidentally rather than explicitly.

Findings from the DES indicate that the teaching of **reading** was effective in three-

quarters of classrooms inspected. Positive findings from both studies include an emphasis on the emergent reader and the use of a variety of texts such as novels, fact books, newspapers, film reviews, and catalogues. Difficulties reported by the Inspectorate in some classrooms included mechanical reading of texts and lack of variety in the reading material provided to children.

The DES study notes that in many instances teachers placed insufficient emphasis on the writing process, were dependent on workbook activities, and underutilised Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the writing process. As one teacher commented in the NCCA study, *it was a challenge to accept the value of writing as the process rather than the final product.*

### **Involvement of Parents**

Findings from both studies show that the involvement of parents in their children's

learning in primary schools varied greatly. The DES study notes that in three-quarters of the classrooms inspected, parents were encouraged to support their children's learning in English (for example, in shared reading initiatives) which contrasted with occasional involvement in children's learning in mathematics and the visual arts. Both studies provide few examples of schools communicating with parents about the curriculum (for example, through information evenings). The DES study notes that strategies to involve parents in their children's learning were only occasionally included in **school planning documents** and that parental involvement in policy formulation or in contributing to and organising learning resources for the school was limited. In interviews with parents, the NCCA found that parents wanted to have much **more information about their child's curriculum**, and the methods of teaching and assessment

which teachers use and which parents themselves might use to support their child's learning. As one parent commented, *education is everything in this day and age and I know I want to help mine [my children] as much as I can. But I need to know how to do this. I need to know what the curriculum is about, the methods etc.*

## Assessment

Findings from the Inspectorate evaluation show that most schools have not yet developed **whole-school plans for assessment**. The effectiveness of available plans was reported by the Inspectorate as weak or requiring significant development. Four areas for improvement were identified:

- preparing a school assessment policy
- broadening the range of assessment methods and tools used

- developing school procedures for recording pupils' progress
- using the results of assessment to inform teaching and learning.

In the NCCA study, when teachers were asked to identify their methods of assessment, they reported using **teacher observation** most frequently, followed by teacher-designed tests and tasks, followed by work samples, portfolios and projects. Teachers reported that teacher observation was an intuitive act, but they were unsure what they were to observe, or how they were to record or report their observations. They asked for more detailed **advice and support** on how to conduct assessments including teacher observations (what information to gather, how much, for how long, and for what purpose). In the words of one teacher, *what am I assessing? ...my idea of their ability?...their end product? ...both?...how do I assess a piece of work?*

## Next Steps

In response to findings from teachers concerning the difficulty of using the strands of the **English Curriculum**, the NCCA has drafted additional support materials for teachers which use the current strand units (oral language, reading and writing) to present the English Curriculum. This support material will support teachers in planning for English using either the strands or strand units. The additional support material will be presented in a user-friendly format and sent to all teachers in the coming weeks.

To complement the booklet, *Your Child's Learning* (2001), the NCCA is developing a **DVD for all parents** of primary school children. The DVD will present different examples of how parents can support their children's learning. It will reflect the diversity of Irish life and will be translated into a number of languages.

In response to teachers' requests for **further assessment advice**, the NCCA will provide practical and helpful information for teachers

on how to gather, record, interpret, use and communicate information about children's progress with the Primary School Curriculum. As part of this work, the NCCA will examine how examples of children's work can be used to guide teachers' classroom assessments. Our website, [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie), will provide access to this additional support material. The NCCA will also develop a national report card template for primary schools, and establish pilot projects to build on and consolidate good practice in transfer from primary to post-primary school.

Finally, given the extent of the findings regarding **methods of teaching** with the Primary School Curriculum, the NCCA will work with the support services to develop targeted supports for teachers. This will include, for example, advice on differentiating learning for children with specific learning needs and planning and managing teaching and learning in multi-class settings.



Primary School  
Curriculum

Curaclam na  
Bunscoile

# English

Additional  
support  
material

# English Curriculum: Additional support material

## Introduction

Whole school and classroom planning in any curriculum subject is a challenge. Planning for English can be particularly demanding. This is because planning in English has implications for teaching and learning in all curriculum subjects. English lends itself naturally to integration across the curriculum, whether this is in the development of children's mathematical language, or children's reading and writing skills in project work in any subject.

As a curriculum only really comes to life in the hands of teachers in classrooms, gathering information about teachers' experiences of the English Curriculum was a key focus of the first phase of the NCCA Primary Curriculum Review. The review examined teachers', principals', parents' and children's experiences of three curriculum subjects: English, visual arts and mathematics. The final report on the first phase of review was published in May 2005 and is available on the NCCA website at: [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie).

Both the curriculum review by the NCCA, and the curriculum implementation evaluation (of the same three subjects) by the Department of Education and Science (DES), present findings on teachers' many successes with the English Curriculum to date. Some of these reported successes included teachers' use of emergent reading methodologies and a variety of reading genres, and gains in children's oral language development.

One of the constant and most compelling findings arising from teacher feedback during the review was the challenge of planning for the English Curriculum. While some teachers reported that they were planning effectively through the four strands (receptiveness to language, competence and confidence in using language, developing cognitive abilities through language and emotional and imaginative development through language) and three strand units (oral language, reading and writing), many teachers reported that they found the four strands difficult to use. Instead many teachers reported that they planned for English primarily through the strand units.

The NCCA has developed this English Curriculum: Additional support material in response to teachers' reported difficulties with the structure of the English Curriculum. It re-presents the content of the English Curriculum by replacing the strands with the strand units.

In replacing the current strands with the strand units, only the structure of the English Curriculum has changed. The content of the English Curriculum remains the same, as does the alignment of the content according to four levels – infant classes, first and second classes, third and fourth classes and fifth and sixth classes. The method of organising content in this additional support material is still the strand but the strands have changed from four to three.

The **strands** are:     *Oral language*  
                              *Reading*  
                              *Writing*

The former strands now fulfil the role of **strand units** and are briefly described below:

*Receptiveness to language* is concerned with the child's willingness and ability to listen, to be aware of the nuances of language and to understand what he/she hears and reads.

*Confidence and competence in using language* is concerned with the child's ability to use and experience language with confidence and success as a speaker, as a writer and as a reader.

*Developing cognitive abilities through language* is concerned with the child's use of language to learn. It encapsulates the curriculum principle that the child not only learns language but also learns through using and experiencing language.

*Emotional and imaginative development through language* is concerned with the child's emotional and imaginative response to the world he/she encounters through talk, writing, play and drama. Reading and listening also help the child to come to a better understanding of him/herself and his/her relationships with others.

In this additional support material the content objectives of the English Curriculum have been reorganised and aligned under the three strands listed above. The four strand units provide the cross-cutting themes for teachers in planning and teaching English. The content of the English Curriculum is presented according to this alternative structure on the following pages for all four class levels.

## OVERVIEW

# Infant classes

STRANDS	Oral Language	Reading	Writing
STRAND UNIT	Receptiveness to language		
	developing receptiveness to oral language	developing concepts of language and print	creating and fostering the impulse to write
STRAND UNIT	Competence and confidence in using language		
	developing competence and confidence in using oral language	developing reading skills and strategies	developing competence, confidence and the ability to write independently
STRAND UNIT	Developing cognitive abilities through language		
	developing cognitive abilities through oral language	developing interests, attitudes and the ability to think through reading	clarifying thought through writing
STRAND UNIT	Emotional and imaginative development through language		
	developing emotional and imaginative life through oral language	responding to text	developing emotional and imaginative life through writing

# Oral Language

## STRAND UNITS

### RECEPTIVENESS TO LANGUAGE

#### »»» developing receptiveness to oral language

##### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- experience, recognise and observe simple commands  
*look, listen, watch*
- listen to a story or description and respond to it
- hear, repeat and elaborate words, phrases and sentences modelled by the teacher
- use and interpret tone of voice expressing various emotions
- learn to adopt appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviour to secure and maintain the attention of a partner  
*establishing eye contact  
using appropriate head movements, gestures and facial expressions  
ensuring audibility and clarity*
- mime and interpret gesture, movement and attitude conveying various emotions.

### COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE IN USING LANGUAGE

#### »»» developing competence and confidence in using oral language

##### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- talk about past and present experiences, and plan, predict and speculate about future and imaginary experiences
- choose appropriate words to name and describe things and events
- experiment with descriptive words to add elaborative detail
- combine simple sentences through the use of connecting words
- initiate and sustain a conversation on a particular topic
- use language to perform common social functions  
*introducing oneself and others  
greeting others and saying goodbye  
giving and receiving messages  
expressing concern and appreciation.*

### DEVELOPING COGNITIVE ABILITIES THROUGH LANGUAGE

#### »»» developing cognitive abilities through oral language

##### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- provide further information in response to the teacher's prompting
- listen to a story or a narrative and ask questions about it
- focus on descriptive detail and begin to be explicit in relation to people, places, times, processes, events, colour, shape, size, position
- discuss different possible solutions to simple problems
- ask questions in order to satisfy curiosity about the world
- show understanding of text.

### EMOTIONAL AND IMAGINATIVE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LANGUAGE

#### »»» developing emotional and imaginative life through oral language

##### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- reflect on and talk about a wide range of everyday experience and feelings
- create and tell stories
- listen to, learn and retell a rich variety of stories, rhymes and songs
- respond through discussion, mime and role-playing to stories, rhymes and songs heard and learnt
- use language to create and sustain imaginary situations in play
- listen to, learn and recite rhymes, including nonsense rhymes
- listen to, learn and ask riddles
- create real and imaginary sound worlds
- recognise and re-create sounds in the immediate environment
- experiment with different voices in role-playing  
*a favourite story, a cartoon character.*

# Reading

## STRAND UNITS

### RECEPTIVENESS TO LANGUAGE »»» developing concepts of language and print

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- listen to, enjoy and respond to stories, nursery rhymes, poems and songs
- become an active listener through the development of a range of listening activities based on stories read or told  
*telling and retelling a story in sequence  
recalling and relating a simple story or event,  
asking questions, role-playing*
- play with language to develop an awareness of sounds  
*language games, phoneme and morpheme sound relationships, nursery rhymes, chants  
singing games, action songs and poems  
a wide variety of rhythms  
attempts at writing words appropriate to a particular need such as the child's own name*
- develop a sense of rhythm and rhyme  
*song, nursery rhymes, jingles, clapping and dancing to syllabic rhythms*
- become familiar with a wide range of environmental print, beginning with print in the classroom
- learn about the basic terminology and conventions of books  
*author and title, left-to-right orientation,  
top-to-bottom orientation,  
front-to-back orientation*
- read texts created by himself/herself and by other children in collaboration with the teacher
- learn to recognise and name the letters of the alphabet
- develop an awareness of some letter-sound relationships.

### COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE IN USING LANGUAGE »»» developing reading skills and strategies

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- experience the reading process being modelled
- handle books and browse through them
- encounter early reading through collaborative reading of large-format books and language-experience material
- build up a sight vocabulary of common words

from personal experience, from experience of environmental print, and from books read

- learn to isolate the beginning sound of a word or syllable
- learn to isolate beginning and final sounds in written words
- learn to isolate the part of a word or a syllable which allows it to rhyme with another word or syllable
- use knowledge of word order, illustration, context and initial letters to identify unknown words
- engage in shared reading activities  
*stories, poems, plays, picture books*

### DEVELOPING COGNITIVE ABILITIES THROUGH LANGUAGE »»» developing interests, attitudes and the ability to think through reading

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- re-read, retell and act out familiar stories, poems or parts of stories
- recall and talk about significant events and details in stories
- analyse and interpret characters, situations, events and sequences presented pictorially
- predict future incidents and outcomes in stories
- differentiate between text and pictures
- understand the function of text  
*become aware that text says something*

### EMOTIONAL AND IMAGINATIVE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LANGUAGE »»» responding to text

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- associate print with enjoyment through listening to stories and poems read aloud
- respond to characters, situations and story details, relating them to personal experience
- perceive reading as a shared, enjoyable experience
- record response to text through pictures and captions
- pursue and develop individual interests through engagement with books.

# Writing

## STRAND UNITS

### RECEPTIVENESS TO LANGUAGE

#### ››› creating and fostering the impulse to write

##### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- experience and enjoy a print-rich environment
- receive help from the teacher, who will sometimes act as scribe to assist with accuracy and presentation
- write and draw frequently  
*scribbling, making attempts at writing, letters and symbols, captions, words and sentences*
- write for different audiences  
*oneself, teacher, other children, family, visitors*
- see personal writing displayed  
*class on worksheets  
as part of arts activities  
on a writing shelf or in a writing corner  
in class-made collections*
- read personal writing aloud and hear it read.

### COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE IN USING LANGUAGE ››› developing competence, confidence and the ability to write independently

##### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- learn to form and name individual letters using various materials  
*plasticine, sand, soft letters, magnetic letters, writing instruments*
- write and draw  
*scribbles, shapes, signs, letters, numerals*
- understand the left-right, top-bottom orientation of writing
- develop a satisfactory grip of writing implements
- copy words from signs in the environment
- copy letters and words informally as part of class activities
- write his/her name
- use labels to name familiar people and things
- write letters and words from memory
- become aware of lower-case and capital letters and the full stop

- develop the confidence to use approximate spelling
- begin to develop conventional spelling of simple words
- see the teacher model writing as an enjoyable experience
- choose subjects for drawing and writing
- choose the form of expression he/she finds appropriate  
*scribbles, shapes, pictures, letters, words.*

### DEVELOPING COGNITIVE ABILITIES THROUGH LANGUAGE ››› clarifying thought through writing

##### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- draw a picture and write about it  
*a name, a caption, a sentence*
- draw and write about everyday experience or about something just learned  
*pictures and scribbles*
- write naming words and add descriptive words
- rewrite sentences to make the message clearer.

### EMOTIONAL AND IMAGINATIVE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LANGUAGE ››› developing emotional and imaginative life through writing

##### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- draw and write about feelings  
*happiness, sadness, love, fear*
- draw and write about things he/she likes and dislikes
- draw and write about sensory experiences  
*hot, cold, bright, dark, sweet*
- draw and write stories
- hear a rich variety of stories, rhymes and songs and draw and write about them
- use mime and role-playing to create imaginary situations and then draw and write about them.

## OVERVIEW

# First and second classes

STRANDS	Oral Language	Reading	Writing
STRAND UNIT	Receptiveness to language		
	developing receptiveness to oral language	developing reading strategies	creating and fostering the impulse to write
STRAND UNIT	Competence and confidence in using language		
	developing competence and confidence in using oral language	reading for pleasure and information	developing competence, confidence and the ability to write independently
STRAND UNIT	Developing cognitive abilities through language		
	developing cognitive abilities through oral language	developing interests, attitudes and the ability to think through reading	clarifying thought through writing
STRAND UNIT	Emotional and imaginative development through language		
	developing emotional and imaginative life through oral language	responding to text	developing emotional and imaginative life through writing

# Oral Language

## STRAND UNITS

### RECEPTIVENESS TO LANGUAGE

#### »»» developing receptiveness to oral language

##### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- experience challenging vocabulary and sentence structure from the teacher
- listen to stories, descriptions, instructions and directions and respond to them
- listen to sounds and respond to them
- become more adept in using appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviour in order to secure and maintain the attention of the listener  
*eye contact, facial expression, audibility and clarity of enunciation, tone of voice*
- use gesture and movement to extend the meaning of what he/she is saying
- express in mime various emotions and reactions, and interpret the emotions and reactions of others.

### COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE IN USING LANGUAGE

#### »»» developing competence and confidence in using oral language

##### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- talk about and reflect on past and present experiences, and plan, predict, anticipate and speculate about future and imaginary experiences
- experiment with more elaborate vocabulary and sentence structure in order to extend and explore meaning  
*experimenting with descriptive words  
combining simple sentences  
elaborating simple sentences*
- experiment with word order and examine its implications for meaning and clarity
- focus on the subject under discussion and sustain a conversation on it
- initiate discussions, respond to the initiatives of others, and have practice in taking turns
- engage in real and imaginary situations to perform different social functions  
*greeting others  
receiving and giving compliments  
using the telephone  
making requests for information*

### DEVELOPING COGNITIVE ABILITIES THROUGH LANGUAGE

#### »»» developing cognitive abilities through oral language

##### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- give a description, recount a narrative or describe a process, and answer questions about it
- listen to other children describe experiences and ask questions about their reactions to them
- become increasingly explicit in relation to people, places, times, processes and events by adding elaborative detail to what he/she describes and narrates
- listen to a story or narrative and ask questions about it
- engage in real and imaginary situations involving language use  
*explain, persuade, enquire, report, agree, dissent, discuss a point of view, justify opinions  
provide solutions to problems*
- ask questions that will satisfy his/her curiosity and wonder  
*who? where? what? when? why? how? what if?*

### EMOTIONAL AND IMAGINATIVE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LANGUAGE

#### »»» developing emotional and imaginative life through oral language

##### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- describe everyday experiences and events
- express feelings in order to clarify them and explain them to others
- tell stories in his/her own words and answer questions about them
- listen to, read, learn and recite a varied and appropriate repertoire of rhymes and poems
- re-create stories and poems in improvisational drama
- use play and improvisational drama to sustain imaginary situations
- listen to and say nonsense words and unusual
- listen to, learn and tell riddles and jokes
- clap the rhythms of poems and rhymes
- listen to, read, learn and recite more sophisticated nonsense verse and rhymes
- recognise and re-create sounds in the environment
- create real and imaginary sound worlds
- use imaginative play to create humorous characters and situations.

# Reading

## STRAND UNITS

### RECEPTIVENESS TO LANGUAGE

#### »»» developing reading strategies

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- continue to experience the reading process being modelled
- engage in shared reading activities
- visit the school library and the local library
- continue to build a sight vocabulary of common words from books read and from personal experience
- engage in activities designed to increase awareness of sounds
  - focusing on the sounds associated with letters and letter-clusters,*
  - patterns of sounds in words*
- learn about the sounds associated with the part of a word or syllable that allows it to rhyme with another word or syllable
  - d - ock      t - able*
  - s - ock      c - able*
  - cl - ock      f - able*
- learn about the sounds associated with the beginning of a word or syllable
- learn to connect the beginnings of words and syllables with their rhyming parts as an auditory and visual exercise
  - 'onset and rime':    r - at    c - at    m - at*
  - different onsets*
  - single consonants    r - at*
  - consonant blends    pl - an*
  - digraphs              ch - at*
  - different rimes*
  - vowel digraphs      tr - ee*
  - vowel-consonant combinations    h - and*
- learn about common word endings, word families and roots of words
- use knowledge of letter-sound relationships (grapho/phonic cues), grammar and syntax (syntactic cues) and surrounding text (contextual cues) when attempting to identify unfamiliar words
- self-correct reading errors when what he/she reads does not make sense
- develop reading skills through engaging with reading material appropriate to his/her stage of development
- adapt his/her reading style for different purposes
  - browsing, simple scanning and skimming.*

### COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE IN USING LANGUAGE »»» reading for pleasure and information

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- read from a range of children's literature, choosing material for reading during silent reading periods
- engage in personal reading

- learn to find books in a classroom or school library
- read aloud to share a text with an audience
- find information and share it with others
- perform simple information retrieval tasks
  - using a table of contents*
  - using a simple index*

### DEVELOPING COGNITIVE ABILITIES THROUGH LANGUAGE »»» developing interests, attitudes and the ability to think through reading

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- pursue individual interests through independent reading of fiction and non-fiction
- adopt an active approach to a text by posing his/her own questions
- give recommendations to and receive recommendations from the wider community of readers on the choice of reading material
  - parent, teacher, librarian, other children*
- develop comprehension strategies
  - recalling details and events*
  - assimilating fact*
  - retelling stories*
- perform alphabetical order tasks
- predict future events and outcomes in a book that is being read aloud
- express a more formal response by giving a considered personal opinion of a book in oral or in written form
- use information technology to increase motivation to read and to enhance reading development.

### EMOTIONAL AND IMAGINATIVE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LANGUAGE

#### »»» responding to text

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- continue to listen to and enjoy stories and poems being read aloud
- engage in spare-moment reading and browsing by having ready access to reading material
- engage with a wide variety of text
  - picture books, poetry, stories, informational material*
- experience enhanced levels of self-esteem through success in reading
- listen to entire stories read aloud in instalments
- respond to characters and events in a story
  - talk and discussion, writing, drama, visual arts*
- explore different attitudes and feelings by imagining what it would be like to be certain characters
- engage frequently in informal discussion of books with teacher and others.

# Writing

## STRAND UNITS

### RECEPTIVENESS TO LANGUAGE »» creating and fostering the impulse to write

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- experience a classroom environment that encourages writing
  - personal writing collections*
  - class library*
  - writing corner*
  - displays of writing*
- observe the teacher as he/she models writing stories
- seek help from the teacher in order to achieve accuracy and an appropriate standard of presentation
- experience how a story structure is organised by reading and listening to fiction
- write regularly for different audiences
  - personal purposes*
  - the teacher*
  - other children*
  - the family*
- choose topics to write about
- explore different genres
  - a story*
  - an invitation*
  - a letter*
- work with other children when writing
- have writing valued
  - hearing it praised*
  - having it displayed*
  - sharing it with others*

### COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE IN USING LANGUAGE »» developing competence, confidence and the ability to write independently

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- experience an abundance of oral language activity when preparing a writing task
- realise that first attempts at writing are not necessarily the finished product and learn to undertake second drafts in order to improve writing
- understand that the conventions of punctuation help to make meaning clearer in writing
  - full stops, capital letters*
- spell words in a recognisable way based on an awareness of the most common spelling strings and patterns
  - simple words with short vowel rimes: dog, mill, rock*
  - simple words with regular patterns: street, came, float*
  - two-syllable words with regular patterns: robber, happen*
  - words with common prefixes and suffixes: display, wonderful*
- use approximate spelling as an interim measure in mastering the conventions of spelling
- spell correctly a range of familiar, important and regularly occurring words, and use a variety of sources as aids to spelling

*words displayed in class*  
*words compiled in personal dictionaries*  
*words learned in reading*

- choose topics for writing after conferring with the teacher
- have regular opportunities to write for himself/herself or for others
- decide whether or not to re-draft a piece of writing
- confer with the teacher and others on the quality of presentation
- write notes and messages to different audiences
  - teacher*
  - friends*
  - parents.*

### DEVELOPING COGNITIVE ABILITIES THROUGH LANGUAGE »» clarifying thought through writing

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- write in a variety of genres
  - stories, diaries, poetry, charts, lists, captions, cards, invitations, simple letters*
- write a version of a story told by the teacher
- write about something that has been learned
- write the significant details about an event or an activity
  - a game I played*
  - my birthday*
- write an explanation for something
- re-read work, confer with the teacher or others about it, and then rewrite it
- write a simple sentence and add words to it to extend its meaning
- listen to a story and write down questions to ask about it
- write answers to questions asked by the teacher.

### EMOTIONAL AND IMAGINATIVE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LANGUAGE »» developing emotional and imaginative life through writing

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- express feelings in writing
  - happiness; sadness; excitement; pride; anticipation*
- write about experiences
  - enjoyable; funny; annoying; frightening*
- listen to the experiences of others and express reactions to them in writing
- draw and write about sensory experience
  - sight; hearing; taste; touch; smell*
- write about feelings experienced in drama activities
- draw and write stories and poems
- express in writing likes and dislikes about events and characters in stories and poems
- listen to music and write about it.

## OVERVIEW

# Third and fourth classes

STRANDS	Oral Language	Reading	Writing
STRAND UNIT	Receptiveness to language		
	developing receptiveness to oral language	developing reading strategies	creating and fostering the impulse to write
STRAND UNIT	Competence and confidence in using language		
	developing competence and confidence in using oral language	reading for pleasure and information	developing competence, confidence and the ability to write independently
STRAND UNIT	Developing cognitive abilities through language		
	developing cognitive abilities through oral language	developing interests, attitudes, information retrieval skills and the ability to think through reading	clarifying thought through writing
STRAND UNIT	Emotional and imaginative development through language		
	developing emotional and imaginative life through oral language	responding to text	developing emotional and imaginative life through writing

# Oral Language

## STRAND UNITS

### RECEPTIVENESS TO LANGUAGE »»» developing receptiveness to oral language

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- experience the teacher's use of challenging vocabulary and sentence structure
- listen to, retell and tape a narrative or a description, taking turns giving the account
- give and follow instructions on how to perform a particular task or process
- become increasingly aware of the importance of gesture, facial expression, tone of voice, audibility and clarity of enunciation in communicating with others
- use mime to convey ideas, reactions, emotions, desires and attitudes
- discuss the use and effect of music, sound effects and non-verbal clues in audio tapes, video tapes and film clips.

### COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE IN USING LANGUAGE »»» developing competence and confidence in using oral language

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- give and take turns in speaking and experience a classroom environment in which tolerance for the views of others is fostered
- initiate conversations and respond to the initiatives of others in talking about experiences and activities
- present ideas that are relevant to the subject in a logical sequence
- summarise and prioritise ideas
- discuss the meanings and origins of words, phrases and expressions with the teacher
- become aware of new words and new connotations of words through his/her reading and writing experience
- play synonym and antonym games
- become familiar with the functions of words without necessarily using technical grammatical terms  
*noun, verb, adjective, adverb, pronoun, preposition*
- practise the common social functions in the everyday context of class and school and through improvisational drama  
*introducing others to the class group or another pupil; expressing appreciation; expressing approval and disapproval; engaging in simple commercial transactions; expressing concern; asking questions to elicit views and feelings; expressing support; giving directions*
- make lists of local expressions and words
- use improvisational drama to re-create well-known characters
- hear, discuss and react to local storytellers.

### DEVELOPING COGNITIVE ABILITIES THROUGH LANGUAGE »»» developing cognitive abilities through oral language

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- discuss issues that directly affect his/her life  
*in school; outside school; in other areas of the curriculum*
- discuss a story being read and predict future events and likely outcomes in it
- discuss different possible solutions to problems
- discuss what he/she knows of a particular topic or process as a basis for encountering new concepts
- discuss causes and effects in relation to processes and events and predict possible outcomes
- listen to a presentation and discuss and decide which are the most important questions to ask
- learn how to use the basic key questions  
*why? how? where? when? what? what if?*
- make presentations to the class about his/her own particular interests
- justify personal likes and dislikes
- argue a point of view and try to persuade others to support it
- explore historical events through improvisational drama
- explore reactions to ideas through improvisational drama.

### EMOTIONAL AND IMAGINATIVE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LANGUAGE »»» developing emotional and imaginative life through oral language

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- describe everyday experiences to the class or group and discuss them
- discuss favourite moments, important events and exciting characters in a story, play or poem
- express reactions to events and characters in stories
- discuss reactions to poems
- create and tell stories to the class or group, and retell them after questioning, comparing the versions
- express feelings and attitudes through improvisational drama
- create and sustain imaginary contexts through improvisational drama
- react to poems through improvisational drama
- dramatise stories
- experience and enjoy playful aspects of language  
*asking riddles and telling jokes; experimenting with funny-sounding words; playing word association games; reading and listening to examples of humorous literature; composing rhymes and verses; appreciating how words interact--how a word can trigger a humorous reaction.*

# Reading

## STRAND UNITS

### RECEPTIVENESS TO LANGUAGE

#### »»» developing reading strategies

##### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- use more than one strategy when reading unfamiliar text  
*grapho/phonic, syntactic, contextual*
- identify unfamiliar words by reference to word parts, prefixes and suffixes
- continue to self-correct reading errors
- become an increasingly independent reader
- understand the relationship between text and illustration
- refine his/her listening skills through hearing the teacher read aloud.

### COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE IN USING LANGUAGE »»» reading for pleasure and information

##### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- have access to a plentiful supply of books both in the classroom and in the school library
- use library facilities outside school
- select personal reading material and develop personal taste in reading for pleasure and information
- experience different types of text
- engage with a wide variety of poetry and verse on a regular basis
- develop basic information retrieval skills  
*using table of contents, chapter headings and index interpreting diagrammatic information scanning and skimming*
- use simple dictionaries effectively  
*find words  
find the meaning of words  
check spelling  
find the pronunciation of words.*

### DEVELOPING COGNITIVE ABILITIES THROUGH LANGUAGE »»» developing interests, attitudes, information retrieval skills and the ability to think through reading

##### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- extend participation in listening and silent reading activities
- read short books in one sitting to experience success in reading
- explore new interests and perspectives through reading  
*poetry, non-fiction, newspaper articles*

- read books independently
- seek recommendations for books to read and recommend books to others
- continue to use information technology to increase motivation to read and to enhance reading development
- know the structure and terminology of books  
*cover, spine, illustration, dedication, table of contents, introduction, page, chapter*
- develop skills in locating and handling books through using well-stocked school and classroom libraries
- continue to develop a range of comprehension strategies to deal with narrative, expository and representational reading material  
*assimilation (what did I learn?), deduction (what can I conclude?), inference (what may I conclude?), analysis (what are the details and how do they come together?), prediction (what might happen next?), evaluation (what do I think of this?), summarising (how can I give a brief account of the main points?)*
- use a knowledge of printing conventions as an aid to expression and comprehension  
*bold type, punctuation marks, capital letters*
- keep a record of his/her reading in various forms  
*keeping a list of books read, keeping written comments on books in a folder.*

### EMOTIONAL AND IMAGINATIVE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LANGUAGE

#### »»» responding to text

##### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- extend and develop his/her response to increasingly challenging reading material  
*discussion, poetry, writing, drama, visual arts, movement, dance*
- engage in talk about books  
*setting, plot, character, motive, favourite authors*
- talk about choice of books and the reasons for choices
- recognise and discuss differences in reading tastes
- share responses with other children and with adults to cultivate a community of readers
- experience a shared response to fiction through the use of a class novel
- read aloud with expression.

# Writing

## STRAND UNITS

### RECEPTIVENESS TO LANGUAGE »» creating and fostering the impulse to write

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- experience a classroom environment that encourages writing  
*class library; writing corner; displays of writing; anthologies of his/her and others' writing; captioned; drawings; posters*
- observe the teacher modelling different writing genres  
*writing about a personal experience; writing a letter; writing a description*
- use personal reading as a stimulus to writing
- write stories that explore a variety of genres
- re-read his/her writing for pleasure
- choose the audience for which to write
- choose both the subject and form of his/her writing
- receive and give positive responses to writing
- see his/her writing valued  
*constructive comment; having it displayed; having it included in class anthologies; reading it aloud.*

### COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE IN USING LANGUAGE »»» developing competence, confidence and the ability to write independently

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- write regularly, and gradually extend the period over which a writing effort is sustained
- engage with the writing of one piece over a period  
*a week, a number of weeks, a term*
- experience varied and consistent oral language activity as a preparation for writing
- learn to use questions as a mechanism for expanding and developing a story  
*who? where? when? why? what? how? what if?*
- give sequence to ideas and events in stories
- develop an appreciation of how the intended audience should influence the nature of a piece of writing  
*a birthday invitation; a letter seeking information for a project*
- develop an awareness of the difference between written language and oral language
- learn to revise and re-draft writing  
*reading it over; conferring and discussing with the teacher; conferring and discussing with others in the class*
- learn to use a wider range of punctuation marks with greater accuracy as part of the revision and editing process
- learn to write with increasing grammatical accuracy through the process of revision and editing
- use a range of aids and strategies, including the use of approximate spelling, to improve his/her command of spelling  
*dictionaries, word lists, word searches, spelling checkers, anagrams, regular word patterns*

- write in a legible joined script with confidence and fluency
- develop his/her ability to write using information technology  
*word-processing*
- regularly select his/her own topics for writing
- choose to write for himself/herself only
- decide, after conferring with the teacher and others, who the audience for a piece of writing should be
- decide the quality of presentation in relation to the purpose and audience of a piece of writing
- co-operate in writing a record of class activities  
*a single topic; a theme; a timetable*

### DEVELOPING COGNITIVE ABILITIES THROUGH LANGUAGE »»» clarifying thought through writing

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- write in a variety of genres with greater sophistication  
*stories; diaries; records of what has been learned; reports; letters; notices; menus; lists*
- read a story and write it in his/her own words
- read a narrative or expository piece and summarise it
- write about an idea to explain it to someone else
- write about why he/she finds an idea attractive
- write about ideas encountered in other areas of the curriculum
- write down directions on how to perform a particular process
- write a list of questions about a particular topic and prioritise them
- write a sentence and elaborate on it by adding one or more ideas to it
- expand and clarify his/her thoughts on a particular idea or topic through drafting and re-drafting.

### EMOTIONAL AND IMAGINATIVE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LANGUAGE »»» developing emotional and imaginative life through writing

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- express his/her reactions to particular experiences in writing
- write about experiences and feelings in diary form
- write about feelings experienced in improvisational drama
- create stories and poems
- write extended stories in book form
- write about favourite moments, characters and events in stories
- express in writing his/her reactions to poems
- express in writing his/her reactions to personal reading
- use his/her own artwork and that of others as a stimulus to writing.

## OVERVIEW

# Fifth and sixth classes

STRANDS	Oral Language	Reading	Writing
STRAND UNIT	Receptiveness to language		
	developing receptiveness to oral language	developing reading strategies	creating and fostering the impulse to write
STRAND UNIT	Competence and confidence in using language		
	developing competence and confidence in using oral language	reading for pleasure and information	developing competence, confidence and the ability to write independently
STRAND UNIT	Developing cognitive abilities through language		
	developing cognitive abilities through oral language	developing interests, attitudes, information retrieval skills and the ability to think through reading	clarifying thought through writing
STRAND UNIT	Emotional and imaginative development through language		
	developing emotional and imaginative life through oral language	responding to text	developing emotional and imaginative life through writing

# Oral Language

## STRAND UNITS

### RECEPTIVENESS TO LANGUAGE

#### »»» developing receptiveness to oral language

##### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- experience from the teacher a growing elaboration and sophistication in the use of vocabulary and sentence structure
- listen to expressions, reactions, opinions and interpretations and retell or summarise them
- listen to radio broadcasts and discuss what has been learned
- follow detailed instructions or directions from others in order to test their accuracy
- take part in games in which unseen objects are identified from descriptions given by other pupils
- be continually aware of the importance of gesture, facial expression, audibility and clarity of enunciation in communicating with others
- use mime to convey ideas, reactions, emotions, desires and attitudes
- interpret mood, attitude, emotion and atmosphere in video extracts, advertisements, paintings and photographs
- listen to or watch sound tapes, videos and films and discuss how sound effects enhance the content
- listen to authors reading and discussing their own work.

### COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE IN USING LANGUAGE

#### »»» developing competence and confidence in using oral language

##### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- acquire the ability to give detailed instructions and directions
- converse freely and confidently on a range of topics
- give and take turns in an environment where tolerance for the views of others is fostered
- practise and use improvisational drama to acquire a facility in performing more elaborate social functions  
*welcoming visitors; showing them the work of the class; making formal introductions; proposing a vote of thanks; expressing sympathy; making a complaint*
- discuss the positive and negative effects of jargon, slang and cliché, and express examples of them in his/her own language
- understand the functions and know the names of the parts of speech  
*noun, verb, adjective, adverb, pronoun, conjunction, preposition, article, interjection*
- learn about and name the basic properties of nouns and verbs  
*common, proper, gender, case tense, voice, person, number*
- become familiar with compound and complex sentences, and know and understand the terms 'phrase' and 'clause'
- explore the possibilities of language and sentence structure in expressing increasingly complex thoughts

- discuss the meaning, effect and diversity of local words and expressions
- hear accents and dialects other than his/her own on tape and on video and discuss them
- use improvisational drama to learn how local idiom, accent and dialect can influence the effect of language in particular situations.

### DEVELOPING COGNITIVE ABILITIES THROUGH LANGUAGE

#### »»» developing cognitive abilities through oral language

##### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- discuss issues of major concern
- discuss ideas and concepts encountered in other areas of the curriculum
- use a discussion of the familiar as the basis of a more formal or objective grasp of a topic or concept
- use the basic key questions and checking questions as a means of extending knowledge
- listen to a presentation on a particular topic, decide through discussion which are the most appropriate questions to ask, and then prioritise them
- argue points of view from the perspective of agreement and disagreement through informal discussion and in the context of formal debates
- justify and defend particular opinions or attitudes and try to persuade others to support a particular point of view
- respond to arguments presented by the teacher
- discuss the value, truth or relevance of popular ideas, causes and proverbs
- explore and express conflicts of opinion through improvisational drama
- explore historical contexts through improvisational drama.

### EMOTIONAL AND IMAGINATIVE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LANGUAGE

#### »»» developing emotional and imaginative life through oral language

##### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- discuss with others his/her reactions to everyday experiences and to local, national and world events
- discuss the concerns of other children
- discuss ideas, concepts and images encountered in literature
- discuss personal reading and writing
- express individual responses to poems and literature and discuss different interpretations
- discuss plays, films and television programmes
- experience and enjoy playful aspects of language  
*experimenting with sequences of words; discussing the origins and effects of unusual words; hearing and reading aloud humorous literature; telling riddles and jokes; playing word association games.*

# Reading

## STRAND UNITS

### RECEPTIVENESS TO LANGUAGE

#### »»» developing reading strategies

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- achieve proficiency in word identification by refining the different word identification skills *grapho/phonetic, syntactic and contextual*
- improve his/her ability to recognise and understand words by using root words, prefixes, suffixes, syllabication
- engage with an increasing range of narrative, expository and representational text
- become self-reliant, confident, independent readers, having time in class for sustained, silent reading.

### COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE IN USING LANGUAGE »»» reading for pleasure and information

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- read widely as an independent reader from a more challenging range of reading material, including stories, poems, myths, legends, novels and non-fiction texts appropriate to his/her age and reading ability
- engage with books in group or in whole-class settings
- learn about the structure and appreciate the function of the component parts of a newspaper *editorial, news, feature, review, sport, obituary, crossword, advertisement, schedule of radio and television programmes*
- participate in organised visits to the public library and avail of the mobile library service
- read to satisfy personal interests.

### DEVELOPING COGNITIVE ABILITIES THROUGH LANGUAGE »»» developing interests, attitudes, information retrieval skills and the ability to think through reading

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- listen to, read, learn, recite and respond to a challenging range of poetry
- have access to a wide range of reading material in the classroom and/or school library *magazines, newspapers, fiction and non-fiction books, books written by other pupils, collections of material related to hobbies and interests, reference material, poetry anthologies*
- continue to keep a record of personal reading in various forms
- use comprehension skills such as analysing, confirming, evaluating, synthesising and correlating to aid deduction, problem-solving and prediction

- develop study skills such as skimming, scanning, note-taking and summarising
- retrieve and interpret information presented in a variety of ways *flowchart, table, diagram, list, web, survey, question, read, recall and review (SQ3R)*
- support arguments and opinions with evidence from the text
- read and interpret different kinds of functional text *forms, menus, timetables, recipes*
- explore appropriate non-fiction texts for various purposes *furthering a personal interest; pursuing a topic raised in class; completing a project*
- use information retrieval strategies in cross-curricular settings
- distinguish between fact and opinion, and bias and objectivity, in text and in the media
- use the school, classroom and public libraries to develop greater insight into book location, classification and organisation
- find information relevant to his/her purpose in non-fiction texts, graphs and pictorial and diagrammatic data, and through the use of information technology *graphical and electronic media.*

### EMOTIONAL AND IMAGINATIVE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LANGUAGE

#### »»» responding to text

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- hear the teacher model a response to poems, fiction, plays and parts of plays
- respond to poetry and fiction through discussion, writing, drama, the visual arts and dance
- relate personal experience to the ideas and emotions conveyed in the text
- appreciate issues in fiction *the development of character; sense of time and place*
- examine similarities and differences in various types of text
- continue to share response to an ever increasing variety of texts with the wider community of readers
- browse through, handle, discuss, recommend and select books for independent reading
- develop individuality as a reader by experiencing success and the enhancement of self-esteem through reading
- read aloud from a personal choice of texts to entertain and inform an audience
- listen to books or extracts from books and poetry read aloud or presented on tape, radio or television.

# Writing

## STRAND UNITS

### RECEPTIVENESS TO LANGUAGE

#### »»» creating and fostering the impulse to write

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- experience a classroom environment that encourages writing  
*class library; writing corner; displays of writing for visitors; anthologies of his/her writing; anthologies of the writing of others; books written by him/her and others; captioned charts, pictures and posters*
- observe the teacher model a wide variety of writing genres  
*narrative; expository; letters; poems; project work; fiction*
- express and communicate reactions to reading experiences
- experience interesting and relevant writing challenges
- write for an increasingly varied audience
- receive and give constructive responses to writing
- see his/her writing valued  
*class anthologies; displays of personal writing; printed examples of writing; writing exhibitions*
- experience a level of success in writing that will be an incentive to continue writing.

### COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE IN USING LANGUAGE »»» developing competence, confidence and the ability to write independently

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- write regularly on chosen topics
- write for a sustained length of time
- engage in the writing of one piece over a period  
*a week, a number of weeks, a term*
- experience varied and consistent oral language activity as part of the pre-writing process
- observe the teacher improving writing  
*drafting, revising, editing*
- write independently through a process of drafting, revising, editing and publishing
- write, without re-drafting, on a given or chosen topic within certain time constraints
- observe the conventions of grammar, punctuation and spelling in his/her writing
- use dictionaries and thesauruses to extend and develop vocabulary and spelling
- explore the possibilities of syntax and sentence structure in reading and writing
- choose a register of language appropriate to subject and audience  
*writing to a friend; writing for a display; writing to seek information*
- choose a form and quality of presentation appropriate to the audience
- help others with editing their writing
- take part in co-operative writing activities,  
*projects, writing and publishing a class newspaper, writing and publishing compilations of stories and poetry*

- write fluently and relevantly in other areas of the curriculum
- develop a legible, fluent, personal style of handwriting
- develop skills in the use of information technology.

### DEVELOPING COGNITIVE ABILITIES THROUGH LANGUAGE »»» clarifying thought through writing

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- write in a variety of genres  
*narrative prose; poetry; instructions; diaries; learning logs; reports; letters; summaries; forms; recipes*
- examine the characteristics that differentiate written and oral language
- write for a particular purpose and with a particular audience in mind
- reflect on and analyse ideas through writing
- refine ideas and their expression through drafting and re-drafting
- express and communicate new learning
- relate new ideas to previous learning
- use notes to summarise reading material and write an account from the notes
- sketch an ordered summary of ideas and draft a writing assignment based on it
- argue the case in writing for a particular point of view
- argue the case in writing for a point of view with which he/she disagrees
- explore the use of compound and complex sentences in expressing thought.

### EMOTIONAL AND IMAGINATIVE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LANGUAGE

#### »»» developing emotional and imaginative life through writing

#### THE CHILD SHOULD BE ENABLED TO

- analyse in writing his/her reactions to personal experiences
- express in writing reactions to the experiences of others
- write stories and poems write longer stories or a series of related stories in book form
- keep a personal diary
- express a personal reaction to ideas, emotions and images encountered in literature
- express and analyse his/her reactions to poems
- analyse different interpretations of poems in writing
- write about the relationship between poems and personal experience
- write short plays based on activity in improvisational drama
- express in writing reactions to music, artwork, films, television programmes and videos.

## Conclusion

The Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP) and the School Development Planning Support (SDPS) have developed planning templates for English, in consultation with the NCCA and the Department of Education and Science (DES). These planning templates reflect the structure of the additional support material presented here. The planning templates can be accessed on the PCSP website at: **[www.curaclam.net](http://www.curaclam.net)** and on the SDPS website at: **[www.sdps.ie](http://www.sdps.ie)**.

This additional support material for the English Curriculum is available on the NCCA website at **[www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie)**. Further guidelines for teachers on the practical application of the three strands and four strand units in their classroom teaching will also be posted on the NCCA website. Feedback from teachers on their experiences using the English Curriculum and the additional support material are always welcome at **[englishcurriculum@ncca.ie](mailto:englishcurriculum@ncca.ie)** or by phoning the NCCA main office at: 01-7996400.



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**Circular Letter 0056/2011**

**To Boards of Management, Principal Teachers and Teaching Staff of Primary Schools**

**INITIAL STEPS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF  
THE NATIONAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY STRATEGY**

**SUMMARY**

This circular

- Draws the attention of boards of management, principal teachers and teachers to the publication of *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People, 2011 – 2020* (see Section 1-2)
- Lists five areas for immediate action under the strategy (Section 3)
- Provides brief information on some initial developments in professional development opportunities for teachers to support literacy and numeracy (Section 4)
- Asks schools to increase the time devoted to the teaching of literacy and numeracy with effect from January 2012 (Section 5)
- Outlines the arrangements for the assessment of pupils' progress that are designed to support better literacy and numeracy teaching in school, including information on enhanced grants to schools for the purchase of assessment materials (Section 6)
- Describes how assessment information on pupils' progress should be recorded, used and reported (Section 7)
- Provides information on national and international assessments of reading and mathematics in which Irish schools are involved and sets out requirements on schools regarding participation in these studies (Section 8).

***The requirements on schools contained in this circular are highlighted in italicised bold type.*** (A summary of these requirements is included in Section 9 of the circular.)

Please bring this circular to the attention of teachers and members of the school board of management.

**Margaret Kelly,  
Principal**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Minister for Education and Skills has asked that *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People, 2011 - 2020* be brought to the attention of boards of management, principal teachers and teaching staff of primary schools. A copy of the strategy is available for download on the Department's website, [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie). A printed summary of the key measures in the Strategy is enclosed for the information of teachers and members of boards of management.

Literacy<sup>1</sup> and numeracy<sup>2</sup> are among the most important skills taught in our schools. They are fundamental to a person's ability to succeed in education, to gain fulfilling employment and to lead a satisfying and rewarding life. The national strategy emphasises the important roles that schools, teachers and parents play in fully developing these skills.

## **2. CONSULTATION PROCESS**

The national strategy was developed and published by the Minister for Education and Skills following an extensive consultation process. Many teachers and school communities contributed to the process and national organisations representing teachers, parents, boards of management and many community organisations were also involved.

The publication of the strategy marks the beginning of a major national effort to improve literacy and numeracy standards among children and young people. The strategy adopts a comprehensive approach and includes a broad range of actions. These include measures to improve the curriculum, to build the capacity of school leaders, to enhance teaching skills through the provision of continuing professional development, to strengthen and extend the duration of initial teacher education, and to promote a greater awareness among parents and the community of the importance of literacy and numeracy. These actions will be implemented over time. Supports for schools and teachers are being made available through enhanced provision for continuing professional development.

The Minister wishes to convey his sincere gratitude to the large number of individual principals, teachers and school staffs that submitted detailed responses and suggestions to the Draft Plan for Literacy and Numeracy. Many of these suggestions are reflected in the National Strategy.

## **3. FIVE AREAS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION**

The Minister now seeks the co-operation of school management and teachers in the implementation of five key areas of the Strategy:

- (a) Improved professional development for teachers
- (b) Increasing the time available for teaching literacy and numeracy

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<sup>1</sup> Literacy includes the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media.

<sup>2</sup> Numeracy encompasses the ability to use mathematical understanding and skills to solve problems and meet the demands of day-to-day living in complex social settings.

- (c) Improving arrangements for assessment of children's literacy and numeracy achievement
- (d) Better arrangement for reporting children's progress
- (e) Co-operating with the administration of national and international assessment studies

The Minister has also asked the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment to begin work on revisions to the curriculum and on the provision of additional resources to support the teaching of literacy and numeracy.

#### **4. INITIAL AND CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS**

The Literacy and Numeracy Strategy acknowledges that improvements to initial teacher education and better continuing professional development for serving teachers and principals are required to support the implementation of the strategy. The Minister is committed to ensuring that relevant and focussed continuing professional development opportunities will be provided for teachers during the lifetime of the Strategy.

Work has already commenced on this task:

- The Teaching Council is advancing the changes to initial teacher education and in summer 2011 over 12,000 primary teachers participated in an increased number of summer professional development courses that focussed on literacy and numeracy
- A national programme of continuing professional development courses for principals commenced in autumn 2011. Details of the courses are being made available to schools from the Professional Development Service for Teachers
- Specific units on the teaching of literacy and numeracy and the use of assessment have been developed and included within the induction programme that is now available to all newly qualified teachers during their probationary period. Principals are asked to encourage all newly qualified teachers to participate fully in the induction programme.

#### **5. INCREASING TIME FOR LITERACY AND NUMERACY**

##### **5.1 An increased time allocation for literacy and numeracy**

The *National Strategy* provides that the time spent in developing literacy and numeracy skills at primary level should be increased. This emphasis on literacy and numeracy was strongly endorsed in the consultation on the strategy.

The Department has asked the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) to review the suggested timeframe in the *Primary School Curriculum* in the light of the need to increase the time for literacy and numeracy.

## 5.2 Immediate adjustment to time for literacy and numeracy

***Pending the adjustments to the existing recommended timeframe by the NCCA and with effect from January 2012 all primary schools will be required to:***

- ***increase the time spent on the development of literacy skills, particularly in the first language of the school, by one hour overall for language (Irish and English) per week (i.e. to 6.5 hours for infants with a shorter day, and to 8.5 hours per week for students with a full day )***
- ***increase the time spent on mathematics by 70 minutes per week to 3 hours and 25 minutes per week for infants with a shorter day, and to 4 hours and 10 minutes per week for students with a full day.***

***You are requested to make provision for these arrangements in your school through a combination of approaches such as:***

- ***integrating literacy and numeracy skills with other curriculum areas***
- ***using some or all of discretionary curriculum time for literacy and numeracy activities***
- ***re-allocating time spent on the other subjects in the curriculum to the development of literacy and numeracy***
- ***prioritising the curriculum objectives which are considered most valuable in supporting children's learning and delaying the introduction of elements of some subjects (for example, by delaying the introduction of strands and strand units from the history and geography curriculum for the infant classes and first and second classes to later in the primary cycle).***

An agreed whole school approach should be recorded in the School Plan so that individual teachers' planning can be aligned with the decisions made at school level. (The Curriculum Planning Tool at [www.nccaplanning.com](http://www.nccaplanning.com) provides support for teacher planning and promotes planning for integration by allowing searches for key words across the entire curriculum).

This increased emphasis on literacy and numeracy is not intended to lead to a narrowing of the curriculum: for example, while language lessons will provide some of the main opportunities to develop literacy skills, literacy can also be taught through many other aspects of the curriculum.

## 6. ASSESSING CHILDREN'S LITERACY AND NUMERACY ACHIEVEMENT

### 6.1 The role that assessment should play

Gathering evidence about how well students are learning, and using this information to improve the learning opportunities provided for them are essential elements in ensuring that each student makes good progress in developing literacy and numeracy skills. This process of gathering and using assessment data should begin at the level of the individual student to

enable the teacher to adjust instruction to suit the needs of individual learners and to inform them and their parents about the progress that they are making.

Gathering and using assessment data also needs to take place at the level of the school, where principals, teachers and boards of management can use this information to identify how well they are providing for the literacy and numeracy needs of individual students and groups of students in the school and how best they can improve the learning in the school.

Assessment data is also needed to inform national educational policy for literacy and numeracy and identify ways of improving the performance of the school system. The literacy and numeracy strategy is designed to improve significantly the collection and analysis of information about students' learning in literacy and numeracy.

## 6.2 Guidelines on assessment

*Assessment in the Primary School: Guidelines for Schools* was developed by the NCCA and issued to all teachers in primary schools at the end of 2007. The guidelines provide advice to schools on how best to fulfil Section 22 of the Education Act which requires schools "to regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to the students and their parents". The guidelines are available to download from the website [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie) under Publications.

## 6.3 Assessment for learning and assessment of learning approaches

The NCCA guidelines provide practical advice on developing a school's assessment policy based on two assessment approaches:

- *Assessment for Learning* takes place when the teacher shares information about the child's learning with the child and when the teacher uses this information to plan the next steps in their teaching and in the student's learning
- *Assessment of Learning* is used to provide a summary of what the student has achieved at fixed points, such as at the end of a period of study, or when a unit of work is completed, or at the end of an academic year. Information from assessment of learning can be used to report to others, such as parents and other teachers.

Schools should use a balanced combination of *assessment for learning* and *assessment of learning* practices. Detailed advice on both types of assessment is contained in the NCCA guidelines, *Assessment in the Primary School: Guidelines for Schools*.

***School management and staff are requested to review their assessment policies and practices in the light of the NCCA publication, Assessment in the Primary School: Guidelines for Schools and the requirements of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy.***

## 6.4 Standardised testing

One element of assessment is standardised testing. Circular 0138/2006 required all schools to implement standardised testing in English reading and mathematics at two points in the primary cycle. This approach has been reviewed as part of the development of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy.

***Following widespread consultations on the national literacy and numeracy strategy, the Minister has determined that the arrangements for standardised testing should be amended as follows:***

- ***English-medium schools will be required to implement standardised testing in English reading and Mathematics during the period May/June for all students in 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes with effect from 2012 onwards***
- ***Irish-medium schools will be required to implement standardised testing in Irish reading, English reading and Mathematics during the period May/June for all students in 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes with effect from 2012 onwards***

***You are requested to ensure that standardised testing is implemented in your school on an annual basis in the relevant classes beginning in May/June 2012.***

***Students may be excluded from standardised testing if in the view of the school principal they have a learning or physical disability which would prevent them from attempting the tests or, in the case of migrant students, where the level of English required in the test would make attempting the test inappropriate.***

## 6.5 Selection of test instruments

The selection of the appropriate standardised test instrument is a matter for decision by individual schools, provided that the tests chosen are normed for the Irish population and are consistent with the primary curriculum.

## 6.6 Grants available

The grant for test instruments, scoring and manuals will be adjusted to take account of the additional testing point, and the payment date will be advanced from December 2012 to April 2012.

The funds may be used to purchase test instruments and materials such as teachers' manuals, test scoring services or test-related software offered by test providers. Any funds remaining after the standardised testing costs have been met may be spent on diagnostic tests in accordance with a school's needs.

## 6.7 Maintenance of records

***For students in the selected classes, the results of the standardised tests should be maintained carefully by the school and should be available for inspection by Department officials.***

## 7. REPORTING AND USING THE RESULTS OF ASSESSMENTS TO IMPROVE PUPIL LEARNING

### 7.1 Reporting to parents

Parents play a critical role in supporting their children's learning. Schools can strengthen the capacity of parents to support their children in this way by sharing meaningful information with parents about the progress that children are achieving in the education system. This information needs to draw on the different sources of evidence that teachers use, such as conversations with the learner, examination of students' own self-assessment data, documented observations of the learner's engagement with tasks, outcomes of other assessment tasks and tests, and examples of students' work. In turn, parents will often be able to enrich teachers' knowledge of their students' progress through providing further information about the students' learning at home.

### 7.2 Report card templates

Schools should help parents to understand fully the evidence of learning that the school reports to them, especially information from standardised tests. The NCCA has provided a range of standard report templates to assist schools in reporting information about the progress of primary pupils to parents, including information from standardised tests. The NCCA report card templates were developed through a process of consultation with schools and parents and take account of research commissioned by the NCCA.

The report cards provide for reporting in four key areas:

- the child's learning and achievement across the curriculum
- the child's learning dispositions
- the child's social and personal development
- ways in which parents can support their child's learning

***All primary schools must use one of the report card templates (available at [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie)) for reporting to parents on students' progress and achievement at school with effect from the date of this circular.***

### 7.3 How often should schools report to parents?

By maintaining regular contact with parents about their children's learning, schools can help parents to support their children's learning and progress. This regular contact and the flow of information between parents and the school can take place in a wide variety of ways. Many schools have found that a whole-school policy on links with parents can greatly assist in strengthening this important relationship.

***While schools will communicate frequently with parents about their children's learning, principals and teachers are required to report on children's progress to their parents twice during each school year:***

- ***One of these reporting events must include a written report at the end of the school year presented in the format of one of the NCCA report templates described above***
- ***The other reporting event may include a meeting, or a meeting and a written report***
- ***The results of any standardised test administered by the school must be included on the report template. (Under the Data Protection Act (1998 & 2003), parents are entitled to the results for their children of any standardised tests that a school has administered.) The results of standardised tests must be recorded in a separate section of the child's report card either as a standard score<sup>3</sup> or as a STen score<sup>4</sup>***
- ***Schools must issue written reports to parents in sufficient time before the closure of the school for the summer vacation to allow parents a reasonable opportunity to seek meetings with the principal and/or teacher(s) to discuss the written report if necessary.***

### 7.4 How can schools help parents to understand the results of standardised tests?

The report template provides space to record the results of standardised tests and space for a brief comment on the test score. The NCCA has published explanatory leaflets for parents entitled *Your Child and Standardised Testing*. Separate leaflets for STen scores and standard scores are available on the NCCA website, [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie). Information on interpreting and reporting standardised test results is also provided on pages 60-65 of the NCCA publication *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for Schools* (2007).

***Schools should provide parents with copies of the NCCA explanatory leaflets when issuing written reports to parents.***

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<sup>3</sup> Standard scores are transformations of raw test scores and usually range from 55 to 145, with a mean (average) of 100

<sup>4</sup> STen scores are a ten-point scale derived from standard scores, with 1 representing the lowest category and 10 the highest. (An extensive description of interpreting standardised test scores is provided in Section 2 of the NCCA *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for Schools* (2007).

## 7.5 Reporting, analysing and using assessment information at school level

Aggregated assessment information for classes or groups in a school can be a very important source of evidence for a school community as it seeks to improve teaching and learning. Effective schools analyse data from standardised tests and other sources regularly and track trends over time. They track not only the general achievement of all students but also the achievement of particular groups, including more able students and vulnerable groups who are at risk of encountering learning difficulties.

Effective schools use the data from assessment to identify priorities for their development including changes they may wish to make in teaching approaches, their priorities for staff development and for the acquisition of resources. They also use assessment information as part of their monitoring of the effectiveness or otherwise of the initiatives that they put in place to improve students' learning.

***Teachers, principals and boards of management should use assessment information, including information about literacy and numeracy, to inform their school self-evaluation, reflective practices and their school improvement plans.***

## 7.6 Limitations on using aggregated data

It is important to note that there are some limitations to the inferences that can reliably be made when making comparisons based on the results of a small number of student assessments. For example, there is a greater possibility that chance factors will influence the aggregate scores of tests when the number of students tested is small. Inferences from comparisons are more reliable when the numbers assessed are in the region of ten students or more at each class level, especially when comparing trends in achievement over time or in comparing results with those of similar schools.

## 7.7 Reporting information from standardised tests to boards of management

Boards of management can play a key role in encouraging a reflective school culture in which the principal, staff and board review practice regularly and seek to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' learning outcomes. This sort of culture is essential to improve attainment in literacy and numeracy. Reviewing regularly the general standard of learning outcomes makes an important contribution to this process.

Under the provisions of section 9(k) the Education Act, 1998, schools must monitor the attainment levels and academic standards of students as part of their ongoing monitoring of school effectiveness.

***With effect from 1 June 2012:***

- ***Principal teachers in primary schools are required to report annually aggregated assessment data from standardised tests to the board of management of their schools***
- ***The report will comprise the aggregated results of standardised tests administered in accordance with this circular. A copy of the form for reporting test results is appended to this circular.***

## 7.8 Reporting assessment results to other schools

Transferring assessment information between schools, for example, when pupils move to another primary school or transfer to a post-primary school, is important to ensure continuity of learning for pupils.

**With effect from 1 June 2012:**

- ***The principal of each primary school must send a copy of the end-of-year report card (including the information from standardised tests) to the primary or second-level school to which a student transfers***
- ***This information should only be provided after enrolment in the primary or second-level school has been accepted***
- ***Legislative arrangements have been made to provide for sharing information on progress, including the results of standardised tests, where students transfer from one school to another. The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 (Section 28) and the (Prescribed Bodies) Regulations 2005 allow schools to share relevant information concerning a child transferring between recognised schools without breaching data protection law.***

## 7.9 Reporting standardised test results to the Department of Education and Skills

Data on student achievement is essential to inform national education policy and to identify ways of improving the performance of the education system.

**With effect from 1 June 2012:**

- ***Primary schools will be required to report aggregate standardised test results to the Department of Education and Skills once annually***
- ***The aggregate results for each class should be recorded following completion of standardised assessments of reading and mathematics in second, fourth and sixth classes in May/June of each year***
- ***The template for reporting to boards of management (included in the appendix) will be used to collect the data***
- ***The Department will not collect assessment information on individual students from schools***
- ***The Department will consult with the relevant partners on the most manageable methods by which the data may be collected and schools will be informed of the administrative arrangements for the collection of the data before June 2012***
- ***Please note that there is no intention to publish data for individual schools or to enable the data to be used for the compilation of league tables.***

## 8. NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

### 8.1 The National Assessments of Mathematics and Reading

For a number of years, the Educational Research Centre has conducted periodic National Assessments of Mathematics and English Reading. The last such assessments were conducted in 2009.

These assessments are based on the testing of a scientifically constructed sample of schools and pupils. No individual school results are identifiable in this process.

The assessments provide important additional national information on attainment in mathematics and reading and on a range of factors that may affect attainment, including, for example, changes in methodology or curriculum, the impact of socio-economic factors, etc. They also allow trends over time to be monitored.

### 8.2 International assessments

From time to time, Ireland participates in international studies that examine the attainment of students in literacy, numeracy and other subjects. Like the national assessments, these studies are based on a scientifically selected sample of students and schools, and no individual school results are identifiable in this process. The most recent international studies in which Irish primary pupils and schools participated were the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). Studies like these provide important comparative information about the attainment of students in Ireland and about the factors that can affect student learning.

### 8.3 Participation in national and international assessments

The sample schools for inclusion in national and international assessments are selected on a scientific basis in order to ensure that appropriate proportions of different schools are included (for example, small, medium and large schools; DEIS and non-DEIS schools; girls-only schools, boys-only schools and co-educational schools; English-medium schools and Irish-medium schools; and at post-primary level, voluntary secondary schools, community and comprehensive schools and schools in the VEC sector). This ensures that the data from the assessments is genuinely representative of the Irish school system.

***In order to ensure that the national and international assessments are based on scientifically selected samples of pupils and schools, schools will be required to cooperate with such national and international testing where requested to do so by the Minister for Education and Skills with effect from the date of this circular.***

## 9. SUMMARY CHECKLIST OF REQUIREMENTS

You are requested to make provision for the requirements of this circular in your school by:

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>increasing the time spent on literacy to 6.5 hours per week for the infant classes and 8.5 hours per week for the students with a full day</i></li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <i>See Section 5.2 for details</i>           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>increasing the time spent on mathematics to 3 hours 25 minutes per week for infant classes and to 4 hours and 10 minutes per week for students with a full day</i></li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <i>Section 5.2</i>                           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>reviewing the assessment policy of your school to ensure that it is fully informed by the NCCA publication, Assessment in the Primary School: Guidelines for Schools (2007) and the requirements of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy</i></li></ul>                                                                                                                                   | <i>Section 6.2 and Section 6.3</i>           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>implementing standardised testing in the period May/June for 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class students, from 2012 onwards</i></li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <i>Section 6.4</i>                           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>maintaining carefully the results of standardised tests in the school and making these available to Department officials for inspection</i></li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <i>Section 6.7</i>                           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>reporting to parents on the progress of their children using the NCCA templates for this purpose and by including the results of any standardised testing undertaken on the report cards. (The NCCA has developed information leaflets for parents explaining standardised test results (<a href="http://www.ncca.ie">www.ncca.ie</a>) which should be enclosed with the reports)</i></li></ul> | <i>Sections 7.1 to Section 7.4 inclusive</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>providing copies of pupils' report card information and standardised test results to the principals of schools to which pupils transfer; (at the end of sixth class or earlier); this information to be transferred to the new school only following the pupil's enrolment in that school</i></li></ul>                                                                                         | <i>Section 7.8</i>                           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>using standardised test results in reading and mathematics and other assessment information to inform your school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan</i></li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <i>Sections 7.5-7.6</i>                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>arranging for aggregated results of standardised tests conducted in your school to be reported to the board of management and the Department of Education and Skills once annually</i></li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                | <i>Sections 7.8-7.9</i>                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>co-operating with requests from the Minister for Education and Skills to participate in national and international assessments of pupil achievement.</i></li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <i>Section 8.3</i>                           |

## APPENDIX

### EXAMPLE OF FORMAT OF REPORT OF AGGREGATE STANDARDISED TEST RESULTS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS FROM JUNE 2012 ONWARDS

<b>Roll number</b>		<b>County</b>		<b>School</b>	
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#### ENGLISH READING

Please enter the number of students in second, fourth and sixth classes whose **scores** on a standardised test of English reading fall within the following ranges in respect of tests undertaken in May/June 2012:

Class	STen 1- 3	STen 4	STen 5	STen 6	STen 7	STen 8 - 10	Numbers of pupils excluded from test	Total enrolment in class	Test administered
Second class									Drumcondra Reading Test or Micra-T Reading Test
Fourth class									Drumcondra Reading Test or Micra-T Reading Test
Sixth class									Drumcondra Reading Test or Micra-T Reading Test

<b>Roll number</b>		<b>County</b>		<b>School</b>	
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**IRISH READING (FOR USE ONLY IN IRISH-MEDIUM SCHOOLS)**

Please enter the number of students in second, fourth and sixth classes whose **scores** on a standardised test of Irish reading fall within the following ranges in respect of tests undertaken in May/June 2012:

<b>Class</b>	<b>STen 1- 3</b>	<b>STen 4</b>	<b>STen 5</b>	<b>STen 6</b>	<b>STen 7</b>	<b>STen 8 - 10</b>	<b>Numbers of pupils excluded from test</b>	<b>Total enrolment in class</b>	<b>Test administered</b>
Second class									Drumcondra Reading Test
Fourth class									Drumcondra Reading Test
Sixth class									Drumcondra Reading Test

<b>Roll number</b>		<b>County</b>		<b>School</b>	
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### MATHEMATICS

Please enter the number of students in second, fourth and sixth classes whose **scores** on a standardised test of mathematics fall within the following ranges in respect of tests undertaken in May/June 2012:

<b>Class</b>	<b>STen 1- 3</b>	<b>STen 4</b>	<b>STen 5</b>	<b>STen 6</b>	<b>STen 7</b>	<b>STen 8 - 10</b>	<b>Numbers of pupils excluded from test</b>	<b>Total enrolment in class</b>	<b>Test administered</b>
Second class									Drumcondra Maths Test or Sigma-T Maths Test
Fourth class									Drumcondra Maths Test or Sigma-T Maths Test
Sixth class									Drumcondra Maths Test or Sigma-T Maths Test

## SUGGESTED TESTS FOR USE BY TEACHERS OF INFANT CLASSES

### Assessment in primary school

→ Teachers → Primary → Assessment

Teachers gather evidence about what and how a child learns on an ongoing basis. A range of assessment methods including testing are used to build a picture over time of a child's learning progress across the curriculum. This information is used to celebrate a child's current learning, and to help make decisions about next steps for future learning. Early identification of learning difficulties and intervention improves outcomes for children.

Assessment information is used to celebrate a child's current learning, and to help make decisions about next steps for future learning. Early identification of learning difficulties and intervention improves outcomes for children.

### Standardised testing in infant classes

[Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools](#) (NCCA, 2007) describes eight assessment methods which teachers use to gather evidence about children's progress in learning and to inform the next steps. Standardised testing is one of these methods. The administration of standardised tests to whole classes is inappropriate in infant classes. The whole class administration of a test may be confusing and upsetting for young children at this early stage of development given the attention capacity needed to complete a test booklet.

The developers of the Drumcondra reading and maths tests for 1st to 6th classes at the Education Research Centre, and the Micra-T and Sigma-T for 1st to 6th classes at Fallons, are clear that these standardised tests, if used before the end of First class, should be administered in **small groups only**. Sharing test scores on report cards for infant classes is not recommended.

### Screening and diagnostic tests for teachers of infant classes

- Suggested tests suitable for screening and diagnostic purposes in infant classes are identified here. They are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive, and recognise that many teachers may already administer similar tests that they find useful.
- The tests are categorised under:
  - Language
  - Reading literacy
  - Phonological/Phonemic awareness
  - Motor and developmental skills
  - Numeracy skills

It should be noted that some tests overlap more than one category.



## SUGGESTED TESTS FOR USE BY TEACHERS OF INFANT CLASSES

- The tests should be administered individually or in small groups to children.
- Most of the tests are norm referenced while some criterion referenced tests are also included. Norming refers to the use of scores to give an estimate of a child's performance compared to other children of the same age or in the same class group who took the same test.
- Some of the tests do not include Irish norms and some have not been recently revised.
- With the exception of the Irish reading standardised test, the scores achieved in the suggested tests reflect scores obtained by children with English as their first language in English language medium schools. Caution should be exercised when interpreting scores for children with English as their second language and for children in Irish language medium schools.
- While most of the tests can be administered at any time during the school year, testing should be done as soon as possible to support early intervention.



## LANGUAGE (EARLY YEARS)

Assessed skills	Test	Age range / Class	Administration	Form of scoring	Publisher website	Year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Receptive vocabulary (word meanings)</li> </ul>	The British Picture Vocabulary Scale (BPVS3)	3yrs. 1mth. - 6yrs. 11mths	Individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.gl-assessment.co.uk">www.gl-assessment.co.uk</a>	2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Word structure</li> <li>Sentence structure</li> <li>Concepts</li> <li>Following directions</li> <li>Expressive vocabulary</li> </ul>	The CELF Preschool Clinical Evaluation of Language Functions	3yrs – 6yrs. 11mths	Individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.pearsonclinical.co.uk">www.pearsonclinical.co.uk</a>	2004
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Semantic knowledge</li> <li>Morphological awareness</li> <li>Syntax</li> <li>Pragmatics</li> </ul>	The Bankson Language Test 2	3yrs – 6yrs. 11mths	Individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.proedinc.com">www.proedinc.com</a>	1990
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content and complexity of information</li> <li>Grammatical usage</li> </ul>	The Renfrew Language Scales-Action Picture Test	3yrs. 6mths -8yrs.5mths	Individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.speechmark.net">www.speechmark.net</a>	2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding, mediating and defining words</li> <li>Understanding and repeating sentences Understanding sentence formation</li> <li>Word analysis, discrimination and articulation</li> </ul>	The Test of Language Development - Primary (TOLD-P4)	4yrs – 8yrs. 11mths	Individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.proedinc.com">www.proedinc.com</a>	2008
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Language, visual and auditory discrimination</li> <li>Motor co-ordination</li> <li>Written language</li> <li>Reading</li> <li>Spelling</li> </ul>	Aston Index	5yrs – 14yrs	Individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.ldlearning.com">www.ldlearning.com</a>	1994
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Receptive language</li> <li>Comprehension</li> <li>Expressive language</li> </ul>	Assessment of Comprehension and Expression	6yrs – 11yrs	Individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.gl-assessment.co.uk">www.gl-assessment.co.uk</a>	2001



## READING LITERACY (EARLY YEARS)

Assessed skills	Test	Age range / Class	Administration	Form of scoring	Publisher website	Year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Concept of print</li> </ul>	LARR- Test of Emergent Literacy	4yrs – 5yrs	Small groups/ individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.gl-assessment.co.uk">www.gl-assessment.co.uk</a>	1993
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Memory</li> <li>▪ Learning styles</li> <li>▪ Social and motor skills</li> </ul>	Belfield Infant Assessment Profile	4yrs - 7yrs	Individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.folens.ie">www.folens.ie</a>	1991
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Language</li> <li>▪ Learning styles</li> <li>▪ Memory</li> <li>▪ Number and perceptual motor skills</li> </ul>	Bury Infant Check	4yrs. 1mths -5yrs. 6mths	Individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.gl-assessment.co.uk">www.gl-assessment.co.uk</a>	1986
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Concept of print</li> <li>▪ Listening comprehension</li> <li>▪ Knowledge of sounds and letters</li> <li>▪ Word recognition skills</li> </ul>	Early Literacy Test	4yrs. 6mths -7yrs. 5mths	Individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.hoddertests.co.uk">www.hoddertests.co.uk</a>	2000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Listening comprehension</li> <li>▪ Letter knowledge</li> <li>▪ Phonological/ phonemic awareness</li> <li>▪ Written vocabulary</li> </ul>	Middle Infant Screening Test	5yrs – 6yrs	Small groups/ individual	Criterion	<a href="http://www.gl-assessment.co.uk">www.gl-assessment.co.uk</a>	1993
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Letter identification: name and sound</li> <li>▪ Phonemic awareness</li> <li>▪ Word recognition</li> <li>▪ Written vocabulary</li> <li>▪ Running record of reading</li> </ul>	An observation survey of early literacy achievement	5yrs – 7yrs	Individual	Criterion and Norm	<a href="http://www.heinemann.com">www.heinemann.com</a>	2002
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Language</li> <li>▪ Visual and auditory discrimination</li> <li>▪ Motor co-ordination</li> <li>▪ Written language</li> <li>▪ Reading</li> <li>▪ Spelling</li> </ul>	Aston Index	5yrs – 14yrs	Individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.ldlearning.com">www.ldlearning.com</a>	1994



## READING LITERACY (EARLY YEARS)

*continued*

<p>Group screener and a follow up individual diagnostic test:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Screener: Word recognition Reading comprehension</li> <li>▪ Diagnostic: Phonological awareness Phonological memory Letter knowledge and letter sounds</li> </ul>	Drumcondra Test of Early Literacy	End of Senior Infants - Beginning of First Class	Small Groups/ individual	Criterion	<a href="http://www.erc.ie">www.erc.ie</a>	2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Léitheoireacht</li> <li>▪ Tuiscint</li> <li>▪ Éisteacht</li> </ul>	Triail Ghaeilge Dhroim Conrach do bhunscoileanna Gaeltachta agus lán Ghaeilge (Leibhéal 1)	Deireadh Naíonáin Shinsir – Tús Rang a hAon	Grúpaí beaga/ aonair	Caighdeánaithe (norm)	<a href="http://www.erc.ie">www.erc.ie</a>	2007

## PHONOLOGICAL/PHONEMIC AWARENESS (EARLY YEARS)

Assessed skills	Test	Age/ Class	Administration	Form of scoring	Publisher website	Year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Phonemic awareness</li> <li>▪ Phonological awareness</li> <li>▪ Letter knowledge</li> </ul>	Pre-school and Primary Inventory of Phonological Awareness (PIPA)	3yrs – 6yrs. 11mths	Individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.pearsonclinical.co.uk">www.pearsonclinical.co.uk</a>	2000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Phonemic awareness</li> <li>▪ Phonological awareness</li> <li>▪ Letter knowledge</li> </ul>	Phonological Abilities Test (PAT)	4yrs -7yrs	Individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.pearsonclinical.co.uk">www.pearsonclinical.co.uk</a>	1997
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Phonemic awareness</li> <li>▪ Phonological awareness</li> <li>▪ Letter knowledge</li> </ul>	Test of Phonological Awareness (TOPA 2+)	5yrs -8yrs	Small groups/ Individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.proedinc.com">www.proedinc.com</a>	2004
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Phonemic awareness</li> <li>▪ Phonological awareness</li> <li>▪ Letter knowledge</li> <li>▪ Invented spelling</li> </ul>	Phonological Awareness Test 2 (PAT 2)	5yrs -9yrs	Individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.linguissystems.com">www.linguissystems.com</a>	2007



## MOTOR AND DEVELOPMENTAL SKILLS (EARLY YEARS)

Assessed skills	Test	Age/ Class	Administration	Form of scoring	Publisher website	Year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical, social developments</li> <li>Hand-eye co-ordination</li> <li>Play and language development</li> </ul>	PIP Developmental Charts	0yrs -5yrs	Individual	Criterion	<a href="http://www.hoddertests.co.uk">www.hoddertests.co.uk</a>	1998
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Motor skills: fine and gross</li> <li>Number</li> <li>Oral language</li> <li>Visual and auditory meaning</li> </ul>	Early Years Easy Screen (EYES)	4yrs -5yrs	Individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.gl-assessment.co.uk">www.gl-assessment.co.uk</a>	1991
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Memory</li> <li>Learning styles</li> <li>Social skills</li> <li>Motor skills</li> </ul>	Belfield Infant Assessment Profile (BIAP)	4yrs -7yrs	Individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.folens.ie">www.folens.ie</a>	1991
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Language</li> <li>Visual and auditory discrimination</li> <li>Motor co-ordination</li> <li>Written language</li> <li>Reading</li> <li>Spelling</li> </ul>	Aston Index	5yrs -14yrs	Individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.ldlearning.com">www.ldlearning.com</a>	1994



## NUMERACY SKILLS (EARLY YEARS)

Skills Assessed	Test	Age/ Class	Administration	Form of scoring	Publisher website	Year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-number</li> <li>Numeration</li> <li>Number</li> <li>Basic addition and subtraction</li> <li>Shape recognition</li> </ul>	Mathematics Assessment for Learning and Teaching (MALT 5, Stage 1)	4yrs - 6yrs. 5mths	Small groups/ Individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.hoddertests.co.uk">www.hoddertests.co.uk</a>	2005
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-number</li> <li>Numeration</li> <li>Number</li> <li>Basic addition and subtraction</li> <li>Shape recognition</li> </ul>	Progress in Maths (4, 5 and 6)	4yrs - 6yrs	Small groups/ Individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.gl-assessment.co.uk">www.gl-assessment.co.uk</a>	2004
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reciting and writing numbers</li> <li>Simple addition and subtraction</li> </ul>	Basic Number Diagnostic Test	5yrs -7yrs	Individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.hoddertests.co.uk">www.hoddertests.co.uk</a>	2001
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early numeracy skills</li> <li>Early mathematical concepts</li> </ul>	Numeracy Progress Test stage 1	5yrs- 8 yrs	Small groups/ Individual	Norm	<a href="http://www.hoddertests.co.uk">www.hoddertests.co.uk</a>	2000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group screener and a follow up individual diagnostic test:</li> <li>Pre-number</li> <li>Numeration</li> <li>Addition and subtraction</li> </ul>	Drumcondra Test of Early Numeracy	End of Senior Infants - Beginning of First Class	Small groups/ Individual	Criterion	<a href="http://www.erc.ie">www.erc.ie</a>	2010

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**Circular 0018/2012**

**To: Boards of Management, Principal Teachers and Teaching Staff of Primary Schools**

**Supporting Assessment: Standardised Testing in Primary Schools**

Circular 0056/2011, which issued in October 2011, asked schools to implement a range of measures relating to the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. These measures included the implementation of standardised testing at three points in the primary school cycle and the reporting of the information from these tests to parents, boards of management and the Department of Education and Skills

The purpose of this circular is to give further information on the implementation of the revised standardised testing arrangements.

Please bring this circular to the attention of the board of management, principal and teaching staff of your school.

Breda Naughton,  
Principal Officer

April 2012

## 1. Background:

Circular 0056/2011 sets out, in detail, arrangements in relation to assessment under *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020*.  
([www.education.ie/featuredlinks/literacyandnumeracyforlearningandlife](http://www.education.ie/featuredlinks/literacyandnumeracyforlearningandlife))

Schools should consult that circular to ensure that they are fully implementing all the measures relating to the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. This circular focuses on aspects of implementation that relate to the administration of standardised tests and the reporting of the results of those tests.

Paragraph 6.4 of Circular 0056/2011 provides as follows in relation to standardised testing:

Schools are requested to ensure that standardised testing is implemented on an annual basis in the relevant classes beginning in May/June 2012.

- English-medium schools will be required to implement standardised testing in English reading and Mathematics during the period May/June for all students in 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes with effect from 2012 onwards
- Irish-medium schools will be required to implement standardised testing in Irish reading, English reading and Mathematics during the period May/June for all students in 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes with effect from 2012 onwards

## 2. Grants Available

Circular 0056/2011 provided that the grant for test instruments, scoring and manuals would be adjusted to take account of the additional testing point and that payment would be advanced from December 2012 to April 2012. The following grants were lodged in schools' bank accounts in 2012.

- **English medium schools:** A grant of €5.10 per pupil, subject to a minimum grant of €140 per school, based on the overall enrolment at 30 September 2011. This allows for testing at 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class in English reading and Mathematics.
- **Gaeltacht schools and Gaelscoileanna:** A grant of €6.40 per pupil, subject to a minimum grant of €162 per school based on the enrolments at 30 September 2011. This allows for testing at 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes in Irish reading, English reading and Mathematics.

The funds may be used to purchase test instruments and materials such as teachers' manuals, test scoring services or test-related software offered by test providers. Any funds remaining after the standardised testing costs have been met may be spent on diagnostic tests in accordance with school needs.

### **3. Report Card Templates for Parents**

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment has provided a range of standard report templates to assist schools in reporting information about the progress of primary pupils to parents, including information from standardised tests. All primary schools must use one of the report card templates for reporting to parents on pupils' progress and achievement at the end of the school year. The report that schools provide for pupils in 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes will include the results of standardised tests.

The NCCA has developed an online tool that will help primary schools to create a report card using these report card templates. The Report Card Creator can be accessed at [www.reportcard.ncca.ie](http://www.reportcard.ncca.ie). A postcard on the Report Card Creator is included in this mailing and at appendix 1 below.

In addition, the NCCA has developed an information leaflet that explains standardised test results to parents. This leaflet is available in several languages at [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie) and should be enclosed with the school report (see appendix 1 for further information).

### **4. Reporting to the Department of Education and Skills**

As indicated in Circular 0056/2011, data on student achievement are essential to inform national education policy and to identify ways of improving the performance of the education system. All primary schools will be required to report aggregate standardised test results for 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes once annually to the Department of Education and Skills.

The Department is developing an online system to enable schools to upload their standardised test data **via Easinet**. Appendix 2 sets out the aggregate data schools will need to retain from the 2011/12 tests to make a return via the online system. It is anticipated that the online system will be operational in Autumn 2012 and guidance will be provided to schools on how to use the system.

## Appendix 1

### Information for Parents on Standardised Tests:

To access information for Parents on Standardised Testing. On the home page click on “blue NCCA column”. On the right hand side of the page, click on link to “Information for Parents”. In the centre of the page, click on “Primary”. On left hand column “About us”, click on “Standardised Tests”.

### Information on NCCA Report Card Creator:

# Report Card Creator

www.reportcard.ncca.ie

### What is it?

An online tool for primary schools to create a report card to share information about the pupil's learning with parents at the end of the school year.

### Why was it developed?

To support schools to meet the requirement to ‘...use one of the (NCCA) report card templates for reporting to parents on students’ progress and achievement at school’ (DES Circular letter 0056/2011).

### How do I use it?

- Go to:**  
[www.reportcard.ncca.ie](http://www.reportcard.ncca.ie)
- Select Language:**  
English, Gaeilge or bilingual.
- Follow the **7 steps** to create your school's pupil report card.
- Download** pupil report card.
- Print** and/or **Save** the report card.



Your child's learning during the year	
Customise within the third and fourth reporting areas	
Your child's learning during the year	Your child's learning during the year
How you can further support your child's learning	Experiencing significant difficulty ★ Experiencing some difficulty ★ Managing comfortably ★ Capable and competent ★ Highly capable and competent
English	★ ★ ★ ★
Listening comprehension	
Oral expression	
Reading	
Written expression	



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Live: 4th May 2012

**APPENDIX 2**

**INFORMATION TO BE RETAINED BY SCHOOLS FOR  
ONLINE SUBMISSION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS IN AUTUMN 2012**

<b>Roll number</b>		<b>County</b>		<b>School</b>	
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**ENGLISH READING**

Please enter the number of students in second, fourth and sixth classes whose **scores** on a standardised test of English reading fall within the following ranges in respect of tests undertaken in May/June 2012:

<b>Class</b>	<b>STen 1-3</b>	<b>STen 4</b>	<b>STen 5</b>	<b>STen 6</b>	<b>STen 7</b>	<b>STen 8 - 10</b>	<b>Number of pupils tested</b>	<b>Numbers of pupils exempted from test</b>	<b>Number of pupils absent and not exempted</b>	<b>Total enrolment in class</b>	<b>Test administered</b>
Second class											Drumcondra Reading Test or Micra-T Reading Test
Fourth class											Drumcondra Reading Test or Micra-T Reading Test
Sixth class											Drumcondra Reading Test or Micra-T Reading Test

Roll number		County		School	
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**IRISH READING (FOR USE ONLY IN IRISH-MEDIUM SCHOOLS)**

Please enter the number of students in second, fourth and sixth classes whose **scores** on a standardised test of Irish reading fall within the following ranges in respect of tests undertaken in May/June 2012:

Class	STen 1-3	STen 4	STen 5	STen 6	STen 7	STen 8 - 10	Number of pupils tested	Numbers of pupils exempted from test	Number of pupils absent and not exempted	Total enrolment in class	Test administered
Second class											Drumcondra Reading Test
Fourth class											Drumcondra Reading Test
Sixth class											Drumcondra Reading Test

<b>Roll number</b>		<b>County</b>		<b>School</b>	
--------------------	--	---------------	--	---------------	--

## MATHEMATICS

Please enter the number of students in second, fourth and sixth classes whose **scores** on a standardised test of mathematics fall within the following ranges in respect of tests undertaken in May/June 2012:

<b>Class</b>	<b>STen 1- 3</b>	<b>STen 4</b>	<b>STen 5</b>	<b>STen 6</b>	<b>STen 7</b>	<b>STen 8 - 10</b>	<b>Number of pupils tested</b>	<b>Numbers of pupils exempted from test</b>	<b>Number of pupils absent and not exempted</b>	<b>Total enrolment in class</b>	<b>Test administered</b>
Second class											Drumcondra Maths Test or Sigma-T Maths Test
Fourth class											Drumcondra Maths Test or Sigma-T Maths Test
Sixth class											Drumcondra Maths Test or Sigma-T Maths Test

## What do my child's standardised test scores mean?

### What do standardised tests measure?

Standardised tests in **English reading** and **maths** measure your child's achievement compared to other children in **all schools** at the same class or age level. The standardised test in **Irish reading** measures a child's achievement compared to other children in Irish-speaking schools at the same class or age level.

### When does my child complete standardised tests?

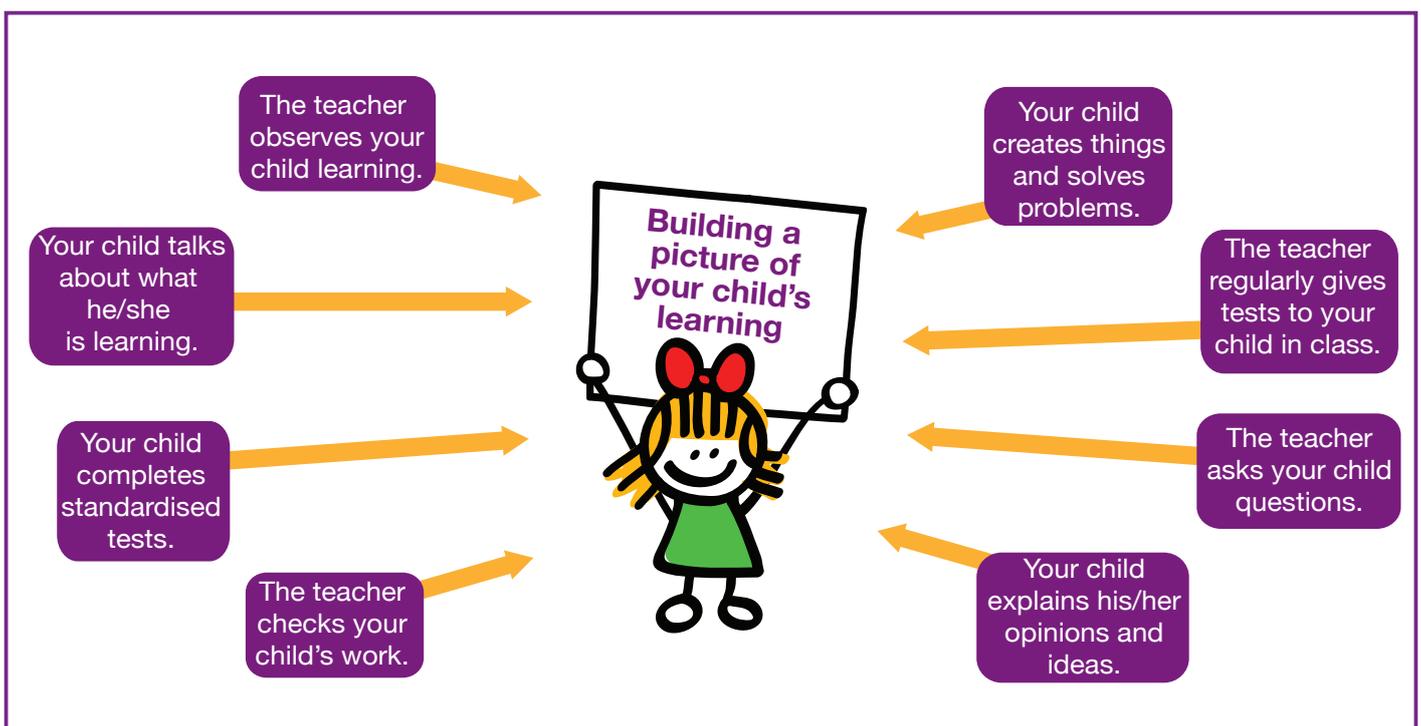
Your child completes standardised tests towards the end of **2nd, 4th and 6th classes**. Your child only completes a standardised test in **Irish reading** if he/she attends an Irish-speaking school. Some schools choose to use standardised tests with more classes.

### Do all children take standardised tests?

Your child's teacher will decide which children will take the tests. For example, if your child's first language is not English, the teacher may decide that he/she should not take the English reading test. Your child may, however, take the maths test. If your child has a learning or physical disability, the teacher may decide to use a different way to measure your child's progress.

### Are standardised tests the only way of gathering information about my child's learning?

No. The diagram below shows how the teacher uses **many** different ways to build a **picture of your child's learning** during the year. The teacher uses the picture to **celebrate** your child's achievements and to plan the **next steps** needed to build on progress made.





## What do my child's test scores mean?

The teacher used standard scores to tell you how your child did in the tests. Standard scores usually go from 55 to 145. The table below describes what the different standard scores tell you about your child's achievement in the tests.

Standard score	What does the standard score mean?	Approximate percentage of children who get this score
130 and above	Very high	2%
120 - 129	High	7%
110 - 119	High average	16%
90 - 109	Average	50%
80 - 89	Low average	16%
70 - 79	Low	7%
Below 70	Very low	2%

If your child's standard score is between 90 and 109 for example, you will know that his/her performance on the test is average. The table shows that about half of children in Ireland have standard scores in this range. You can also see that some children have standard scores above and below the average.

Scores for children with English as an additional language may not always reflect progress being made in class. Similar care is needed when interpreting scores for children with special educational needs.

## If my child's score is low, what does this tell me?

A low standard score (for example, 80) suggests that your child *may* have difficulties in one of the areas tested. Other assessments may be used to determine if this is the case. Information about your child's learning and development at home e.g. homework, may also be helpful to the teacher. Teachers at your child's school may decide that your child would benefit from extra support. If so, your child's teacher will talk to you about this.

## If my child's score is high, what does this tell me?

A high score *may* suggest that your child is a high achiever in the area tested. As with low scores, one high score is not enough to confirm this. Your child's teacher will use information from other classroom assessments to understand more clearly how well your child is doing in maths, English reading or Irish reading. The teacher may talk to you about extra learning opportunities that you and the school can provide for your child.

## What can affect my child's test score?

As with other tests your child does in school, the score on a standardised test can be affected by how he/she feels on the test day or by worry or excitement about a home or school event. This means that each test score is an **indication** of your child's achievement. Remember that you play an important role in encouraging and supporting your child regardless of test results. You may like to arrange to meet with your child's teacher if you have any concerns about his/her scores.

## How can I help my child?

The NCCA has developed some online resources to help you to support your child's learning in primary school. Many of these are available in various languages and new resources are regularly added to the parents' page at [www.ncca.ie/parents](http://www.ncca.ie/parents). Take a look at the resources for your child's class.



## Céard a chiallaíonn scóir chaighdeánaithe thástála mo pháiste?

### Céard a dhéanann tástálacha caighdeánaithe a thomhas?

Déanann tástálacha i **léamh an Bhéarla** agus sa **mhatamaitic** gnóthachtáil do pháiste a thomhas, i gcomparáid le páistí eile i **ngach scoil** sa rang céanna nó sa leibhéal céanna aoise. Déanann an tástáil chaighdeánaithe i **léamh na Gaeilge** gnóthachtáil pháiste a thomhas, i gcomparáid le páistí eile i scoileanna ina múinteoir trí Ghaeilge sa rang céanna nó sa leibhéal céanna aoise.

### Cathain a thugann mo pháiste faoi thástálacha caighdeánaithe?

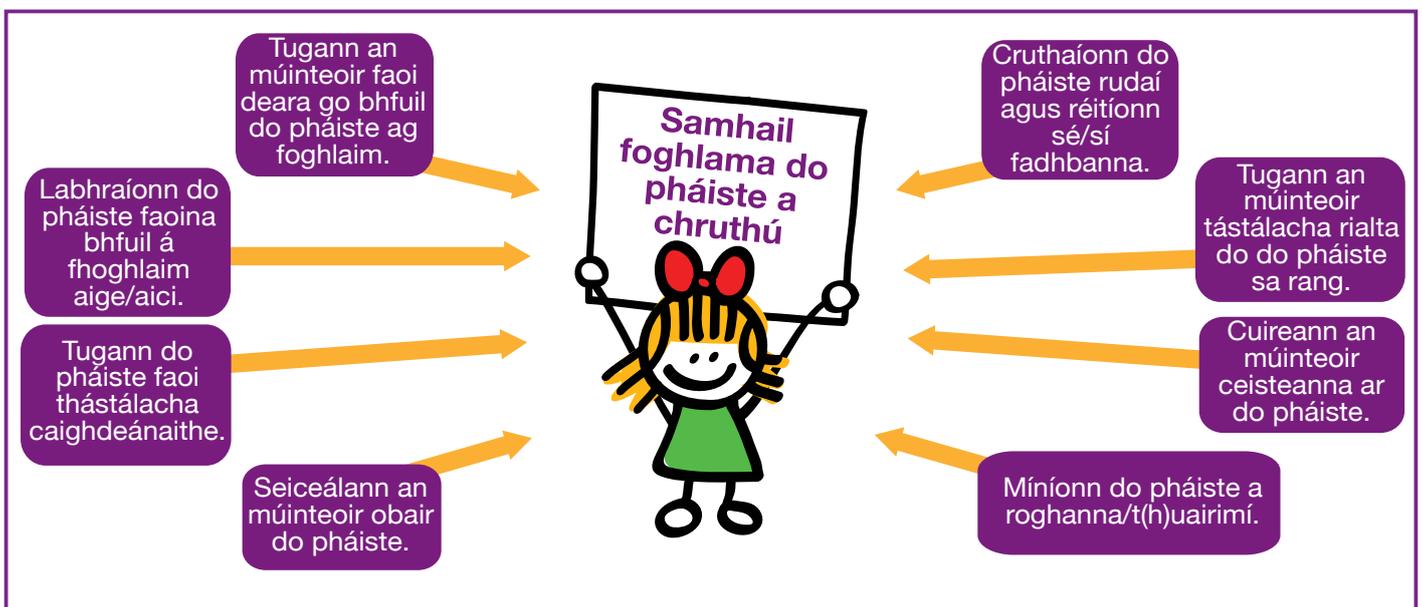
Tugann do pháiste faoi na tástálacha caighdeánaithe i dtreo dheireadh an **2ú, an 4ú agus an 6ú rang**. Ní thugann do pháiste faoi thástáil i **léamh na Gaeilge** ach amháin má fhreastalaíonn sé/sí ar scoil ina múinteoir trí Ghaeilge. Roghnaíonn roinnt scoileanna chun tástálacha caighdeánaithe a úsáid le níos mó ranganna.

### An ndéanann gach páiste na tástálacha caighdeánaithe?

Déanfaidh múinteoir do pháiste cinneadh faoi na páistí a dhéanfaidh na tástálacha. Mar shampla, murab é an Béarla céadteanga do pháiste, féadfaidh an múinteoir a chinneadh nár cheart dó/di an tástáil léimh a dhéanamh i mBéarla. Féadfaidh do pháiste, áfach, an tástáil mhatamaitice a dhéanamh. Má tá do pháiste faoi mhíchumas foghlama nó fisiciúil, féadfaidh an múinteoir an cinneadh a dhéanamh chun bealach éagsúil a úsáid chun dul chun cinn do pháiste a thomhas.

### An iad na tástálacha caighdeánaithe an t-aon bhealach chun faisnéis a bhailiú faoi fhoghlaim mo pháiste?

Ní hiad. Léiríonn an léaráid thíos conas a úsáideann an múinteoir **go leor** bealaí éagsúla chun **samhail foghlama do pháiste a chruthú** le linn na bliana. Úsáideann an múinteoir an deimhniú seo chun gnóthachtáil do pháiste a **cheiliúradh** agus chun na **chéad chéimeanna** eile a theastaíonn chun cur leis an dul chun cinn a rinneadh a phleanáil.



## Céard a chiallaíonn scóir thástála mo linbh?

D'úsáid an múinteoir **scóir chaighdeánacha** le léiriú duit conas mar a d'éirigh le do pháiste sna tástálacha. Is gnách go ngabhann scóir chaighdeánacha ó 55 aníos go dtí 145. Léiríonn an tábla thíos céard a insíonn na scóir éagsúla chaighdeánacha duit faoi ghnóthachtáil do pháiste sna tástálacha.

Scór caighdeánach	Céard a chiallaíonn an scór caighdeánach?	Neaschéatadán na bpáistí a bhaineann an scór seo amach
130 agus os a chionn	An-ard	2%
120 - 129	Ard	7%
110 - 119	Ardmheánach	16%
90 - 109	Meánach	50%
80 - 89	Ísealmheánach	16%
70 - 79	Íseal	7%
Faoi bhun 70	An-íseal	2%

Má tá scór caighdeánach do pháiste idir 90 agus 109, cuir i gcás, beidh a fhios agat gurb ionann a f(h)eidmíocht sa tástáil agus feidhmíocht mheánach. Léiríonn an tábla go bhfuil ag thart ar leath na bpáistí in Éirinn scóir chaighdeánacha sa réimse seo. Ina theannta sin, féadfaidh tú a thabhairt faoi deara go bhfuil scóir chaighdeánacha ag roinnt páistí os cionn agus faoi bhun an mheáin.

Tharlódh nach léireodh scóir le haghaidh páistí ag a bhfuil an Béarla mar theanga bhreise an dul chun cinn atá á dhéanamh i gcónaí sa seomra ranga. Ní mór go mbítear cúramach, chomh maith, nuair a bhaintear ciall as scóir i measc páistí ag a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta oideachais.

## Má tá scór mo pháiste íseal, céard a chuireann seo in iúl dom?

Tugann scór caighdeánach íseal le fios (mar shampla, 80) **go bhféadfadh** go bhfuil deacrachtaí ag do pháiste i gceann amháin de na réimsí a rinneadh a thástáil. Féadtar measúnuithe eile a úsáid lena dheimhniú an amhlaidh atá an cás. D'fhéadfadh eolas faoi fhoghlaim agus forbairt do pháiste sa bhaile bheith cabhrach don mhúinteoir freisin, e.g. obair bhaile. D'fhéadfadh múinteoirí ag scoil do pháiste a chinneadh go mbainfeadh do pháiste tairbhe as tacaíocht bhreise. Más amhlaidh a chinneann siad, labhróidh múinteoir do pháiste leat faoi seo.

## Má tá scór mo pháiste ard, céard a chuireann seo in iúl dom?

**D'fhéadfadh** scór ard a thabhairt le fios go mbaireann do pháiste ardscóir amach sa réimse a rinneadh a thástáil. Ar aon dul le scóir ísle, ní dóthain scór ard amháin leis seo a dheimhniú. Úsáidfidh múinteoir do pháiste faisnéis ó mheasúnuithe eile a dhéantar sa seomra ranga chun tuiscint níos soiléire a fháil ar a fheabhas atá ag éirí le do pháiste sa mhatamaitic, i léamh an Bhéarla nó i léamh na Gaeilge. D'fhéadfadh an múinteoir labhairt leat faoi dheiseanna breise foghlama ar féidir leat féin agus an múinteoir cur ar fáil do do pháiste.

## Cén rudaí ar féidir leo difear a dhéanamh do scór tástála mo pháiste?

Ar nós tástálacha eile a dhéanann do pháiste ar scoil, féadfaidh conas a bhraitheann sé/sí ar lá na tástála nó buairt nó bís a bheith air/uirthi faoi eachtra sa bhaile nó ar scoil difear a dhéanamh do scór ar thástáil chaighdeánaithe. Ciallaíonn seo go gcuireann gach scór tástála gnóthachtáil do pháiste **in iúl**. Cuimhnigh go bhfuil feidhm thábhachtach agat chun do pháiste a spreagadh agus chun tacú leis/léi gan aird ar na torthaí tástála. B'fhéidir gur mian leat a shocrú chun casadh le múinteoir do pháiste má bhíonn aon bhuarthaí agat faoina scóir.

## Conas is féidir liom cabhrú le mo pháiste?

D'fhorbair an NCCA roinnt acmhainní ar líne chun cabhrú leat tacú le foghlaim do pháiste sa bhunscoil. Tá fáil ar go leor díobh seo i dteangacha éagsúla agus cuirtear acmhainní nua le leathanach na dtuismitheoirí go rialta ag [www.ncca.ie/parents](http://www.ncca.ie/parents). Caith súil ar na hacmhainní atá ar fáil do rang do pháiste.



## Co oznaczają wyniki jakie moje dziecko uzyskało ze standaryzowanego sprawdzianu?

### Co mierzą standaryzowane sprawdziany?

Standaryzowany sprawdzian umiejętności **czytania w języku angielskim** i sprawdzian z **matematyki** służą do oceny osiągnięć dziecka w porównaniu z innymi dziećmi ze **wszystkich szkół** na poziomie tej samej klasy lub w tym samym wieku.

Standaryzowany sprawdzian umiejętności **czytania w języku irlandzkim** służy do oceny osiągnięć dziecka w porównaniu z innymi dziećmi ze szkół podstawowych z językiem irlandzkim na poziomie tej samej klasy lub w tym samym wieku.

### Kiedy moje dziecko przystępuje do standaryzowanych sprawdzianów?

Twoje dziecko przystępuje do standaryzowanych sprawdzianów pod koniec **2-giej, 4-tej i 6-tej klasy**. Twoje dziecko przystępuje do standaryzowanego sprawdzianu z **czytania w języku irlandzkim** tylko wtedy, gdy uczęszcza do szkoły podstawowej z wykładowym językiem irlandzkim. Niektóre szkoły przeprowadzają standaryzowane sprawdziany także w innych klasach.

### Czy wszystkie dzieci przystępują do standaryzowanych sprawdzianów?

Nauczyciel Twojego dziecka zdecyduje, które dzieci przystąpią do sprawdzianów. Na przykład, jeśli język angielski nie jest pierwszym językiem dziecka, nauczyciel może zdecydować, że nie będzie ono pisać sprawdzianu umiejętności czytania w języku angielskim. Twoje dziecko może jednak przystąpić do sprawdzianu z matematyki. Jeśli Twoje dziecko ma trudności w uczeniu się lub jest niepełnosprawne fizycznie, nauczyciel może zdecydować się wykorzystać inny sposób sprawdzenia jego postępów w nauce.

### Czy standaryzowane sprawdziany są jedynym sposobem gromadzenia informacji dotyczących uczenia się mojego dziecka?

Nie. Poniższy diagram prezentuje jak nauczyciel wykorzystuje **wiele** różnych sposobów, aby zbudować **obraz przedstawiający uczenie się Twojego dziecka** w ciągu roku. Nauczyciel wykorzystuje ten obraz, aby uczcić osiągnięcia Twojego dziecka oraz aby zaplanować **kolejne kroki**, które będą następstwem postępów, jakie Twoje dziecko poczyniło.



## Jak interpretować wyniki sprawdzianu mojego dziecka?

Nauczyciel korzysta ze skali standaryzowanej, aby poinformować Cię o osiągnięciach dziecka na sprawdzianie. Wyniki w skali standaryzowanej zwykle wynoszą od 55 do 145. Poniższa tabela pokazuje, co różne wyniki w skali standaryzowanej mówią o osiągnięciach dziecka na sprawdzianie.

Wynik w skali standaryzowanej	Co oznacza wynik w skali standaryzowanej?	Średni procent uczniów, którzy otrzymali ten wynik
130 i powyżej	Bardzo wysoki	2%
120 - 129	Wysoki	7%
110 - 119	Wysoki średni	16%
90 - 109	Średni	50%
80 - 89	Niski średni	16%
70 - 79	Niski	7%
Poniżej 70	Bardzo niski	2%

Jeśli, na przykład, wynik dziecka w skali standaryzowanej wynosi od 90 do 109, wiadomo, że jego osiągnięcia na sprawdzianie są przeciętne. Tabela pokazuje, że mniej więcej połowa dzieci w Irlandii uzyskuje wyniki w skali standaryzowanej w tym przedziale. Na podstawie tabeli można się zorientować, że niektóre dzieci uzyskują wyniki powyżej i poniżej średniej w skali standaryzowanej. Wyniki uzyskane przez dzieci, dla których język angielski jest dodatkowym językiem, nie zawsze odzwierciedlają postęp dziecka w klasie. Podobne podejście należy zastosować podczas interpretowania wyników w przypadku dzieci ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi.

## Jeśli wynik mojego dziecka jest niski, co to oznacza?

Niski wynik w skali standaryzowanej (np. 80) sugeruje, że dziecko **może** mieć trudności w jednym z aspektów poddanych sprawdzeniu. Inne formy sprawdzenia umiejętności mogą być zastosowane w celu potwierdzenia czy tak faktycznie jest. Informacje dotyczące uczenia się oraz rozwoju dziecka w domu np.: zadania domowe, również mogą okazać się pomocne dla nauczyciela. Nauczyciele ze szkoły do której uczęszcza Twoje dziecko mogą zdecydować, że dziecku przydałaby się dodatkowa pomoc. W takim przypadku porozmawia z Tobą nauczyciel Twojego dziecka.

## Jeśli wynik mojego dziecka jest wysoki, co to dla mnie oznacza?

Wysoki wynik ze sprawdzianu **może** sugerować, że dziecko ma duże osiągnięcia w aspektach, które zostały poddane sprawdzeniu. Podobnie jak z niskimi wynikami, jeden wysoki wynik nie wystarczy aby to potwierdzić. Nauczyciel Twojego dziecka wykorzysta informacje z innych form oceniania w klasie pracy na zajęciach aby lepiej zorientować się, na ile dobrze dziecko radzi sobie z matematyką oraz czytaniem w językach angielskim lub irlandzkim. Nauczyciel może porozmawiać z Tobą na temat dodatkowych możliwości uczenia się, jakie zarówno Ty jak i szkoła możecie zapewnić Twojemu dziecku.

## Co może mieć wpływ na wynik jaki uzyska moje dziecko ze standaryzowanego sprawdzianu?

Podobnie jak w przypadku innych sprawdzianów przeprowadzanych w szkole, na wyniki dziecka ze standaryzowanego sprawdzianu może mieć wpływ jego samopoczucie w dniu sprawdzianu albo zmartwienia lub pobudzenie wywołane sytuacją w domu lub w szkole. Oznacza to, że wynik każdego sprawdzianu jest **wskazaniem** osiągnięć Twojego dziecka. Pamiętaj, że odgrywasz ważną rolę w zachęcaniu i wspieraniu dziecka bez względu na wynik, jaki uzyskało na sprawdzianie. Możesz spotkać się z nauczycielem Twojego dziecka jeśli masz jakiegokolwiek obawy dotyczące wyniku jaki dziecko uzyskało.

## Jak mogę pomóc swojemu dziecku?

NCCA przygotowała materiały dostępne on-line aby pomóc Ci wspierać proces nauki Twojego dziecka w szkole podstawowej. Wiele z tych materiałów dostępnych jest w różnych językach. Regularnie dodawane są nowe materiały, które znaleźć można na stronie rodziców: [www.ncca.ie/parents](http://www.ncca.ie/parents). Zapoznaj się z materiałami dla klasy, w której jest Twoje dziecko.



## معلومات للوالدين

## النتيجة القياسية

← الوالدين ← المرحلة الابتدائية ← التقييم

# ماذا تعنى نتائج الاختبار الموحد لطفلي؟

### ماذا يقيس الاختبار الموحد؟

الاختبارات الموحدة في القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية والرياضيات تقيس مستوى إنجاز طفلك بالمقارنة مع الأطفال الآخرين في كل المدارس لنفس الفصل أو بنفس العمر. الاختبار الموحد في القراءة باللغة الإيرلندية يقيس مستوى إنجاز الطفل مقارنة مع الأطفال الآخرين في المدارس الناطقة باللغة الإيرلندية لنفس الفصل أو بنفس العمر.

### متى يستكمل طفلي الاختبارات الموحدة؟

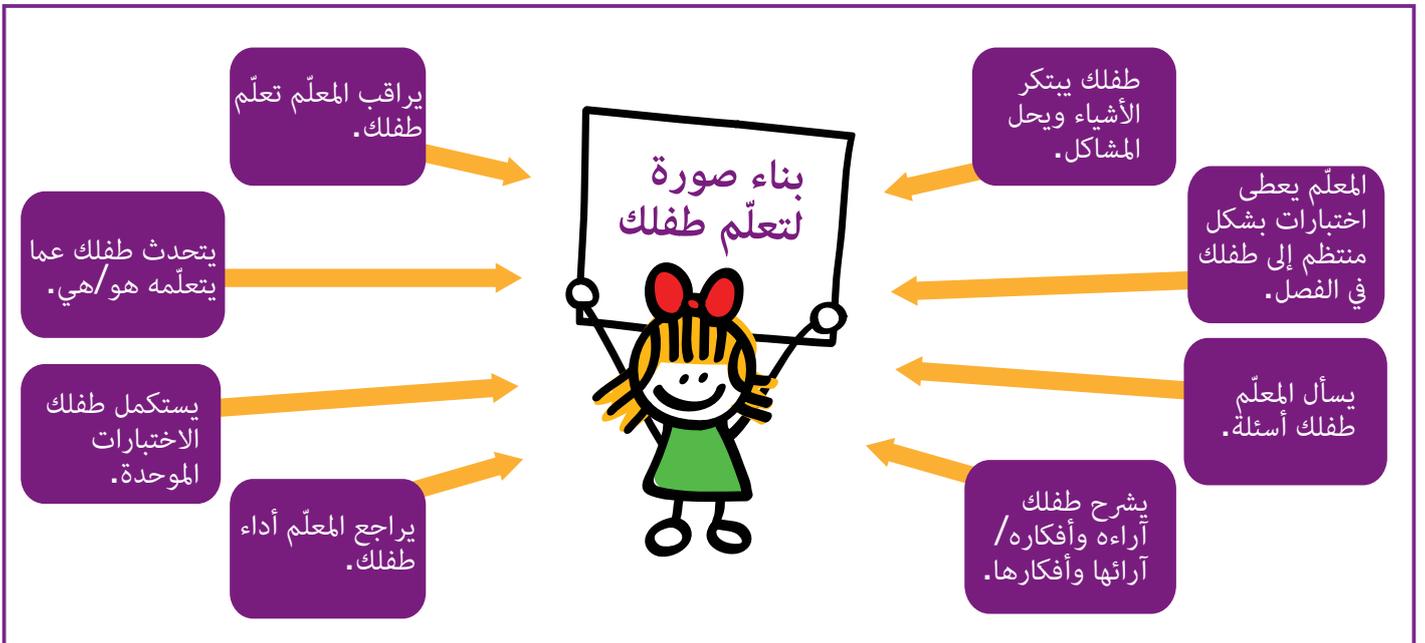
يستكمل طفلك الاختبارات الموحدة في نهاية الفصل الثاني، الرابع والسادس. يستكمل طفلك الاختبار الموحد في القراءة باللغة الإيرلندية إذا كان هو/هي يحضر مدرسة ناطقة باللغة الإيرلندية. تختار بعض المدارس استخدام الاختبار الموحد للفصول الأخرى.

### هل يجب على كل الأطفال أخذ الاختبار الموحد؟

يقوم معلّم طفلك بتقرير من هم الأطفال الذين سيقومون بأخذ الاختبار. على سبيل المثال، إذا لم تكن الإنجليزية هي اللغة الأولى لطفلك، قد يقرر المعلّم انه لا يجب عليه/عليها أخذ اختبار القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية. لكن قد يأخذ طفلك اختبار الرياضيات. إذا كان لطفلك صعوبة في التعلم أو إعاقة جسدية، قد يقرر المعلّم استخدام طريقة أخرى لقياس مستوى تقدم طفلك.

### هل الاختبار الموحد هو السبيل الوحيد لجمع المعلومات حول تعليم طفلي؟

كلا. يوضّح الرسم البياني ادناه كيف يستخدم المعلّم العديد من الطرق المختلفة لبناء صورة تعلم طفلك خلال السنة. يستخدم المعلّم الصورة للاحتفال بإنجازات طفلك والتخطيط للخطوات القادمة المطلوبة للبناء على التقدم المحرز.





## معلومات للوالدين

## النتيجة القياسية

### ماذا تعني علامات اختبار طفلي؟

استخدم المعلم العلامات القياسية لإخبارك عن كيفية أداء طفلك في الاختبارات.

تبدأ العلامات القياسية من 55 إلى 145. يصف الجدول أدناه ماذا تخبرك العلامات القياسية المختلفة عن أداء طفلك في الاختبارات.

النسبة التقريبية للأطفال الحائزين على هذه العلامة	ماذا تعني العلامة القياسية؟	العلامة القياسية
2%	عالي جدًا	130 فما فوق
7%	عالي	129 - 120
16%	عالي متوسط	119 - 110
50%	متوسط	109 - 90
16%	منخفض متوسط	89 - 80
7%	منخفض	79 - 70
2%	منخفض جدًا	أدنى من 70

إذا كانت النتيجة القياسية التي حاز عليها طفلك هي بين 90 و109، مثلًا، سوف تعلم أن أدائه/أدائها في الاختبار هو متوسط. يوضح الجدول أن حوالي نصف الأطفال في أيرلندا يحرزون علامة قياسية بهذه النتيجة. تستطيع كذلك رؤية أن لدى بعض الأطفال نتائج قياسية أعلى وأسفل من المتوسط. نتائج الأطفال ذوي الإنجليزية كلغة إضافية قد لا تعكس دائمًا التقدم الذي يتم احرازه في الصف، هناك حاجة إلى عناية مماثلة عند تفسير النتائج للأطفال ذوي الاحتياجات التعليمية الخاصة.

### إذا كانت علامة احراز طفلي منخفضة، ماذا يخبرني هذا؟

علامة احراز منخفضة (على سبيل المثال 80) تعني أن طفلك قد تكون لديه صعوبات في إحدى المجالات التي تم اختبارها. قد يتم استخدام تقييمات أخرى لتحديد ما إذا كان هذا هو الحال. معلومات حول تعلم طفلك وتطويره في المنزل، مثل الواجب المنزلي، قد تكون مفيدة للمعلم. قد يقرر المعلمون في مدرسة طفلك أن طفلك سيستفيد من دعم إضافي. إذا كان الأمر كذلك، سيقوم معلم طفلك بالتحدث إليك عن هذا.

### إذا كانت نتيجة احراز طفلي عالية، ماذا يخبرني هذا؟

علامة احراز مرتفعة قد تعني أن طفلك متفوق في المجال الذي تم اختباره. كما هو الحال مع العلامات المنخفضة، علامة مرتفعة واحدة لا تكفي لتأكيد هذا. سيقوم معلم طفلك باستخدام معلومات مستمدة من تقييمات الفصول الدراسية الأخرى للفهم بشكل أكثر وضوحًا كيفية أداء طفلك في الرياضيات، القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية أو القراءة باللغة الإيرلندية. قد يتحدث إليك المعلم حول فرص التعليم الإضافية التي باستطاعتك أنت والمدرسة توفيرها لطفلك.

### ماذا يمكن أن يؤثر على نتيجة اختبار طفلي؟

كما هو الحال مع الاختبارات الأخرى التي يأخذها طفلك في المدرسة، قد يؤثر على نتيجة الاختبار الموحّد كيفية شعوره/شعورها في يوم الاختبار أو القلق أو الإثارة حول حدث في المنزل أو المدرسة. يعني هذا أن كل نتيجة اختبار هي مؤشر لإنجاز طفلك. تذكر أنك تلعب دورًا هامًا في تشجيع ودعم طفلك بغض النظر عن نتائج الاختبار. قد ترغب في ترتيب لقاء مع معلم طفلك إذا كانت لديك أية مخاوف حول نتائج أدائه/أدائها في الاختبار.

### كيف أستطيع مساعدة طفلي؟

قام المجلس الوطني للمناهج والتقييم (NCCA) بتطوير بعض الموارد على الإنترنت لمساعدتك على دعم تعليم طفلك في المدرسة الابتدائية. تتوفر العديد منها بلغات مختلفة ويتم إضافة موارد جديدة بشكل منتظم إلى صفحة الوالدين على [www.ncca.ie/parents](http://www.ncca.ie/parents).  
القي نظرة على الموارد التابعة لفصل طفلك.



## Ce înseamnă punctajele copilului meu la testul standardizat?

### Ce măsoară testele standardizate?

Testele standardizate la **Engleză citire** și **matematică** măsoară rezultatele copilului dumneavoastră în comparație cu alți copii din **toate școlile**, din aceeași clasă sau de aceeași vârstă.

Testul standardizat de **Irlandeză citire** măsoară rezultatele copilului dumneavoastră în comparație cu alți copii din școlile în care se vorbește Irlandeză, din aceeași clasă sau de aceeași vârstă.

### Toți copiii susțin testele standardizate?

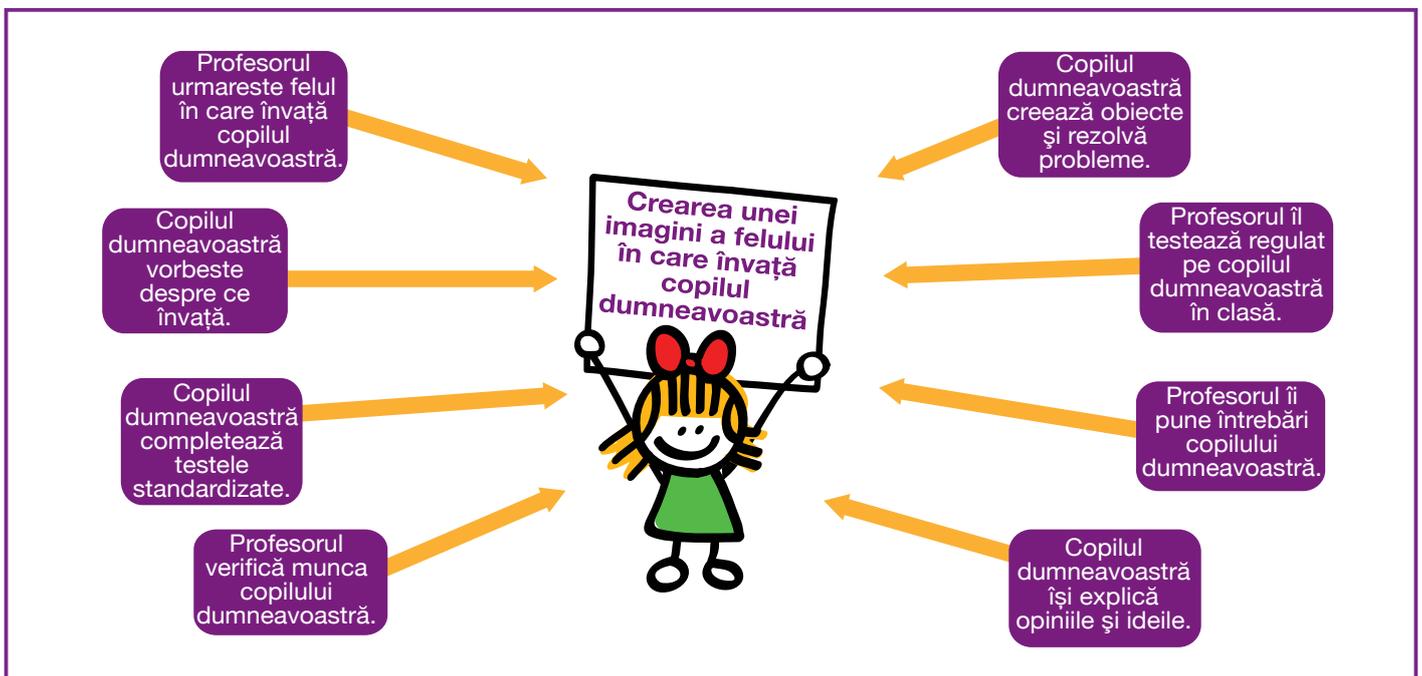
Profesorul copilului dumneavoastră va decide ce copii vor susține testele. De exemplu, dacă prima limbă a copilului dumneavoastră nu este Engleza, profesorul poate decide dacă el/ea nu trebuie să susțină testul de Engleză citire. Dacă copilul dumneavoastră are probleme de învățare sau dizabilități fizice, profesorul poate decide să folosească o altă metodă de măsurare a progresului copilului dumneavoastră.

### Când completează copilul meu testele standardizate?

Copilul dumneavoastră completează testele standardizate spre sfârșitul **claselor a 2-a, a 4-a și a 6-a**. Copilul dumneavoastră susține testul standardizat la **Irlandeză citire** dacă el/ea frecventează o școală în care se vorbește Irlandeză. Unele școli optează să folosească testele standardizate la mai multe clase.

### Sunt testele standardizate singura cale de a aduna informații despre felul în care învață copilul meu?

Nu. Diagrama de mai jos arată cum profesorul folosește **multe** metode diferite ca să creeze o **imagine a felului în care învață copilul dumneavoastră** pe parcursul anului. Profesorul folosește imaginea pentru a **aprecia** rezultatele copilului dumneavoastră și pentru a planifica **etapele următoare** necesare pentru utilizarea progresului făcut.



## Ce înseamnă punctajele testului copilului meu?

Profesorul folosește **punctaje standard** pentru a vă arăta cum s-a descurcat copilul dumneavoastră la teste. Punctajele standard sunt de la 55 la 145. Tabelul de mai jos descrie ce vă arată diferitele scoruri standard despre rezultatele copilului dumneavoastră la teste.

Punctajul standard	Ce înseamnă punctajul standard?	Proporția copiilor cu acest punctaj
130 și peste	Foarte ridicat	2%
120 - 129	Ridicat	7%
110 - 119	Ridicat mediu	16%
90 - 109	Mediu	50%
80 - 89	Sub medie	16%
70 - 79	Scăzut	7%
Sub 70	Foarte scăzut	2%

Dacă punctajul STen al copilului dumneavoastră este între 5 și 6, de exemplu, dumneavoastră veți ști că rezultatele lui/ei la test sunt medii. Tabelul arată că, în Irlanda, un copil din trei are punctajul STen în aceasta zonă. Puteți vedea, de asemenea, că unii copii au punctajul STen peste și sub medie. Punctajele copiilor pentru care Engleza este limba additională, este posibil să nu reflecte întotdeauna progresul făcut în clasă. În mod similar va fi nevoie de atenție și la interpretarea punctajelor copiilor cu nevoi educaționale speciale.

## Dacă punctajul copilului meu este scăzut, ce îmi spune acest lucru?

Un punctaj STen de 1, 2 sau 3 sugerează că copilul dumneavoastră **poate** avea dificultăți în unul din domeniile testate. Pot fi folosite alte evaluări pentru a determina dacă așa este cazul. Informațiile despre felul în care copilul dumneavoastră învață și se dezvoltă acasă, de exemplu tema pentru acasă, pot fi de asemenea de ajutor profesorului. Profesorii din școala copilului dumneavoastră ar putea decide dacă copilul dumneavoastră ar putea beneficia de ajutor suplimentar. În acest caz, profesorul va discuta aceasta cu dumneavoastră.

## Dacă punctajul copilului meu este ridicat, ce îmi arată acest lucru?

Un punctaj STen de 8, 9 sau 10 **poate** sugera faptul că copilul dumneavoastră este foarte sărguincios în domeniul testat. Ca și în cazul punctajului scăzut, un punctaj ridicat nu este de ajuns să confirme acest lucru. Profesorul copilului dumneavoastră va folosi informațiile de la celelalte evaluări școlare ca să înțeleagă mai clar cât de bine se descurcă copilul dumneavoastră la matematică, Engleză citire sau Irlandeză citire. Profesorul poate discuta cu dumneavoastră despre oportunități suplimentare de învățare pe care dumneavoastră și școala i le puteți furniza copilului dumneavoastră.

## Ce poate afecta punctajul testului copilului meu?

Ca și la alte teste susținute de către copilul dumneavoastră în școală, punctajul la un test standardizat poate fi afectat de către felul în care el/ea se simte în ziua testului sau de îngrijorare ori emoții legate de un eveniment de acasă sau de la școală. Aceasta înseamnă că fiecare punctaj la test este **o indicație** a rezultatelor copilului dumneavoastră. Rețineți că jucați un rol important în încurajarea și sprijinirea copilului dumneavoastră indiferent de rezultatele testului. Puteți aranja o întâlnire cu profesorul copilului dumneavoastră dacă aveți orice nelămuriri despre punctajele lui/ei.

## Cum îmi pot ajuta copilul?

NCCA a creat niște resurse online pentru a vă ajuta să sprijiniți modul în care copilul învață în școala primară. Multe dintre acestea sunt disponibile în diverse limbi și resurse noi sunt adăugate regulat la pagina părinților la [www.ncca.ie/parents](http://www.ncca.ie/parents). Aruncați o privire la resursele pentru clasa copilului dumneavoastră.



## Что означают результаты стандартизированных тестов моего ребёнка?

### Что оценивают стандартизированные тесты?

Стандартизированные тесты по **чтению на английском языке** и по **математике** оценивают успеваемость ребёнка по сравнению с успеваемостью детей в таком же классе или такого же возраста **всех школ**.

Стандартизированный тест по **чтению на ирландском языке** оценивает успеваемость ребёнка по сравнению с успеваемостью детей в таком же классе или такого же возраста тех школ, в которых говорят на ирландском языке.

### Когда мой ребёнок будет проходить стандартизированные тесты?

Ваш ребёнок пройдёт стандартизированные тесты в конце **2-го, 4-го и 6-го классов**. Ваш ребёнок пройдёт стандартизированный тест по **чтению на ирландском языке** только в том случае, если он посещает школу, в которой говорят на ирландском.

### Все ли дети проходят стандартизированные тесты?

Учитель вашего ребёнка решит, кто будет проходить тесты. Например, если первый язык вашего ребёнка не является английским, учитель может решить, что ему/ей не нужно проходить тест по чтению на английском. Но ребёнку, возможно, нужно будет пройти тест по математике. Если у ребёнка имеются трудности в обучении или физические недостатки, учитель может применить другой способ оценки успеваемости.

### Являются ли стандартизированные тесты единственным способом получения информации об обучении моего ребёнка?

Нет. На представленной ниже схеме показано, что учитель может использовать **много** различных способов для **построения общей картины успеваемости ребёнка** в течение года. Учитель пользуется данной картиной, чтобы **отметить** успеваемость ребёнка и правильно спланировать **следующие шаги** для повышения его успеваемости.



## Что означают результаты тестов моего ребёнка?

Учитель использует стандартизированные баллы для определения результатов теста. По данной стандартизированной шкале можно получить от 55 до 145 баллов. В представленной ниже таблице описано, что означают различные стандартизированные баллы, полученные за тест.

Стандартизированные баллы	Что означает стандартизированный балл?	Приблизительный процент детей, получающих данный балл
130 и выше	Очень высокий	2%
120 - 129	Высокий	7%
110 - 119	Выше среднего	16%
90 - 109	Средний	50%
80 - 89	Ниже среднего	16%
70 - 79	Низкий	7%
Ниже 70	Очень низкий	2%

Если ребёнок получил от 90 до 109 баллов, у него/неё средний результат. В таблице показано, что около половины детей в Ирландии получают балл в этом диапазоне. Вы так же можете видеть, что результаты некоторых детей выше или ниже среднего. Балл детей, у которых английский язык преподаётся как дополнительный предмет, не всегда может отображать прогресс, достигнутый на уроках. Этот факт также следует учитывать при интерпретировании баллов детей со специальными потребностями в образовании.

## Если балл моего ребёнка низкий, что это значит?

Низкий балл (например, 80) означает, что у ребёнка, **возможно**, имеются трудности в одной из проверяемых областей знаний. В этом случае возможно использование других способов оценки знаний для точного определения. Информация об обучении и развитии вашего ребёнка дома, например домашняя работа, также может быть полезной для учителя. Учителя в школе вашего ребёнка могут решить, что ему/ей необходима дополнительная работа. Если это так, учитель обсудит это с вами.

## Если балл моего ребёнка высокий, что это значит?

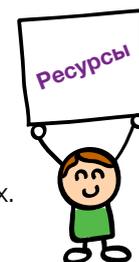
Высокий балл **может** означать, что у ребёнка высокая успеваемость в проверяемой области знаний. Так же как и в ситуации с низким баллом, получение высокого балла не достаточно для того, чтобы точно определить успеваемость ребёнка. Учитель будет использовать результаты других тестов, проводимых в классе, чтобы более чётко выяснить уровень успеваемости вашего ребёнка по математике или чтению на английском или ирландском языках. Учитель может обсудить с вами дополнительную возможность обучения, которая может быть предоставлена вашему ребёнку вами и школой.

## Что может повлиять на результат теста моего ребёнка?

Как и при выполнении других тестов в школе, на результат стандартизированного теста могут повлиять самочувствие ребёнка в день тестирования, а также его уровень обеспокоенности или волнения по поводу событий дома или в школе. Это означает, что каждый результат теста – **показатель** успеваемости ребёнка. Помните, вы играете важную роль в поощрении и поддержке своего ребёнка независимо от результатов тестов. Вы можете договориться о встрече с учителем ребёнка, если у вас возникли какие-либо вопросы о результатах тестов.

## Как я могу помочь своему ребёнку?

Национальный совет образования (NCCA) разработал некоторые ресурсы в Интернете, которые помогут Вам поддержать своего ребёнка в обучении в начальной школе. Многие из них доступны на различных языках. Новые ресурсы регулярно добавляются на страницу для родителей по адресу [www.ncca.ie/parents](http://www.ncca.ie/parents). Ознакомьтесь с ресурсами, которые соответствуют уровню вашего ребёнка.



## Que signifient les résultats de mon enfant à l'examen normalisé (standardised test) ?

### Qu'évaluent les examens normalisés ?

Les examens normalisés en **lecture en anglais** et en **mathématiques** évaluent les progrès de votre enfant par rapport aux autres enfants de **toutes les écoles**, de la même classe, ou du même âge.

L'examen normalisé en **lecture en gaélique** évalue les progrès de votre enfant par rapport aux autres enfants des écoles gaélophones, de la même classe ou du même âge.

### Quand mon enfant passe-t-il/elle les examens normalisés ?

Votre enfant passe les examens normalisés vers la fin du 2e, 4e et 6e cycle (**2nd, 4th and 6th classes**).

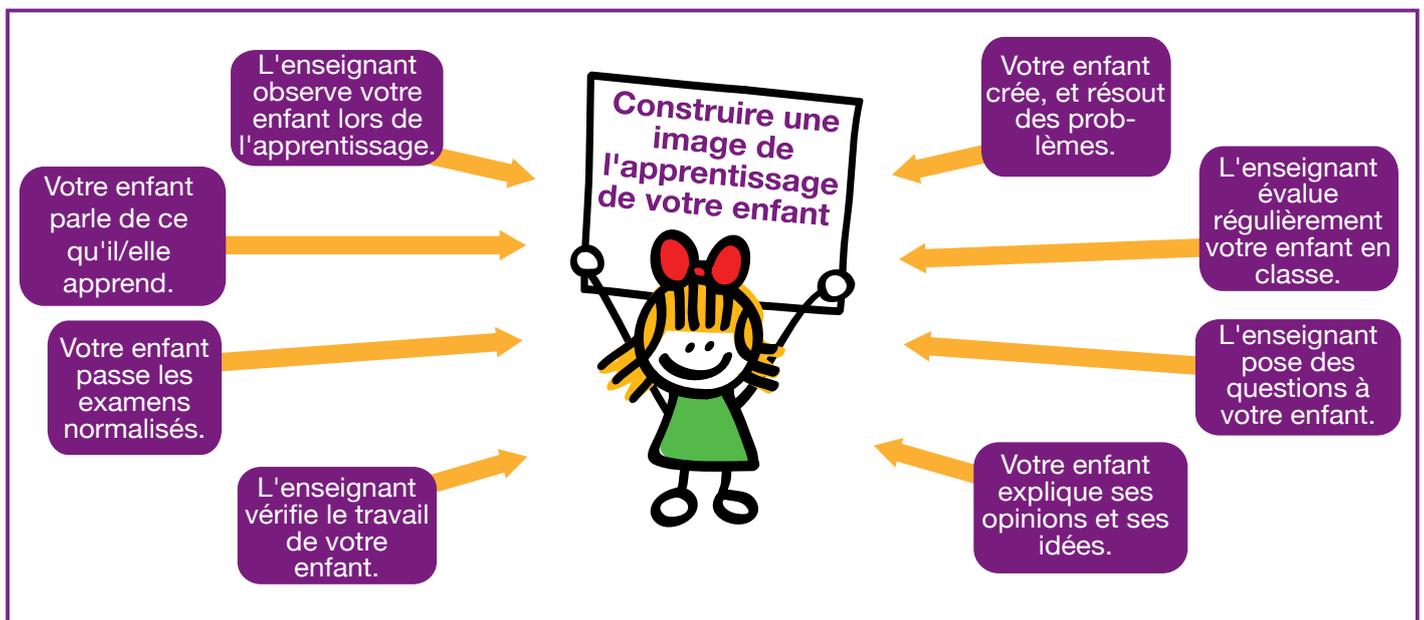
Votre enfant ne passe d'examen normalisé en **lecture en gaélique** que s'il/elle étudie dans une école gaélophone. Certaines écoles choisissent d'utiliser les examens normalisés dans plusieurs autres cycles.

### Tous les enfants passent-ils les examens normalisés ?

L'enseignant de votre enfant décidera quels enfants passeront les examens. Par exemple, si la langue maternelle de votre enfant n'est pas l'anglais, l'enseignant peut décider qu'il/elle ne passera pas l'examen de lecture en anglais. Mais votre enfant pourrait passer l'examen de mathématiques. Si votre enfant a des difficultés physiques ou d'apprentissage, l'enseignant choisira peut-être une autre façon d'évaluer ses progrès.

### Les examens normalisés sont-ils la seule façon d'obtenir des informations concernant l'apprentissage de mon enfant ?

Non. Le diagramme ci-dessous montre les **nombreuses** méthodes utilisées par l'enseignant pour construire une **image de l'apprentissage de votre enfant** tout au long de l'année. L'enseignant utilise cette image pour **célébrer** les progrès de votre enfant, et pour planifier les **étapes futures** nécessaires à une progression continue.



## Que signifient les résultats de mon enfant aux examens ?

L'enseignant a utilisé des **résultats normalisés** pour vous informer des résultats de votre enfant aux examens. Les résultats normalisés s'échelonnent généralement entre 55 et 145. Le tableau ci-dessous décrit ce que signifient les différents résultats normalisés quant à la réussite de votre enfant aux examens.

Résultats normalisés	Que signifie le résultat normalisé ?	Pourcentage approximatif des enfants qui ont ce résultat
130 et plus	Très bon	2 %
120 - 129	Bon	7 %
110 - 119	Assez bon	16 %
90 - 109	Moyen	50 %
80 - 89	Assez bas	16 %
70 - 79	Bas	7 %
Moins de 70	Très bas	2 %

Si le résultat normalisé de votre enfant se situe par exemple entre 90 et 109, vous saurez que son résultat à l'examen correspond à la moyenne. Le tableau montre que la moitié environ des enfants en Irlande obtient des résultats normalisés dans cette fourchette. Vous pouvez également voir que certains enfants ont des résultats normalisés au-dessus et en dessous de la moyenne.

Les résultats pour les enfants ayant l'anglais comme langue additionnelle ne reflètent pas toujours les progrès effectués en classe. Il faut prêter une attention particulière à l'interprétation des résultats des élèves ayant des besoins éducatifs spécifiques.

## Si le résultat de mon enfant est bas, qu'est-ce que cela signifie ?

Un résultat normalisé bas (par exemple, 80) suggère que votre enfant **pourrait** avoir des difficultés dans l'une des matières évaluées. D'autres évaluations pourront être mises en place pour déterminer si c'est le cas. Les informations concernant l'apprentissage de votre enfant et son développement à la maison, par exemple les devoirs, peuvent également être utiles à l'enseignant. Les enseignants de l'école de votre enfant peuvent décider qu'un soutien supplémentaire pourrait être profitable pour votre enfant. Dans ce cas, son enseignant vous en parlera.

## Si le résultat de mon enfant est bon, qu'est-ce que cela signifie ?

Un bon résultat **pourrait** suggérer que votre enfant réussit très bien dans la matière évaluée. Tout comme pour les bas résultats, un seul bon résultat n'est pas suffisant pour le confirmer. L'enseignant de votre enfant utilisera d'autres informations, d'autres évaluations en classe pour mieux comprendre le niveau de votre enfant en mathématiques, lecture en anglais ou en gaélique. L'enseignant discutera peut-être avec vous d'opportunités supplémentaires d'apprentissage que vous et l'école pouvez offrir à votre enfant.

## Qu'est-ce qui peut affecter les résultats de mon enfant à l'examen ?

Tout comme pour d'autres examens que votre enfant passe à l'école, le résultat d'un examen normalisé peut être affecté par la façon dont il/elle se sent le jour de l'examen, ou par ses inquiétudes ou son excitation concernant un événement à la maison ou à l'école. Chaque résultat d'examen est donc une indication des progrès de votre enfant. Rappelez-vous que vous jouez un rôle important, et devez encourager et soutenir votre enfant quelque soient ses résultats. Vous pouvez organiser une réunion avec son enseignant si vous avez des inquiétudes quant à ses résultats.

## Comment aider mon enfant ?

La NCCA a développé des ressources Internet pour vous aider à soutenir l'apprentissage de votre enfant à l'école primaire. Beaucoup sont disponibles dans différentes langues, et de nouvelles ressources sont ajoutées à la page des parents, à [www.ncca.ie/parents](http://www.ncca.ie/parents). Allez voir les ressources disponibles pour la classe de votre enfant. Allez voir les ressources disponibles pour la classe de votre enfant.



## 孩子标准考试成绩意味着什么？

### 标准考试测量什么？

英语阅读和数学标准考试测量孩子与其他所有学校同年级或同年龄段孩子相比较的成绩。

爱尔兰语阅读标准考试测量孩子与其他爱尔兰语学校同年级或同年龄段孩子相比较的成绩。

### 孩子什么时候进行标准考试？

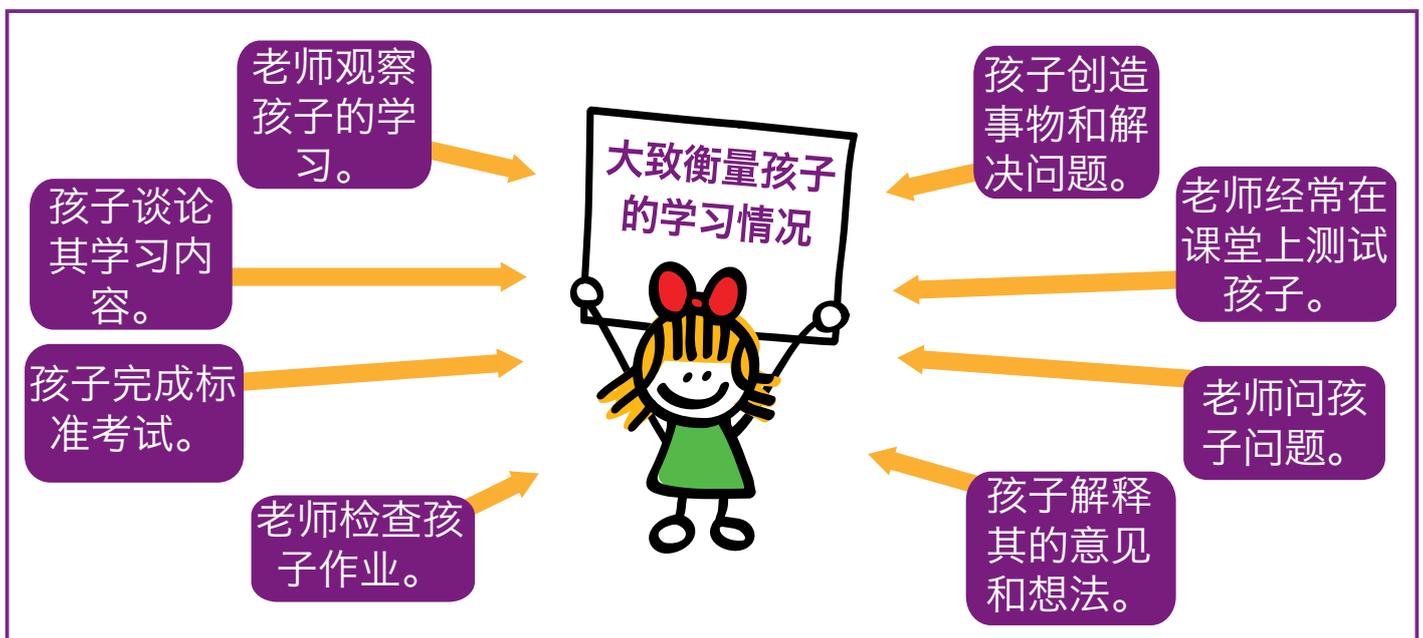
孩子在2、4和6年级末进行标准考试。如孩子在爱尔兰语学校上学，就只需考加一次爱尔兰语阅读标准考试。但某些学校会选择在更多年级使用标准考试。

### 所有孩子都需要参加标准考试吗？

孩子的老师将决定哪些孩子将参加考试。例如，如果孩子的第一语言不是英语，老师可能不会让他/她参加英语阅读测试，改而参加数学考试。如果孩子有学习障碍或身体残疾，考师会使用其他方式来衡量孩子的进步。

### 标准考试是衡量孩子学习成绩的唯一方法吗？

不是。以下图表说明老师大致衡量学年中孩子学习情况的多种不同方式。老师以孩子的学习情况来记录孩子的进步，并计划取得进步的下一步。



## 孩子考试成绩意味着什么？

老师用标准分来衡量在考试中的成绩。标准分通常在55到145之间。下表描述孩子在不同标准分下的考试成绩。

标准分	标准分代表什么意思？	得到这个分数孩子大约百分比
130 和以上	非常高	2%
120 - 129	高分	7%
110 - 119	中偏上	16%
90 - 109	中等	50%
80 - 89	中偏下	16%
70 - 79	低分	7%
70 以下	非常低	2%

例如，如果孩子的标准分在90和109之间，这就意味着其成绩在中等水平。该表显示，在爱尔兰大约一半孩子的标准分在这个范围内。同时，有些孩子的标准分在平均水平以上和以下。英语作为第二语言的孩子，他们的成绩并不总是反应学习情况，同样，对于接受特殊教育的孩子，他们的成绩也需要特别的注意。

## 如果孩子得分较低，这意味着什么？

低标准得分（例如80）表示孩子可能在某一考试科目存在困难。老师将会用其他测试来考核是否存在这种情况。孩子在家的学习发展，例如家庭作业，同样对老师的考核有帮助。孩子学校的教师会决定孩子是否需要额外的帮助。如有需要，孩子的老师会与您谈话。

## 如果孩子得分较高，这意味着什么？

高分表明孩子可能在测试科目中学习优秀。但像低分一样，高分并不能完全证明孩子学习优秀。老师将从其他课堂评估信息中，更清楚地了解孩子在数学、英语阅读或爱尔兰语阅读的学习情况。老师可以和您探讨您和学校能为孩子提供额外学习机会的方法。

## 什么可以影响孩子的考试分数？

与其他学校考试一样，标准化考试可能会受到孩子考试当天的状态，对家庭或学校某个活动的担忧或兴奋影响。这意味着，每个考试分数都是孩子学习情况的一个指标。请记住，无论成绩如何，都要鼓励和支持孩子。如果对孩子的分数有任何疑问，您可与老师安排见面。

## 怎样帮助孩子？

NCCA已编写了一些网上资料，指导您如何帮助孩子在小学阶段的学习。这些资料大多提供多种语言，新资料会经常在[www.ncca.ie/parents](http://www.ncca.ie/parents)家长页上更新。请浏览孩子班级的资料。





## O que significam as classificações dos testes normalizados do/a meu/minha filho/a?

### O que é que os testes normalizados avaliam?

Os testes normalizados de **leitura de inglês** e de **matemática** avaliam o desempenho do/a seu/sua filho/a comparativamente com o de outras crianças em **todas as escolas** no mesmo ano ou na mesma faixa etária.

O teste normalizado de **leitura de irlandês** avalia o desempenho de uma criança em comparação com outras crianças de escolas de língua irlandesa no mesmo ano ou na mesma faixa etária.

### Quando é que o/a meu/minha filho/a faz os testes normalizados?

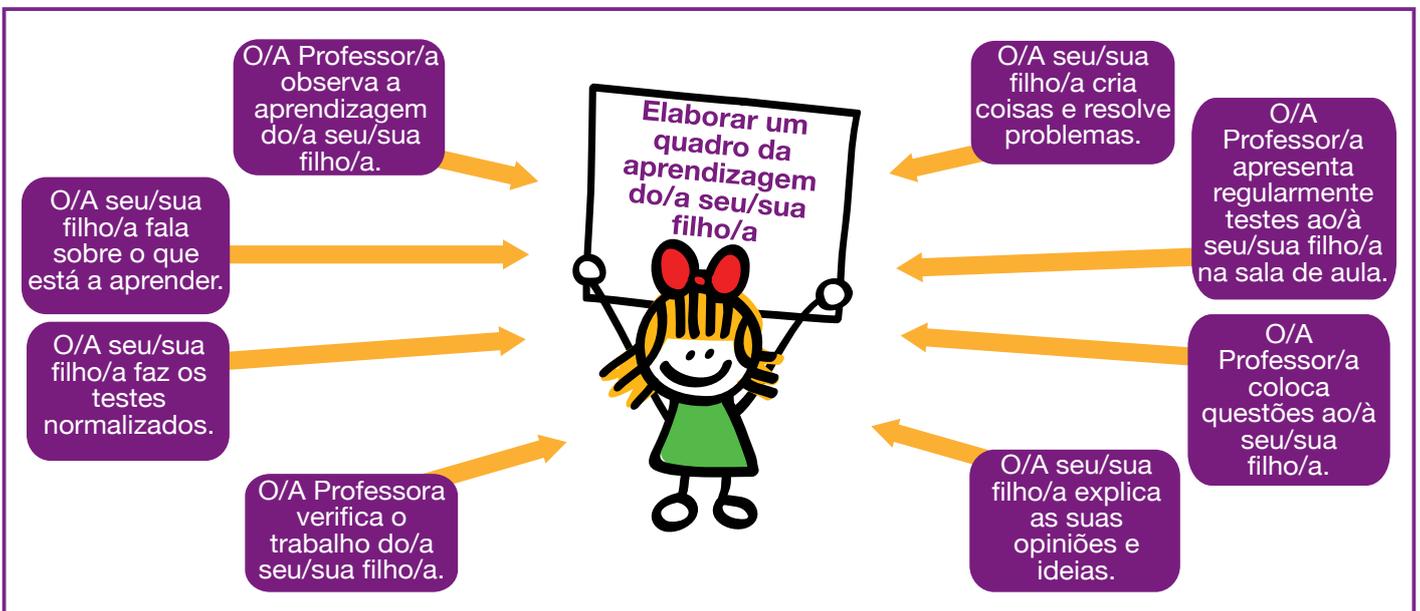
O/A seu/sua filho/a faz os testes normalizados no final do **2º, 4º e 6º ano**. O/A seu/sua filho/a apenas fará um teste normalizado de **leitura de irlandês** se frequentar uma escola de língua irlandesa. Algumas escolas optam por realizar testes normalizados em mais anos.

### Todas as crianças fazem os testes normalizados?

Caberá ao/à Professor/a do/a seu/sua filho/a decidir quais as crianças que farão os testes. Por exemplo, se a primeira língua do/a seu/sua filho/a não for o inglês, o/a Professor/a pode decidir que ele/a não deve fazer o teste de leitura de inglês. O/A seu/sua filho/a pode, no entanto, fazer o teste de matemática. Se o/a seu/sua filho/a tiver dificuldades de aprendizagem, ou uma incapacidade física, o/a Professor/a pode optar por outra forma de avaliação do progresso do/a seu/sua filho/a.

### Os testes normalizados são a única forma de recolher informação sobre a aprendizagem do/á meu/minha filho/a?

Não. O diagrama abaixo mostra como o/a Professor/a usa **muitas** formas distintas para elaborar um **quadro da aprendizagem do/a seu/sua filho/a** ao longo do ano. O/A Professor/a usa o quadro para **assinalar** os êxitos do/a seu/sua filho/a e para planear os **próximos passos** necessários para construir sobre os progressos realizados.



## Qual o significado das classificações dos testes do/a meu/minha filho/a?

O/A Professora utilizou as **classificações normalizadas** para o/a informar quanto ao desempenho do/a seu/sua filho/a nos testes. As classificações normalizadas variam normalmente entre 55 e 145. A tabela abaixo descreve o que as diferentes classificações normalizadas revelam sobre o desempenho do/a seu/sua filho/a nos testes.

Classificação normalizada	O que significa a classificação normalizada?	Porcentagem aproximada de crianças que obtêm esta classificação
130 e superior	Muito alta	2%
120 - 129	Alta	7%
110 - 119	Média-alta	16%
90 - 109	Média	50%
80 - 89	Média-baixa	16%
70 - 79	Baixa	7%
Abaixo de 70	Muito baixa	2%

Se a classificação normalizada do/a seu/sua filho/a for entre 90 e 109, por exemplo, saberá que o/a seu/sua filho/a teve um desempenho médio no teste. A tabela mostra que cerca de metade das crianças na Irlanda têm classificações normalizadas dentro deste intervalo. Poderá também ver que algumas crianças têm classificações normalizadas acima e abaixo da média. As classificações de crianças com Inglês como idioma adicional podem não reflectir sempre os progressos feitos na aula. É necessário um cuidado semelhante na interpretação de classificações de crianças com necessidades educativas especiais.

## Se a classificação do/a meu/minha filho/a for baixa, o que é que isso me diz?

Uma classificação normalizada baixa (por exemplo, 80) sugere que o/a seu/sua filho/a **pode** ter dificuldades numa das áreas avaliadas. Poderão ser utilizadas outras avaliações para determinar se é este o caso. Poderá ser também útil ao/à Professora receber informações sobre a aprendizagem e desenvolvimento do/a seu/sua filho/a em casa, por exemplo os trabalhos de casa. Os Professores da escola do/a seu/sua filho/a podem decidir se o/a seu/sua filho/a iria beneficiar de um apoio extra. Se assim for, o/a Professor/a do/a seu/sua filho/a falará consigo sobre o assunto.

## Se a classificação do/a meu/minha filho/a for alta, o que é que isso me diz?

Uma classificação normalizada alta **pode** sugerir que o/a seu/sua filho/a apresenta um bom desempenho na área avaliada. Tal como nas classificações baixas, uma classificação alta não é suficiente para confirmá-lo. O/A Professor/a do/a seu/sua filho/a fará uso das informações recolhidas a partir de outras avaliações levadas a cabo na sala de aula para compreender de forma mais clara o desempenho do/a seu/sua filho/a a matemática, leitura de inglês ou leitura de irlandês. O/A Professor/a poderá falar consigo sobre oportunidades de aprendizagem extra, que poderá proporcionar ao/à seu/sua filho/a, tanto em casa como na escola.

## O que pode afetar a classificação dos testes do/a meu/minha filho/a?

Tal como em outros testes que o/a seu/sua filho/a faz na escola, a classificação num teste normalizado pode ser afetada pela forma como ele/a se sente no dia do teste, ou pela preocupação ou excitação com algum acontecimento em casa ou na escola. Isto significa que a classificação de cada teste é um **indicador** do desempenho do/a seu/sua filho/a. Lembre-se que desempenha um papel importante no incentivo e apoio do/a seu/sua filho/a, independentemente dos resultados dos testes. Se tiver alguma dúvida relativamente às classificações do/a seu/sua filho/a, poderá querer agendar uma reunião com o/a Professor/a dele/a.

## Como posso ajudar o/a meu/minha filho/a?

A NCCA desenvolveu alguns recursos online para ajudá-lo/a a apoiar a aprendizagem do/a seu/sua filho/a na escola primária. Muitos destes recursos estão disponíveis em vários idiomas, sendo regularmente acrescentados novos recursos à página dos Pais em [www.ncca.ie/parents](http://www.ncca.ie/parents). Consulte os recursos para o ano do/a seu/sua filho/a.



## What do my child's standardised test scores mean?

### What do standardised tests measure?

Standardised tests in **English reading** and **maths** measure your child's achievement compared to other children in **all schools** at the same class or age level. The standardised test in **Irish reading** measures a child's achievement compared to other children in Irish-speaking schools at the same class or age level.

### When does my child complete standardised tests?

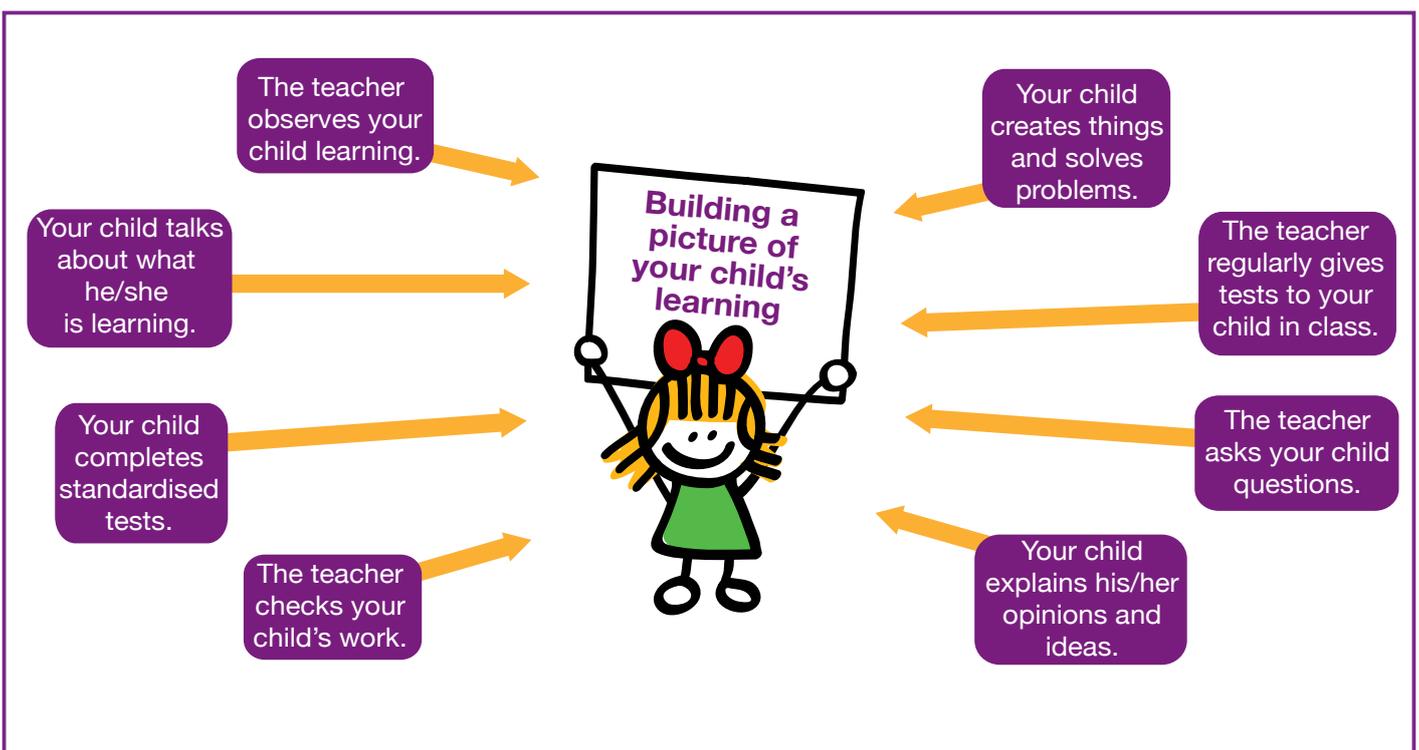
Your child completes standardised tests towards the end of **2nd, 4th and 6th classes**. Your child only completes a standardised test in **Irish reading** if he/she attends an Irish-speaking school. Some schools choose to use standardised tests with more classes.

### Do all children take standardised tests?

Your child's teacher will decide which children will take the tests. For example, if your child's first language is not English, the teacher may decide that he/she should not take the English reading test. Your child may, however, take the maths test. If your child has a learning or physical disability, the teacher may decide to use a different way to measure your child's progress.

### Are standardised tests the only way of gathering information about my child's learning?

No. The diagram below shows how the teacher uses **many** different ways to build a **picture of your child's learning** during the year. The teacher uses the picture to **celebrate** your child's achievements and to plan the **next steps** needed to build on progress made.





## What do my child's test scores mean?

The teacher used **STen scores** to tell you how your child did in the tests. STen scores go from 1 to 10. The table below describes what the different STen scores tell you about your child's achievement in the tests.

STen score	What does the STen score mean?	Proportion of children with this score
8 - 10	Well above average	1/6 or almost 17%
7	High average	1/6 or almost 17%
5 - 6	Average	1/3 or almost 34%
4	Low average	1/6 or almost 17%
1 - 3	Well below average	1/6 or almost 17%

If your child's STen score is between 5 and 6 for example, you will know that his/her performance on the test is average. The table shows that about one in every three children in Ireland have STen scores in this range. You can also see that some children have STen scores above and below the average.

Scores for children with English as an additional language may not always reflect progress being made in class. Similar care is needed when interpreting scores for children with special educational needs.

## If my child's score is low, what does this tell me?

A STen score of 1, 2 or 3 suggests that your child **may** have difficulties in one of the areas tested. Other assessments may be used to determine if this is the case. Information about your child's learning and development at home e.g. homework, may also be helpful to the teacher. Teachers at your child's school may decide that your child would benefit from extra support. If so, your child's teacher will talk to you about this.

## If my child's score is high, what does this tell me?

A STen score of 8, 9 or 10 **may** suggest that your child is a high achiever in the area tested. As with low scores, one high score is not enough to confirm this. Your child's teacher will use information from other classroom assessments to understand more clearly how well your child is doing in maths, English reading or Irish reading. The teacher may talk to you about extra learning opportunities that you and the school can provide for your child.

## What can affect my child's test score?

As with other tests your child does in school, the score on a standardised test can be affected by how he/she feels on the test day or by worry or excitement about a home or school event. This means that each test score is an **indication** of your child's achievement. Remember that you play an important role in encouraging and supporting your child regardless of test results. You may like to arrange to meet with your child's teacher if you have any concerns about his/her scores.

## How can I help my child?

The NCCA has developed some online resources to help you to support your child's learning in primary school. Many of these are available in various languages and new resources are regularly added to the parents' page at [www.ncca.ie/parents](http://www.ncca.ie/parents). Take a look at the resources for your child's class.



## Céard a chiallaíonn scóir chaighdeánaithe thástála mo pháiste?

### Céard a dhéanann tástálacha caighdeánaithe a thomhas?

Déanann tástálacha i **léamh an Bhéarla** agus sa **mhatamaitic** gnóthachtáil do pháiste a thomhas, i gcomparáid le páistí eile i **ngach scoil** sa rang céanna nó sa leibhéal céanna aoise.

Déanann an tástáil chaighdeánaithe i **léamh na Gaeilge** gnóthachtáil pháiste a thomhas, i gcomparáid le páistí eile i scoileanna ina múintear trí Ghaeilge sa rang céanna nó sa leibhéal céanna aoise.

### Cathain a thugann mo pháiste faoi thástálacha caighdeánaithe?

Tugann do pháiste faoi na tástálacha caighdeánaithe i dtreo dheireadh an **2ú, an 4ú agus an 6ú rang**. Ní thugann do pháiste faoi thástáil i **léamh na Gaeilge** ach amháin má fhreastalaíonn sé/sí ar scoil ina múintear trí Ghaeilge. Roghnaíonn roinnt scoileanna chun tástálacha caighdeánaithe a úsáid le níos mó ranganna.

### An ndéanann gach páiste na tástálacha caighdeánaithe?

Déanfaidh múinteoir do pháiste cinneadh faoi na páistí a dhéanfaidh na tástálacha. Mar shampla, murab é an Béarla céadteanga do pháiste, féadfaidh an múinteoir a chinneadh nár cheart dó/di an tástáil léimh a dhéanamh i mBéarla. Féadfaidh do pháiste, áfach, an tástáil mhatamaitice a dhéanamh. Má tá do pháiste faoi mhíchumas foghlama nó fisiciúil, féadfaidh an múinteoir an cinneadh a dhéanamh chun bealach éagsúil a úsáid chun dul chun cinn do pháiste a thomhas.

### An iad na tástálacha caighdeánaithe an t-aon bhealach chun faisnéis a bhailiú faoi fhoghlaim mo pháiste?

Ní hiad. Léiríonn an léaráid thíos conas a úsáideann an múinteoir **go leor** bealaí éagsúla chun **samhail foghlama do pháiste a chruthú** le linn na bliana. Úsáideann an múinteoir an deimhniú seo chun gnóthachtáil do pháiste a **cheiliúradh** agus chun na **chéad chéimeanna** eile a theastaíonn chun cur leis an dul chun cinn a rinneadh a phleanáil.



## Céard a chiallaíonn scóir thástála mo pháiste?

D'úsáid an múinteoir **scóir STen** le léiriú duit conas mar a d'éirigh le do pháiste sna tástálacha. Gabhann scóir STen ó 1 aníos go dtí 10. Léiríonn an tábla thíos céard a insíonn na scóir éagsúla STen duit faoi ghnóthachtáil do pháiste sna tástálacha.

Scór STen	Céard a chiallaíonn an scór STen?	An méid páistí leis an scór seo
8 - 10	Go mór os cionn an mheáin	1/6 nó beagnach 17%
7	Ardmheánach	1/6 nó beagnach 17%
5 - 6	Meánach	1/3 nó beagnach 34%
4	Ísealmheánach	1/6 nó beagnach 17%
1 - 3	Go mór faoi bhun an mheáin	1/6 nó beagnach 17%

Má tá scór STen do pháiste idir 5 agus 6, cuir i gcás, beidh a fhios agat gurb ionann a f(h)eidhmíocht sa tástáil agus feidhmíocht mheánach. Léiríonn an tábla go bhfuil scóir STen sa réimse seo ag thart ar pháiste as gach triúr in Éirinn. Ina theannta sin, féadfaidh tú a thabhairt faoi deara go bhfuil scóir STen ag roinnt páistí os cionn agus faoi bhun an mheáin.

Tharlódh nach léireodh scóir le haghaidh páistí ag a bhfuil an Béarla mar theanga bhreise an dul chun cinn atá á dhéanamh i gcónaí sa seomra ranga. Ní mór go mbeitear cúramach, chomh maith, nuair a bhaintear ciall as scóir i measc páistí ag a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta oideachais.

## Má tá scór mo pháiste íseal, céard a chuireann seo in iúl dom?

Tugann scór STen 1, 2 nó 3 le fios **go bhféadfadh** go bhfuil deacrachtaí ag do pháiste i gceann amháin de na réimsí a rinneadh a thástáil. Féadtar measúnuithe eile a úsáid lena dheimhniú an amhlaidh atá an cás. D'fhéadfadh eolas faoi fhoghlaim agus forbairt do pháiste sa bhaile bheith cabhrach don mhúinteoir freisin, e.g. obair bhaile. D'fhéadfadh múinteoirí ag scoil do pháiste a chinneadh go mbainfeadh do pháiste tairbhe as tacaíocht bhreise. Más amhlaidh a chinneann siad, labhróidh múinteoir do pháiste leat faoi seo.

## Má tá scór mo pháiste ard, céard a chuireann seo in iúl dom?

**D'fhéadfadh** scór STen 8, 9 nó 10 a thabhairt le fios go mbaineann do pháiste ardscóir amach sa réimse a rinneadh a thástáil. Ar aon dul le scóir ísle, ní dóthain scór ard amháin leis seo a dheimhniú. Úsáidfidh múinteoir do pháiste faisnéis ó mheasúnuithe eile a dhéantar sa seomra ranga chun tuiscint níos soiléire a fháil ar a fheabhas atá ag éirí le do pháiste sa mhatamaitic, i léamh an Bhéarla nó i léamh na Gaeilge. D'fhéadfadh an múinteoir labhairt leat faoi dheiseanna breise foghlama ar féidir leat féin agus an múinteoir cur ar fáil do do pháiste.

## Cén rudaí ar féidir leo difear a dhéanamh do scór tástála mo pháiste?

Ar nós tástálacha eile a dhéanann do pháiste ar scoil, féadfaidh conas a bhraitheann sé/sí ar lá na tástála nó buairt nó bís a bheith air/uirthi faoi eachtra sa bhaile nó ar scoil difear a dhéanamh do scór ar thástáil chaighdeánaithe. Ciallaíonn seo go gcuireann gach scór tástála gnóthachtáil do pháiste **in iúl**. Cuimhnigh go bhfuil feidhm thábhachtach agat chun do pháiste a spreagadh agus chun tacú leis/léi gan aird ar na torthaí tástála. B'fhéidir gur mian leat a shocrú chun casadh le múinteoir do pháiste má bhíonn aon bhuarthaí agat faoina scóir.

## Conas is féidir liom cabhrú le mo pháiste?

D'fhorbair an NCCA roinnt acmhainní ar líne chun cabhrú leat tacú le foghlaim do pháiste sa bhunscoil. Tá fáil ar go leor díobh seo i dteangacha éagsúla agus cuirtear acmhainní nua le leathanach na dtuismitheoirí go rialta ag **www.ncca.ie/parents**. Caith súil ar na hacmhainní atá ar fáil do rang do pháiste.



## Co oznaczają wyniki jakie moje dziecko uzyskało ze standaryzowanego sprawdzianu?

### Co mierzą standaryzowane sprawdziany?

Standaryzowany sprawdzian umiejętności **czytania w języku angielskim** i sprawdzian z **matematyki** służą do oceny osiągnięć dziecka w porównaniu z innymi dziećmi ze **wszystkich szkół** na poziomie tej samej klasy lub w tym samym wieku.

Standaryzowany sprawdzian umiejętności **czytania w języku irlandzkim** służy do oceny osiągnięć dziecka w porównaniu z innymi dziećmi ze szkół podstawowych z językiem irlandzkim na poziomie tej samej klasy lub w tym samym wieku.

### Kiedy moje dziecko przystępuje do standaryzowanych sprawdzianów?

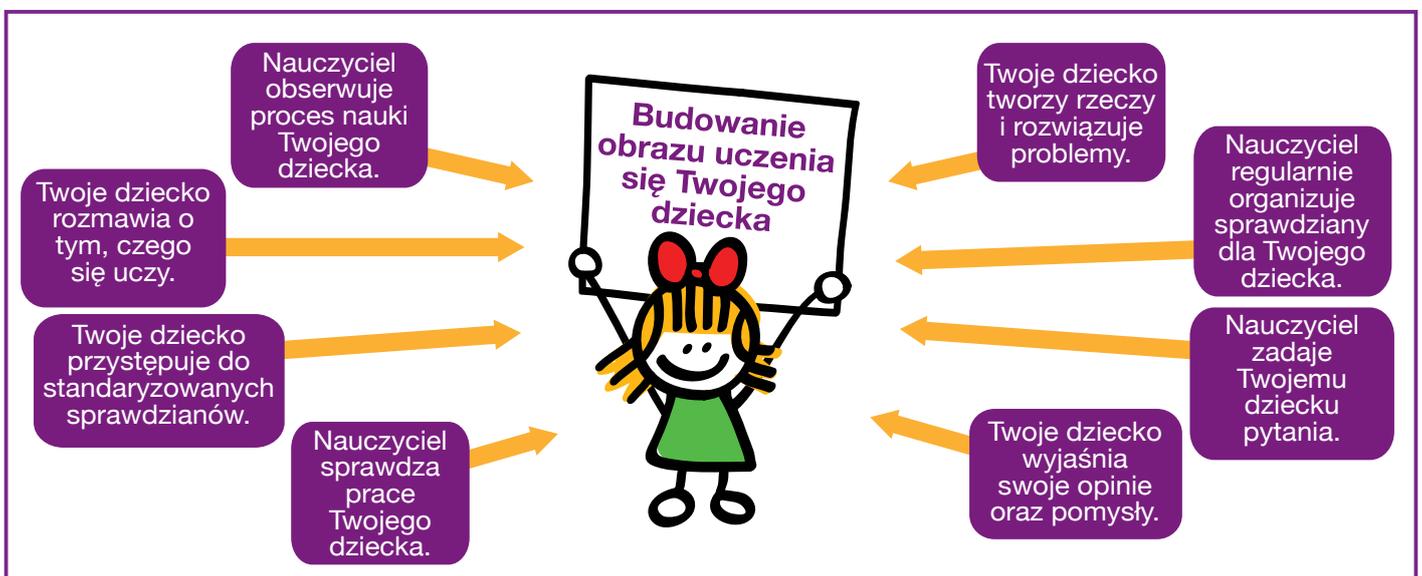
Twoje dziecko przystępuje do standaryzowanych sprawdzianów pod koniec **2-giej, 4-tej i 6-tej klasy**. Twoje dziecko przystępuje do standaryzowanego sprawdzianu z **czytania w języku irlandzkim** tylko wtedy, gdy uczęszcza do szkoły podstawowej z wykładowym językiem irlandzkim. Niektóre szkoły przeprowadzają standaryzowane sprawdziany także w innych klasach.

### Czy wszystkie dzieci przystępują do standaryzowanych sprawdzianów?

Nauczyciel Twojego dziecka zdecyduje, które dzieci przystąpią do sprawdzianów. Na przykład, jeśli język angielski nie jest pierwszym językiem dziecka, nauczyciel może zdecydować, że nie będzie ono pisać sprawdzianu umiejętności czytania w języku angielskim. Twoje dziecko może jednak przystąpić do sprawdzianu z matematyki. Jeśli Twoje dziecko ma trudności w uczeniu się lub jest niepełnosprawne fizycznie, nauczyciel może zdecydować się wykorzystać inny sposób sprawdzenia jego postępów w nauce.

### Czy standaryzowane sprawdziany są jedynym sposobem gromadzenia informacji dotyczących uczenia się mojego dziecka?

Nie. Poniższy diagram prezentuje jak nauczyciel wykorzystuje **wiele** różnych sposobów, aby zbudować **obraz przedstawiający uczenie się Twojego dziecka** w ciągu roku. Nauczyciel wykorzystuje ten obraz, aby uczcić osiągnięcia Twojego dziecka oraz aby zaplanować **kolejne kroki**, które będą następstwem postępów, jakie Twoje dziecko poczyniło.



## Jak interpretować wyniki sprawdzianu mojego dziecka?

Nauczyciel skorzystał ze skali STen, aby poinformować Cię o wynikach dziecka na sprawdzianie. Wyniki w skali STen wynoszą od 1 do 10. Poniższa tabela wskazuje, co różne wyniki w skali STen mówią o osiągnięciach dziecka na tym sprawdzianie.

Wyniki w skali STen	Co oznacza wynik w skali STen?	Proporcje uczniów, którzy otrzymali ten wynik
8 - 10	Dużo powyżej średniej	1/6 lub prawie 17%
7	Wysoki średni	1/6 lub prawie 17%
5 - 6	Średni	1/3 lub prawie 34%
4	Niski średni	1/6 lub prawie 17%
1 - 3	Dużo poniżej średniej	1/6 lub prawie 17%

Jeśli, na przykład, Twoje dziecko uzyskało w skali STen wynik od 5 do 6, wiadomo, że jego osiągnięcia na sprawdzianie są przeciętne. Tabela pokazuje, że mniej więcej co trzecie dziecko w Irlandii uzyskuje wyniki w skali STen w tym przedziale. Na podstawie tabeli można się zorientować, że niektóre dzieci uzyskują wyniki powyżej i poniżej średniej w skali STen. Wyniki uzyskane przez dzieci, dla których język angielski jest dodatkowym językiem, nie zawsze odzwierciedlają postęp dziecka w klasie. Podobne podejście należy zastosować podczas interpretowania wyników w przypadku dzieci ze specjalnymi potrzebami edukacyjnymi.

## Jeśli wynik mojego dziecka jest niski, co to oznacza?

Wynik 1, 2 lub 3 w skali STen sugeruje, że Twoje dziecko **może** mieć trudności w jednym z aspektów, które sprawdzano w czasie testu. Inne formy sprawdzenia umiejętności mogą być zastosowane w celu potwierdzenia czy tak faktycznie jest. Informacje dotyczące uczenia się oraz rozwoju dziecka w domu np.: zadania domowe, również mogą okazać się pomocne dla nauczyciela. Nauczyciele ze szkoły do której uczęszcza Twoje dziecko mogą zdecydować, że dziecku przydałaby się dodatkowa pomoc. W takim przypadku porozmawia z Tobą nauczyciel Twojego dziecka.

## Jeśli wynik mojego dziecka jest wysoki, co to dla mnie oznacza?

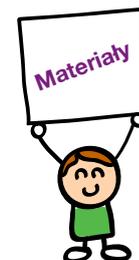
Wynik 8, 9 lub 10 w skali STen **może** sugerować, że Twoje dziecko ma duże osiągnięcia w aspektach, które sprawdzano w czasie testu. Podobnie jak z niskimi wynikami, jeden wysoki wynik nie wystarczy aby to potwierdzić. Nauczyciel Twojego dziecka wykorzysta informacje z innych form oceniania klasie pracy na zajęciach aby lepiej zorientować się, na ile dobrze dziecko radzi sobie z matematyką oraz czytaniem w językach angielskim lub irlandzkim. Nauczyciel może porozmawiać z Tobą na temat dodatkowych możliwości uczenia się, jakie zarówno Ty jak i szkoła możecie zapewnić Twojemu dziecku.

## Co może mieć wpływ na wynik jaki uzyska moje dziecko ze standaryzowanego sprawdzianu?

Podobnie jak w przypadku innych sprawdzianów przeprowadzanych w szkole, na wyniki dziecka ze standaryzowanego sprawdzianu może mieć wpływ jego samopoczucie w dniu sprawdzianu albo zmartwienia lub pobudzenie wywołane sytuacją w domu lub w szkole. Oznacza to, że wynik każdego sprawdzianu jest **wskazaniem** osiągnięć Twojego dziecka. Pamiętaj, że odgrywasz ważną rolę w zachęcaniu i wspieraniu dziecka bez względu na wynik, jaki uzyskało na sprawdzianie. Możesz spotkać się z nauczycielem Twojego dziecka jeśli masz jakiegokolwiek obawy dotyczące wyniku jaki dziecko uzyskało.

## Jak mogę pomóc swojemu dziecku?

NCCA przygotowała materiały dostępne on-line aby pomóc Ci wspierać proces nauki Twojego dziecka w szkole podstawowej. Wiele z tych materiałów dostępnych jest w różnych językach. Regularnie dodawane są nowe materiały, które znaleźć można na stronie rodziców: [www.ncca.ie/parents](http://www.ncca.ie/parents). Zapoznaj się z materiałami dla klasy, w której jest Twoje dziecko.



## معلومات للوالدين

## نتيجة ستين

← الوالدين ← المرحلة الابتدائية ← التقييم

# ماذا تعنى نتائج الاختبار الموحد لطفلي؟

### ماذا يقيس الاختبار الموحد؟

الاختبارات الموحدة في القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية والرياضيات تقيس مستوى إنجاز طفلك بالمقارنة مع الأطفال الآخرين في كل المدارس لنفس الفصل أو بنفس العمر. الاختبار الموحد في القراءة باللغة الإيرلندية يقيس مستوى إنجاز الطفل مقارنة مع الأطفال الآخرين في المدارس الناطقة باللغة الإيرلندية لنفس الفصل أو بنفس العمر.

### متى يستكمل طفلي الاختبارات الموحدة؟

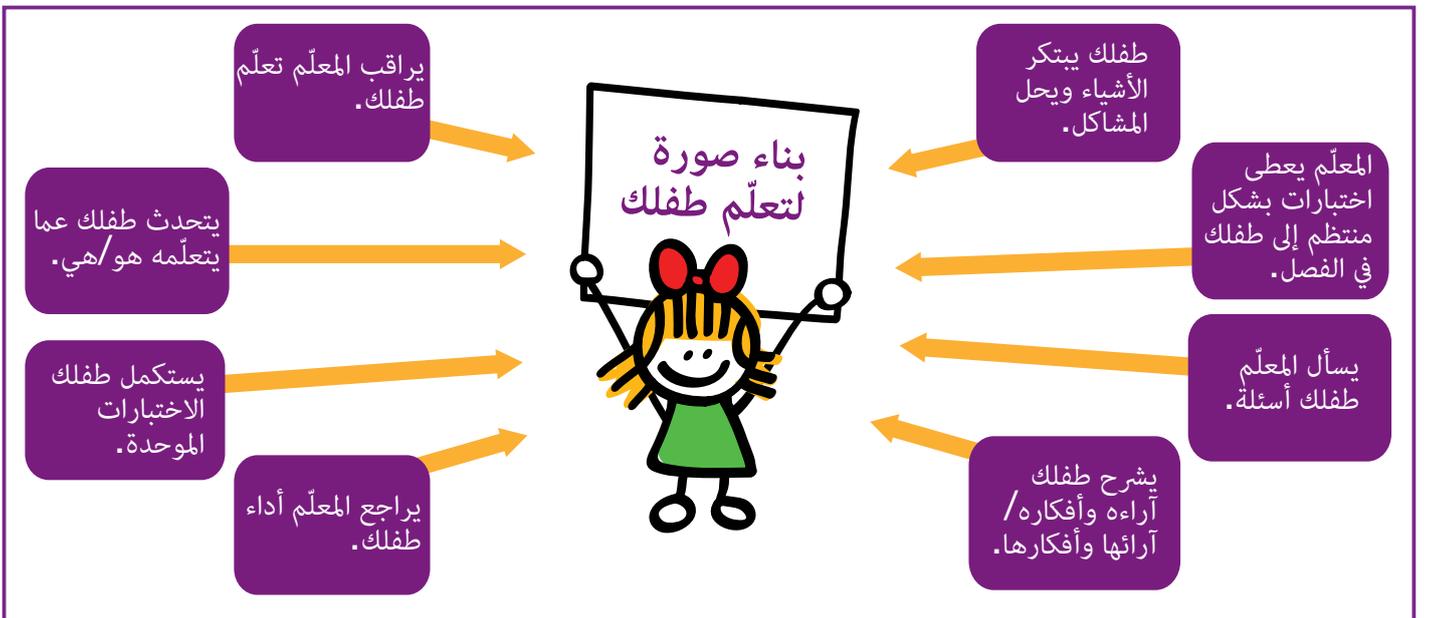
يستكمل طفلك الاختبارات الموحدة في نهاية الفصل الثاني، الرابع والسادس. يستكمل طفلك الاختبار الموحد في القراءة باللغة الإيرلندية إذا كان هو/هي يحضر مدرسة ناطقة باللغة الإيرلندية. تختار بعض المدارس استخدام الاختبار الموحد للفصول الأخرى.

### هل يجب على كل الأطفال أخذ الاختبار الموحد؟

يقوم معلم طفلك بتقرير من هم الأطفال الذين سيقومون بأخذ الاختبار. على سبيل المثال، إذا لم تكن الإنجليزية هي اللغة الأولى لطفلك، قد يقرر المعلم انه لا يجب عليه/عليها اخذ اختبار القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية. لكن قد يأخذ طفلك اختبار الرياضيات. إذا كان لطفلك صعوبة في التعلم أو إعاقة جسدية، قد يقرر المعلم استخدام طريقة أخرى لقياس مستوى تقدم طفلك.

### هل الاختبار الموحد هو السبيل الوحيد لجمع المعلومات حول تعليم طفلي؟

كلا. يوضح الرسم البياني ادناه كيف يستخدم المعلم العديد من الطرق المختلفة لبناء صورة تعلم طفلك خلال السنة. يستخدم المعلم الصورة للاحتفال بإنجازات طفلك والتخطيط للخطوات القادمة المطلوبة للبناء على التقدم المحرز.





## معلومات للوالدين

## نتيجة ستين

### ماذا تعني علامات اختبار طفلي؟

استخدم المعلم نتائج ستين لإخبارك عن كيفية أداء طفلك في الاختبارات. تبدأ العلامات القياسية من 1 إلى 10. يصف الجدول أدناه ماذا تخبرك العلامات القياسية المختلفة عن إنجازات طفلك في الاختبارات.

العلامة القياسية	ماذا تعني نتيجة ستين؟	نسبة الأطفال الحائزين على هذه النتيجة
10 - 8	أعلى بكثير من المتوسط	6/1 أو ما يقرب من 17%
7	عالي متوسط	6/1 أو ما يقرب من 17%
6 - 5	متوسط	3/1 أو ما يقرب من 34%
4	منخفض متوسط	6/1 أو ما يقرب من 17%
3 - 1	أدنى بكثير من المتوسط	6/1 أو ما يقرب من 17%

إذا كانت نتيجة ستين لطفلك هي ما بين 5 و6 مثلاً، سوف تعلم أن أدائه/أدائها في الاختبار هو متوسط. يوضح الجدول أن واحداً من كل ثلاثة أطفال في أيرلندا يحرزون علامة قياسية بهذه النطاق. تستطيع كذلك رؤية أن لدى بعض الأطفال نتائج قياسية أعلى وأدنى من المتوسط. نتائج الأطفال ذوي الإنجليزية كلغة إضافية قد لا تعكس دائماً التقدم الذي يتم إحرازه في الصف. هناك حاجة إلى عناية مماثلة عند تفسير النتائج للأطفال ذوي الاحتياجات التعليمية الخاصة.

### إذا كانت علامة احراز طفلي منخفضة، ماذا يخبرني هذا؟

نتيجة احراز منخفضة من 1، 2 أو 3 تعني أن طفلك قد تكون لديه صعوبات في إحدى المجالات التي تم اختبارها. قد يتم استخدام تقييمات أخرى لتحديد ما إذا كان هذا هو الحال. معلومات حول تعلم طفلك وتطويره في المنزل، مثلاً الواجب المنزلي، قد تكون مفيدة للمعلم. قد يقرر المعلمون في مدرسة طفلك أن طفلك سيستفيد من دعم إضافي. إذا كان الأمر كذلك، سيقوم معلم طفلك بالتحدث إليك عن هذا.

### إذا كانت نتيجة احراز طفلي عالية، ماذا يخبرني هذا؟

نتيجة احراز مرتفعة من 8، 9 أو 10 قد تعني أن طفلك متفوق في المجال الذي تم اختبارها. كما هو الحال مع العلامات المنخفضة، علامة مرتفعة واحدة لا تكفي لتأكيد هذا. سيقوم معلم طفلك باستخدام معلومات مستمدة من تقييمات الفصول الدراسية الأخرى للفهم بشكل أكثر وضوحاً كيفية أداء طفلك في الرياضيات، القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية أو القراءة باللغة الأيرلندية. قد يتحدث إليك المعلم حول فرص التعليم الإضافية التي باستطاعتك أنت والمدرسة توفيرها لطفلك.

### ماذا يمكن أن يؤثر على نتيجة اختبار طفلي؟

كما هو الحال مع الاختبارات الأخرى التي يأخذها طفلك في المدرسة، قد يؤثر على نتيجة الاختبار الموحد كيفية شعوره/شعورها في يوم الاختبار أو القلق أو الإثارة حول حدث في المنزل أو المدرسة. يعني هذا أن كل نتيجة اختبار هي مؤشر لإنجاز طفلك. تذكر أنك تلعب دوراً هاماً في تشجيع ودعم طفلك بغض النظر عن نتائج الاختبار. قد ترغب في ترتيب لقاء مع معلم طفلك إذا كانت لديك أية مخاوف حول نتائج أدائه/أدائها في الاختبار.

### كيف أستطيع مساعدة طفلي؟

قام المجلس الوطني للمناهج والتقييم (NCCA) بتطوير بعض الموارد على الإنترنت لمساعدتك على دعم تعليم طفلك في المدرسة الابتدائية. تتوفر العديد منها بلغات مختلفة ويتم إضافة موارد جديدة بشكل منتظم إلى صفحة الوالدين على [www.ncca.ie/parents](http://www.ncca.ie/parents).  
القي نظرة على الموارد التابعة لفصل طفلك.



## Ce înseamnă punctajele copilului meu la testul standardizat?

### Ce măsoară testele standardizate?

Testele standardizate la **Engleză citire** și **matematică** măsoară rezultatele copilului dumneavoastră în comparație cu alți copii din **toate școlile**, din aceeași clasă sau de aceeași vârstă.

Testul standardizat de **Irlandeză citire** măsoară rezultatele copilului dumneavoastră în comparație cu alți copii din școlile în care se vorbește Irlandeză, din aceeași clasă sau de aceeași vârstă.

### Când completează copilul meu testele standardizate?

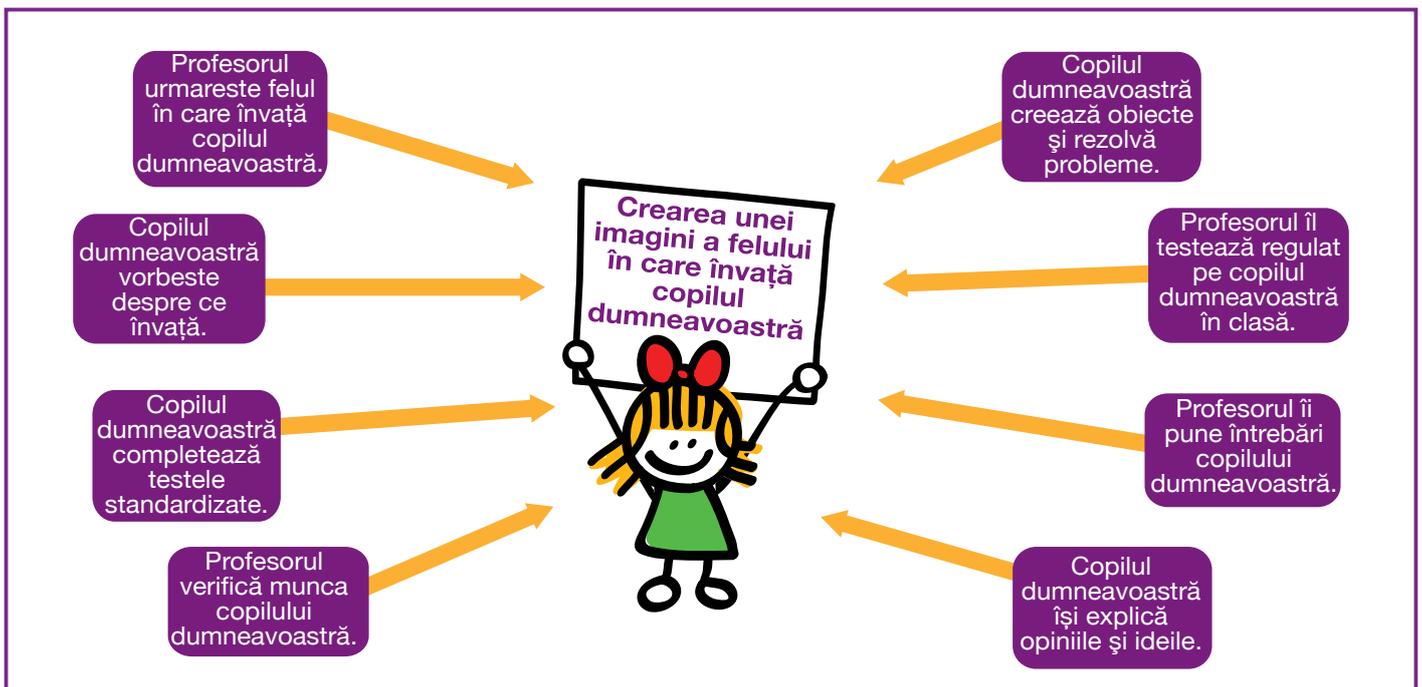
Copilul dumneavoastră completează testele standardizate spre sfârșitul **claselor a 2-a, a 4-a și a 6-a**. Copilul dumneavoastră susține testul standardizat la **Irlandeză citire** dacă el/ea frecventează o școală în care se vorbește Irlandeză. Unele școli optează să folosească testele standardizate la mai multe clase.

### Toți copiii susțin testele standardizate?

Profesorul copilului dumneavoastră va decide ce copii vor susține testele. De exemplu, dacă prima limbă a copilului dumneavoastră nu este Engleza, profesorul poate decide dacă el/ea nu trebuie să susțină testul de Engleză citire. Dacă copilul dumneavoastră are probleme de învățare sau dizabilități fizice, profesorul poate decide să folosească o altă metodă de măsurare a progresului copilului dumneavoastră.

### Sunt testele standardizate singura cale de a aduna informații despre felul în care învață copilul meu?

Nu. Diagrama de mai jos arată cum profesorul folosește **multe** metode diferite ca să creeze o **imagine a felului în care învață copilul dumneavoastră** pe parcursul anului. Profesorul folosește imaginea pentru a **aprecia** rezultatele copilului dumneavoastră și pentru a planifica **etapele următoare** necesare pentru utilizarea progresului facut.



### Ce înseamnă punctajele testului copilului meu?

Profesorul a folosit **punctajele STen** ca să vă spună cum s-a descurcat copilul dumneavoastră la teste. Tabelul de mai jos descrie ce vă arată diferitele punctaje STen despre rezultatele copilului dumneavoastră la teste.

Punctajele STen	Ce înseamnă punctajul STen?	Proporția copiilor cu acest punctaj
8 - 10	Mult peste medie	1/6 sau aproape 17%
7	Peste medie	1/6 sau aproape 17%
5 - 6	Mediu	1/3 sau aproape 34%
4	Sub medie	1/6 sau aproape 17%
1 - 3	Mult sub medie	1/6 sau aproape 17%

Dacă punctajul STen al copilului dumneavoastră este între 5 și 6, de exemplu, dumneavoastră veți ști că rezultatele lui/ei la test sunt medii. Tabelul arată că, în Irlanda, un copil din trei are punctajul STen în aceasta zonă. Puteți vedea, de asemenea, că unii copii au punctajul STen peste și sub medie. Punctajele copiilor pentru care Engleza este limba aditionala, este posibil sa nu reflecte intotdeauna progresul facut in clasa. In mod similar va fi nevoie de atentie si la interpretarea punctajelor copiilor cu nevoi educationale speciale.

### Dacă punctajul copilului meu este scăzut, ce îmi spune acest lucru?

Un punctaj STen de 1, 2 sau 3 sugerează că copilul dumneavoastră **poate** avea dificultăți în unul din domeniile testate. Pot fi folosite alte evaluări pentru a determina dacă așa este cazul. Informațiile despre felul în care copilul dumneavoastră învață și se dezvoltă acasă, de exemplu tema pentru acasă, pot fi de asemenea de ajutor profesorului. Profesorii din școala copilului dumneavoastră ar putea decide dacă copilul dumneavoastră ar putea beneficia de ajutor suplimentar. În acest caz, profesorul va discuta aceasta cu dumneavoastră.

### Dacă punctajul copilului meu este ridicat, ce îmi arată acest lucru?

Un punctaj STen de 8, 9 sau 10 **poate** sugera faptul că copilul dumneavoastră este foarte sărguincios în domeniul testat. Ca și în cazul punctajului scăzut, un punctaj ridicat nu este de ajuns să confirme acest lucru. Profesorul copilului dumneavoastră va folosi informațiile de la celelalte evaluări școlare ca să înțeleagă mai clar cât de bine se descurcă copilul dumneavoastră la matematică, Engleză citire sau Irlandeză citire. Profesorul poate discuta cu dumneavoastră despre oportunități suplimentare de învățare pe care dumneavoastră și școala i le puteți furniza copilului dumneavoastră.

### Ce poate afecta punctajul testului copilului meu?

Ca și la alte teste susținute de către copilul dumneavoastră în școală, punctajul la un test standardizat poate fi afectat de către felul în care el/ea se simte în ziua testului sau de îngrijorare ori emoții legate de un eveniment de acasă sau de la școală. Aceasta înseamnă că fiecare punctaj la test este **o indicație** a rezultatelor copilului dumneavoastră. Rețineți că jucați un rol important în încurajarea și sprijinirea copilului dumneavoastră indiferent de rezultatele testului. Puteți aranja o întâlnire cu profesorul copilului dumneavoastră dacă aveți orice nelămuriri despre punctajele lui/ei.

### Cum îmi pot ajuta copilul?

NCCA a creat niște resurse online pentru a vă ajuta să sprijiniți modul în care copilul învață în școala primară. Multe dintre acestea sunt disponibile în diverse limbi și resurse noi sunt adăugate regulat la pagina părinților la [www.ncca.ie/parents](http://www.ncca.ie/parents). Aruncați o privire la resursele pentru clasa copilului dumneavoastră.



## Что означают результаты стандартизированных тестов моего ребёнка?

### Что оценивают стандартизированные тесты?

Стандартизированные тесты по **чтению на английском языке** и по **математике** оценивают успеваемость ребёнка по сравнению с успеваемостью детей в таком же классе или такого же возраста **всех школ**.

Стандартизированный тест по **чтению на ирландском языке** оценивает успеваемость ребёнка по сравнению с успеваемостью детей в таком же классе или такого же возраста тех школ, в которых говорят на ирландском языке.

### Когда мой ребёнок будет проходить стандартизированные тесты?

Ваш ребёнок пройдёт стандартизированные тесты в конце **2-го, 4-го и 6-го классов**. Ваш ребёнок пройдёт стандартизированный тест по **чтению на ирландском языке** только в том случае, если он посещает школу, в которой говорят на ирландском.

### Все ли дети проходят стандартизированные тесты?

Учитель вашего ребёнка решит, кто будет проходить тесты. Например, если первый язык вашего ребёнка не является английским, учитель может решить, что ему/ей не нужно проходить тест по чтению на английском. Но ребёнку, возможно, нужно будет пройти тест по математике. Если у ребёнка имеются трудности в обучении или физические недостатки, учитель может применить другой способ оценки успеваемости.

### Являются ли стандартизированные тесты единственным способом получения информации об обучении моего ребёнка?

Нет. На представленной ниже схеме показано, что учитель может использовать **много** различных способов для **построения общей картины успеваемости ребёнка** в течение года. Учитель пользуется данной картиной, чтобы **отметить** успеваемость ребёнка и правильно спланировать **следующие шаги** для повышения его успеваемости.



## Что означают результаты тестов моего ребёнка?

Учитель использует стандартизированную десятибалльную шкалу для определения результатов теста. По данной стандартизированной шкале можно получить от 1 до 10 баллов. В представленной ниже таблице описано, что означают различные стандартизированные баллы, полученные за тест.

Стандартизированные баллы десятибалльной шкалы	Что означают баллы десятибалльной шкалы?	Процент детей, получающих данный балл
8 - 10	Высокий	1/6 или почти 17%
7	Выше среднего	1/6 или почти 17%
5 - 6	Средний	1/3 или почти 34%
4	Ниже среднего	1/6 или почти 17%
1 - 3	Низкий	1/6 или почти 17%

Если ребёнок получил от 5 до 6 баллов, у него/неё средний результат. В таблице показано, что приблизительно 1 из 3 детей в Ирландии получает балл в этом диапазоне. Вы так же можете видеть, что результаты некоторых детей выше или ниже среднего. Балл детей, у которых английский язык преподаётся как дополнительный предмет, не всегда может отображать прогресс, достигнутый на уроках. Этот факт также следует учитывать при интерпретировании баллов детей со специальными потребностями в образовании.

## Если балл моего ребёнка низкий, что это значит?

Если балл ребёнка 1, 2 или 3, то, **возможно**, у него/неё имеются трудности в одной из проверяемых областей знаний. В этом случае возможно использование других способов оценки знаний для точного определения. Информация об обучении и развитии вашего ребёнка дома, например домашняя работа, также может быть полезной для учителя. Учителя в школе вашего ребёнка могут решить, что ему/ей необходима дополнительная работа. Если это так, учитель обсудит это с вами.

## Если балл моего ребёнка высокий, что это значит?

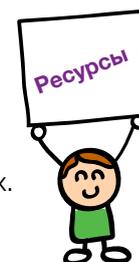
Если балл ребёнка 8, 9 или 10, то, **возможно**, у него/неё высокая успеваемость в проверяемой области знаний. Так же как и в ситуации с низким баллом, получение высокого балла не достаточно для того, чтобы точно определить успеваемость ребёнка. Учитель будет использовать результаты других тестов, проводимых в классе, чтобы более чётко выяснить уровень успеваемости вашего ребёнка по математике или чтению на английском или ирландском языках. Учитель может обсудить с вами дополнительную возможность обучения, которая может быть предоставлена вашему ребёнку вами и школой.

## Что может повлиять на результат теста моего ребёнка?

Как и при выполнении других тестов в школе, на результат стандартизированного теста могут повлиять самочувствие ребёнка в день тестирования, а также его уровень обеспокоенности или волнения по поводу событий дома или в школе. Это означает, что каждый результат теста – **показатель** успеваемости ребёнка. Помните, вы играете важную роль в поощрении и поддержке своего ребёнка независимо от результатов тестов. Вы можете договориться о встрече с учителем ребёнка, если у вас возникли какие-либо вопросы о результатах тестов.

## Как я могу помочь своему ребёнку?

Национальный совет образования (NCCA) разработал некоторые ресурсы в Интернете, которые помогут Вам поддержать своего ребёнка в обучении в начальной школе. Многие из них доступны на различных языках. Новые ресурсы регулярно добавляются на страницу для родителей по адресу [www.ncca.ie/parents](http://www.ncca.ie/parents). Ознакомьтесь с ресурсами, которые соответствуют уровню вашего ребёнка.



## Que signifient les résultats de mon enfant à l'examen normalisé (standardised test) ?

### Qu'évaluent les examens normalisés ?

Les examens normalisés en **lecture en anglais** et en **mathématiques** évaluent les progrès de votre enfant par rapport aux autres enfants de **toutes les écoles**, de la même classe, ou du même âge.

L'examen normalisé en **lecture en gaélique** évalue les progrès de votre enfant par rapport aux autres enfants des écoles gaélophones, de la même classe ou du même âge.

### Quand mon enfant passe-t-il/elle les examens normalisés ?

Votre enfant passe les examens normalisés vers la fin du 2e, 4e et 6e cycle (**2nd, 4th and 6th classes**).

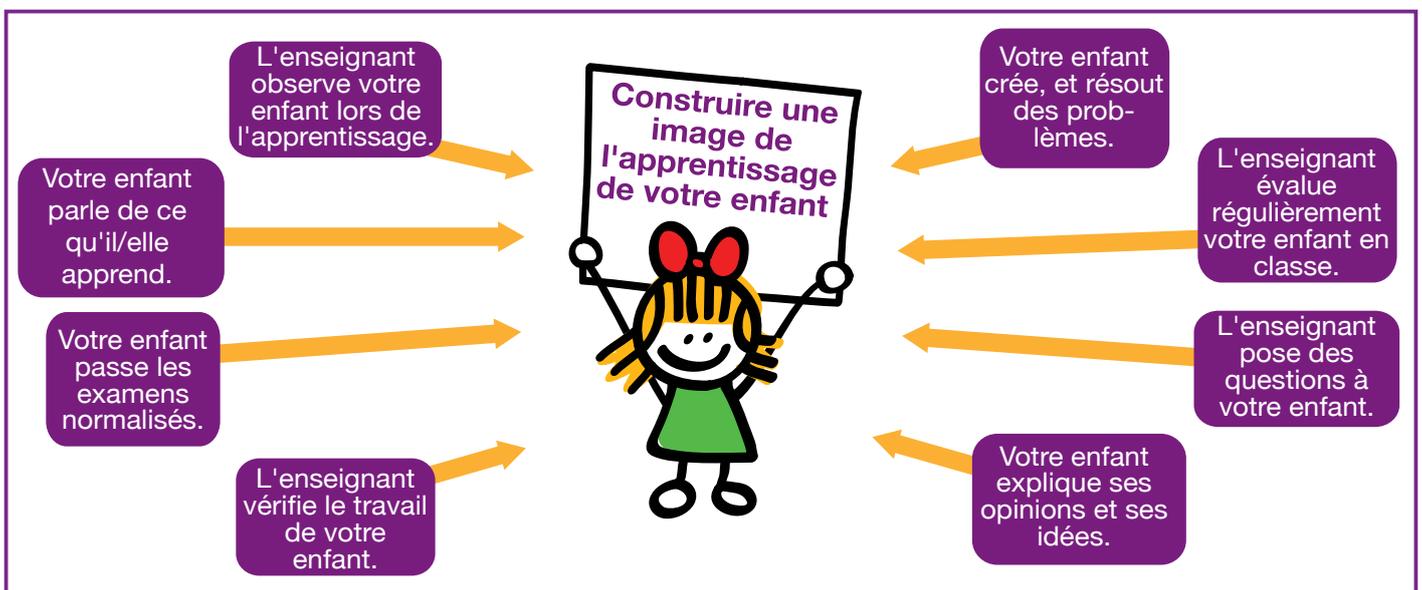
Votre enfant ne passe d'examen normalisé en **lecture en gaélique** que s'il/elle étudie dans une école gaélophone. Certaines écoles choisissent d'utiliser les examens normalisés dans plusieurs autres cycles.

### Tous les enfants passent-ils les examens normalisés ?

L'enseignant de votre enfant décidera quels enfants passeront les examens. Par exemple, si la langue maternelle de votre enfant n'est pas l'anglais, l'enseignant peut décider qu'il/elle ne passera pas l'examen de lecture en anglais. Mais votre enfant pourrait passer l'examen de mathématiques. Si votre enfant a des difficultés physiques ou d'apprentissage, l'enseignant choisira peut-être une autre façon d'évaluer ses progrès.

### Les examens normalisés sont-ils la seule façon d'obtenir des informations concernant l'apprentissage de mon enfant ?

Non. Le diagramme ci-dessous montre les **nombreuses** méthodes utilisées par l'enseignant pour construire une **image de l'apprentissage de votre enfant** tout au long de l'année. L'enseignant utilise cette image pour **célébrer** les progrès de votre enfant, et pour planifier les **étapes futures** nécessaires à une progression continue.



### Que signifient les résultats de mon enfant aux examens ?

L'enseignant a utilisé les **résultats STen** pour vous informer des résultats de votre enfant aux examens. Les résultats STen s'échelonnent entre 1 et 10. Le tableau ci-dessous décrit ce que signifient les différents résultats STen quant à la réussite de votre enfant aux examens.

Résultats STen	Que signifient les résultats STen ?	Proportion d'enfants avec ce résultat
8 - 10	Bien au-dessus de la moyenne	1/6 soit presque 17 %
7	Au-dessus de la moyenne	1/6 soit presque 17 %
5 - 6	Moyenne	1/3 soit presque 34 %
4	En dessous de la moyenne	1/6 soit presque 17 %
1 - 3	Bien en dessous de la moyenne	1/6 soit presque 17 %

Si le résultat STen de votre enfant se situe par exemple entre 5 et 6, vous saurez que son résultat à l'examen correspond à la moyenne. Le tableau montre qu'environ un enfant sur trois en Irlande obtient un résultat STen dans cette fourchette. Vous pouvez également voir que certains enfants ont des résultats STen au-dessus et en dessous de la moyenne. Les résultats pour les enfants ayant l'anglais comme langue additionnelle ne reflètent pas toujours les progrès effectués en classe. Il faut prêter une attention particulière à l'interprétation des résultats des élèves ayant des besoins éducatifs spécifiques.

### Si le résultat de mon enfant est bas, qu'est-ce que cela signifie ?

Un résultat STen de 1, 2 ou 3 suggère que votre enfant **pourrait** avoir des difficultés dans l'une des matières évaluées. D'autres évaluations pourront être mises en place pour déterminer si c'est le cas. Les informations concernant l'apprentissage de votre enfant et son développement à la maison, par exemple les devoirs, peuvent également être utiles à l'enseignant. Les enseignants de l'école de votre enfant peuvent décider qu'un soutien supplémentaire pourrait être profitable pour votre enfant. Dans ce cas, son enseignant vous en parlera.

### Si le résultat de mon enfant est bon, qu'est-ce que cela signifie ?

Un résultat STen de 8, 9 ou 10 **pourrait** suggérer que votre enfant réussit très bien dans la matière évaluée. Tout comme pour les bas résultats, un seul bon résultat n'est pas suffisant pour le confirmer. L'enseignant de votre enfant utilisera d'autres informations, d'autres évaluations en classe pour mieux comprendre le niveau de votre enfant en mathématiques, lecture en anglais ou en gaélique. L'enseignant discutera peut-être avec vous d'opportunités supplémentaires d'apprentissage que vous et l'école pouvez offrir à votre enfant.

### Qu'est-ce qui peut affecter les résultats de mon enfant à l'examen ?

Tout comme pour d'autres examens que votre enfant passe à l'école, le résultat d'un examen normalisé peut être affecté par la façon dont il/elle se sent le jour de l'examen, ou par ses inquiétudes ou son excitation concernant un événement à la maison ou à l'école. Chaque résultat d'examen est donc **une indication** des progrès de votre enfant. Rappelez-vous que vous jouez un rôle important, et devez encourager et soutenir votre enfant quelque soient ses résultats. Vous pouvez organiser une réunion avec son enseignant si vous avez des inquiétudes quant à ses résultats.

### Comment aider mon enfant ?

La NCCA a développé des ressources Internet pour vous aider à soutenir l'apprentissage de votre enfant à l'école primaire. Beaucoup sont disponibles dans différentes langues, et de nouvelles ressources sont ajoutées à la page des parents, à [www.ncca.ie/parents](http://www.ncca.ie/parents). Allez voir les ressources disponibles pour la classe de votre enfant.



## 孩子标准考试成绩意味着什么？

### 标准考试测量什么？

英语阅读和数学标准考试测量孩子与其他所有学校同年级或同年龄段孩子相比较的成绩。

爱尔兰语阅读标准考试测量孩子与其他爱尔兰语学校同年级或同年龄段孩子相比较的成绩。

### 孩子什么时候进行标准考试？

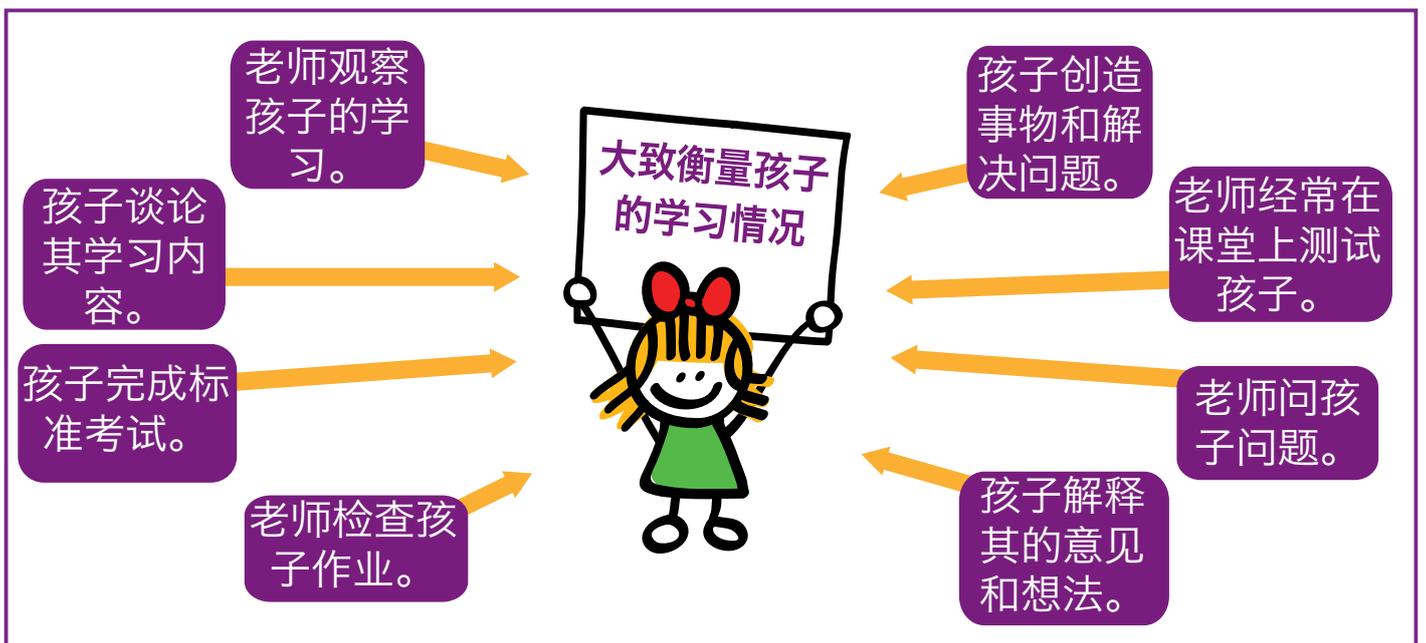
孩子在2、4和6年级末进行标准考试。如孩子在爱尔兰语学校上学，就只需考加一次爱尔兰语阅读标准考试。但某些学校会选择在更多年级使用标准考试。

### 所有孩子都需要参加标准考试吗？

孩子的老师将决定哪些孩子将参加考试。例如，如果孩子的第一语言不是英语，老师可能不会让他/她参加英语阅读测试，改而参加数学考试。如果孩子有学习障碍或身体残疾，考师会使用其他方式来衡量孩子的进步。

### 标准考试是衡量孩子学习成绩的唯一方法吗？

不是。以下图表说明老师大致衡量学年中孩子学习情况的多种不同方式。老师以孩子的学习情况来记录孩子的进步，并计划取得进步的下一步。



## 孩子考试成绩意味着什么？

老师用标准十分数来衡量孩子在考试中的成绩。标准十分数通常在1到10之间。下表描述孩子在不同标准十分数下的考试成绩。

标准十分	标准十分数代表什么意思？	得到这个分数的百分比
8 - 10	高分	1/6 或接近 17%
7	中等偏上	1/6 或接近 17%
5 - 6	中等	1/3 或接近 34%
4	中等偏下	1/6 或接近 17%
1 - 3	低分	1/6 或接近 17%

例如，如果孩子的标准十分数在5到6之间，意味着他/她的成绩在中等水平。该表显示，在爱尔兰大约三分之一的孩子标准十分数在这个范围内。同时有些孩子的标准十分数在平均水平以上和以下。英语作为第二语言的孩子，他们的成绩并不总是反应学习情况，同样，对于接受特殊教育的孩子，他们的成绩也需要特别的注意。

## 如果孩子得分较低，这意味着什么？

标准十分数为1、2或3表示孩子可能在某一考试科目存在困难。老师将会用其他测试来考核是否存在这种情况。孩子在家的学习发展，例如家庭作业，同样对老师的考核有帮助。孩子学校的教师会决定孩子是否需要额外的帮助。如有需要，孩子的老师会与您谈话。

## 如果孩子得分较高，这意味着什么？

标准十分数为8、9或10表明孩子可能在测试科目中学习优秀。但像低分一样，高分并不能完全证明孩子学习优秀。老师将从其他课堂评估信息中，更清楚地了解孩子在数学、英语阅读或爱尔兰语阅读的学习情况。老师可以和您探讨您和学校能为孩子提供额外学习机会的方法。

## 什么可以影响孩子的考试分数？

与其他学校考试一样，标准化考试可能会受到孩子考试当天的状态，对家庭或学校某个活动的担忧或兴奋影响。这意味着，每个考试分数都是孩子学习情况的一个指标。请记住，无论成绩如何，都要鼓励和支持孩子。如果对孩子的分数有任何疑问，您可与老师安排见面。

## 怎样帮助孩子？

NCCA已编写了一些网上资料，指导您如何帮助孩子在小学阶段的学习。这些资料大多提供多种语言，新资料会经常在[www.ncca.ie/parents](http://www.ncca.ie/parents)家长页上更新。请浏览孩子班级的资料。



## O que significam as classificações dos testes normalizados do/a meu/minha filho/a?

### O que é que os testes normalizados avaliam?

Os testes normalizados de **leitura de inglês** e de **matemática** avaliam o desempenho do/a seu/sua filho/a comparativamente com o de outras crianças em **todas as escolas** no mesmo ano ou na mesma faixa etária.

O teste normalizado de **leitura de irlandês** avalia o desempenho de uma criança em comparação com outras crianças de escolas de língua irlandesa no mesmo ano ou na mesma faixa etária.

### Quando é que o/a meu/minha filho/a faz os testes normalizados?

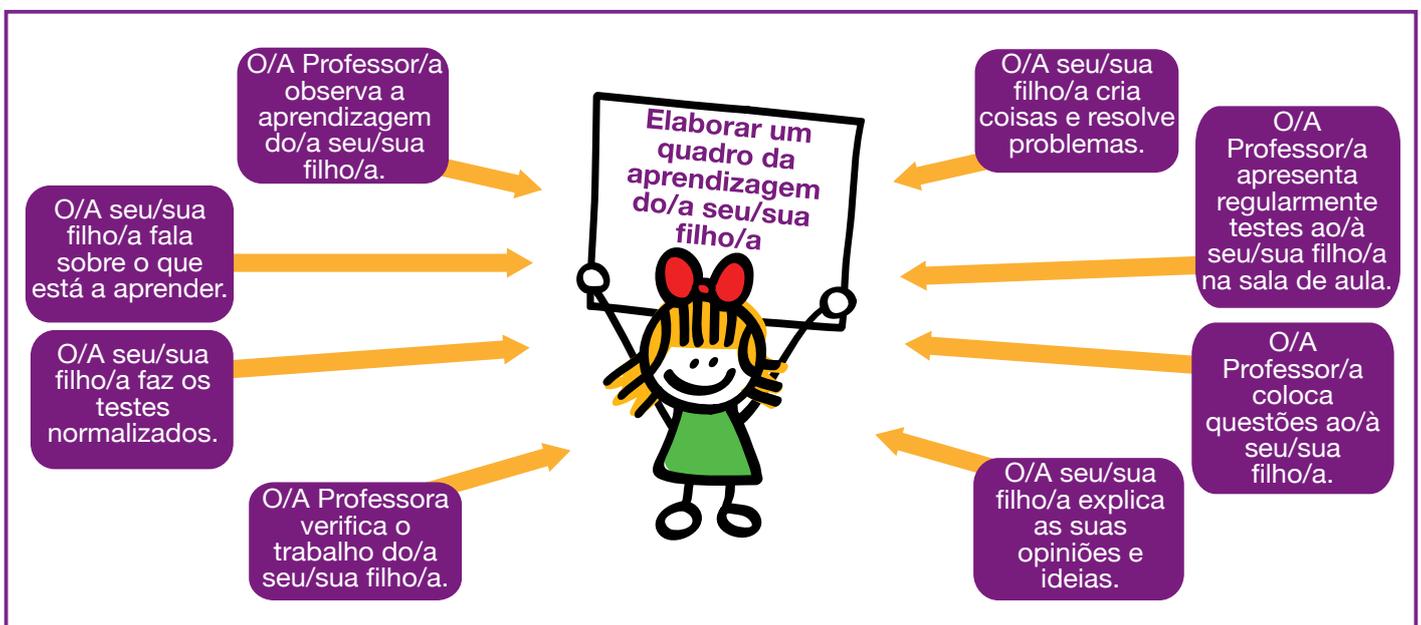
O/A seu/sua filho/a faz os testes normalizados no final do **2º, 4º e 6º ano**. O/A seu/sua filho/a apenas fará um teste normalizado de **leitura de irlandês** se frequentar uma escola de língua irlandesa. Algumas escolas optam por realizar testes normalizados em mais anos.

### Todas as crianças fazem os testes normalizados?

Caberá ao/à Professor/a do/a seu/sua filho/a decidir quais as crianças que farão os testes. Por exemplo, se a primeira língua do/a seu/sua filho/a não for o inglês, o/a Professor/a pode decidir que ele/a não deve fazer o teste de leitura de inglês. O/A seu/sua filho/a pode, no entanto, fazer o teste de matemática. Se o/a seu/sua filho/a tiver dificuldades de aprendizagem, ou uma incapacidade física, o/a Professor/a pode optar por outra forma de avaliação do progresso do/a seu/sua filho/a.

### Os testes normalizados são a única forma de recolher informação sobre a aprendizagem do/a meu/minha filho/a?

Não. O diagrama abaixo mostra como o/a Professor/a usa **muitas** formas distintas para elaborar um **quadro da aprendizagem do/a seu/sua filho/a** ao longo do ano. O/A Professor/a usa o quadro para **assinalar** os êxitos do/a seu/sua filho/a e para planear os **próximos passos** necessários para construir sobre os progressos realizados.



### Qual o significado das classificações dos testes do/a meu/minha filho/a?

O/A Professor/a utilizou as **classificações STen** para o/a informar quanto ao desempenho do/a seu/sua filho/a nos testes. As classificações STen variam entre 1 e 10. A tabela abaixo descreve o que as diferentes classificações STen revelam sobre o desempenho do/a seu/sua filho/a nos testes.

Classificação STen	O que significa a classificação STen?	Proporção de crianças com esta classificação
8 - 10	Muito acima da média	1/6 ou quase 17%
7	Média-alta	1/6 ou quase 17%
5 - 6	Média	1/3 ou quase 34%
4	Média-baixa	1/6 ou quase 17%
1 - 3	Bem abaixo da média	1/6 ou quase 17%

Se a classificação STen do/a seu/sua filho/a for, por exemplo, entre 5 e 6, saberá que o seu desempenho no teste foi médio. A tabela abaixo mostra que cerca de uma em cada três crianças na Irlanda têm classificações STen dentro deste intervalo. Poderá também ver que algumas crianças têm classificações STen acima e abaixo da média. As classificações de crianças com Inglês como idioma adicional podem não reflectir sempre os progressos feitos na aula. É necessário um cuidado semelhante na interpretação de classificações de crianças com necessidades educativas especiais.

### Se a classificação do/a meu/minha filho/a for baixa, o que é que isso me diz?

Uma classificação STen de 1, 2 ou 3 sugere que o/a seu/sua filho/a **pode** ter dificuldades numa das áreas avaliadas. Poderão ser utilizadas outras avaliações para determinar se é este o caso. Poderá ser também útil ao/à Professora receber informações sobre a aprendizagem e desenvolvimento do/a seu/sua filho/a em casa, por exemplo os trabalhos de casa. Os Professores da escola do/a seu/sua filho/a podem decidir se o/a seu/sua filho/a iria beneficiar de um apoio extra. Se assim for, o/a Professor/a do/a seu/sua filho/a falará consigo sobre o assunto.

### Se a classificação do/a meu/minha filho/a for alta, o que é que isso me diz?

Uma classificação STen de 8, 9 ou 10 **pode** sugerir que o/a seu/sua filho/a apresenta um bom desempenho na área avaliada. Tal como nas classificações baixas, uma classificação alta não é suficiente para confirmá-lo. O/A Professor/a do/a seu/sua filho/a fará uso das informações recolhidas a partir de outras avaliações levadas a cabo na sala de aula para compreender de forma mais clara o desempenho do/a seu/sua filho/a a matemática, leitura de inglês ou leitura de irlandês. O/A Professor/a poderá falar consigo sobre oportunidades de aprendizagem extra, que poderá proporcionar ao/à seu/sua filho/a, tanto em casa como na escola.

### O que pode afetar a classificação dos testes do/a meu/minha filho/a?

Tal como em outros testes que o/a seu/sua filho/a faz na escola, a classificação num teste normalizado pode ser afetada pela forma como ele/a se sente no dia do teste, ou pela preocupação ou excitação com algum acontecimento em casa ou na escola. Isto significa que a classificação de cada teste é **um indicador** do desempenho do/a seu/sua filho/a. Lembre-se que desempenha um papel importante no incentivo e apoio do/a seu/sua filho/a, independentemente dos resultados dos testes. Se tiver alguma dúvida relativamente às classificações do/a seu/sua filho/a, poderá querer agendar uma reunião com o/a Professor/a dele/a.

### Como posso ajudar o/a meu/minha filho/a?

A NCCA desenvolveu alguns recursos online para ajudá-lo/a a apoiar a aprendizagem do/a seu/sua filho/a na escola primária. Muitos destes recursos estão disponíveis em vários idiomas, sendo regularmente acrescentados novos recursos à página dos Pais em [www.ncca.ie/parents](http://www.ncca.ie/parents). Consulte os recursos para o ano do/a seu/sua filho/a.



# SUPPORTING ASSESSMENT IN SCHOOLS

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STANDARDISED TESTING IN COMPULSORY  
SCHOOLING

APRIL 2005





# Standardised Testing in Compulsory Schooling

## Introduction

This paper presents the response of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) to the request of July 2004, to identify key issues relating to implementing standardised testing of literacy and numeracy in compulsory schooling, and to provide corresponding advice. It should be seen in the context of the other three papers that comprise the suite of documents *Supporting Assessment in Schools*. As the paper will make clear, consideration of standardised testing in isolation from more general assessment practice and policy issues places an over-emphasis on what is just one of a range of assessment tools availed of by teachers and schools in their day-to-day work. Standardised testing should be considered in context; the inclusion of this paper as part of the suite of other assessment documents is an attempt to do just that.

The paper is presented in two sections. The first presents an initial mapping of issues related to the introduction of standardised testing in compulsory schooling, the second discusses international practice and advises on short and medium term next steps.

The issues presented in the first part of this paper have been mapped out by members of two NCCA committees, the Junior Cycle Review Committee and the Early Childhood and Primary Committee. The Assessment Technical Working Group has also provided ideas and comment. The second part of the paper is informed by initial work undertaken by the International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks (known as INCA) project, at the National Foundation for Educational Research in England. NCCA's membership of this project gives access to such compilations of international practice. More detailed thematic studies are also feasible.<sup>1</sup> The initial INCA overview is included as an appendix. The second part of the paper also draws on a number of projects taking place across the NCCA and on its research conducted to support the Primary Curriculum and Junior Cycle reviews.

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<sup>1</sup> The NCCA commissioned a study of this nature as part of its review of senior cycle education.

## **Section One – Mapping the Issues**

In setting out some issues associated with standardised testing this paper firstly discusses the range of purposes currently served by standardised tests. It comments on the relationship between standardised testing and the curriculum. It suggests some of the issues that can arise in the frequency and timing of such tests. The paper examines some of the unintended consequences that can emerge when standardised testing becomes a high-stakes assessment activity in schools and the education system. Finally, some of the logistical and cost issues are raised.

The development of standardised tests, their theoretical context and the technical details associated with their administration and scoring is a specialised field of study. The mapping presented here is done in general terms to allow for accessibility.

### **The purpose or function of standardised testing**

While there are many definitions of standardised testing, this paper is based on the following:

*A standardised test is an instrument of assessment that contains standardised procedures for its administration and scoring and for the interpretation of its results. In practice, the term 'standardised test' is most often applied to assessment instruments that contain objectively scored items that are produced commercially by a test agency and that are norm-referenced.*

Standardised tests are currently used in most primary schools on a regular basis to test a child's reading and mathematical skills and to measure children's progress in these areas. These norm-referenced standardised tests help the teacher to provide a more accurate picture of the child's development with reference to age or class group. When used in combination with other assessment methods, standardised tests contribute to the

accuracy of the teacher's monitoring and assist in identifying the needs of individual children.

Standardised tests are tests of a pupil's **achievement**, rather than tests of a pupil's ability. However, because standardised tests provide accurate information on achievement, a tendency to extend specific judgements on achievement into more general judgements on ability can sometimes emerge in practice. For example, standardised tests are sometimes perceived as proxies for testing a pupil's IQ. This is an important issue as standardised tests simply measure the pupil's achievement on particular test items at a given time, and relate it to the achievement of pupils of similar age, whereas the potential of a pupil to realise his/her innate ability is determined by a range of in-school and out-of-school factors, some of which relate only indirectly to the process of learning.

A single assessment instrument cannot answer multiple questions. In the letter to the NCCA requesting advice on standardised testing, a number of purposes are linked with standardised testing including the identification of progress, the allocation of resources and the provision of information for decision making among others. The question of fitness-for-purpose of standardised testing emerges as an important issue in this context.

The purposes which standardised tests currently serve in Irish schools include the following:

- Standardised tests are used to identify pupils with learning difficulties at the earliest possible stage so that appropriate support and intervention can be put in place. While standardised tests do not indicate the nature of a learning difficulty, they are used to flag potential difficulties and prompt further assessment.
- Standardised tests are used in the process of pupils transferring from the primary to the post-primary school. Smyth et al (2004) noted the use of standardised tests with pupils on entry into first year. "The majority of schools use various

standardised tests (such as Drumcondra tests, Sigma-T, Micra-T, Gapadol, NFER-Nelson, Shonnell and Richmond).”<sup>2</sup> 42% of schools use their own tests on entry; the researchers reported that post-primary school principals mentioned a total of 26 different types of tests. According to the principals in the study, the results of the tests are used for the identification of students who may require learning support, the establishing of a base-line for ongoing monitoring, the allocation of students to base classes and the allocation of subject levels for the Junior Certificate examination.

- Standardised tests contribute to the evaluation of schools by the Inspectorate of the DES. Standardised test data are corroborated with other measures of pupil progress and attainment, as part of an Inspector’s evaluation of overall learning progress in the school.
  
- Standardised tests are used to report on their children’s achievement to parents and guardians. Test results, as well as information gleaned through other assessment measures are used to present a full picture of the child’s progress to his/her parents/guardians.
  
- Standardised tests are used to conduct national assessments of educational achievement in primary schools, approximately every five years. The Educational Research Centre (ERC), in conjunction with the DES uses standardised tests with population samples, in English (reading), Irish (reading, and oral language in co-operation with Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann), and Mathematics. These data are used to gauge the overall standards of achievement in the system as well as changes over time.

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<sup>2</sup> Smyth, E, McCoy, S. & Darmody, M. (1994). Moving up: The experiences of first-year students in post-primary education. The Liffey Press, Dublin.

- Standardised tests are used to identify pupils who require learning support. The number of learning support hours allocated to a school is based on the number of pupils achieving scores at or below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile in standardised tests.
- Standardised tests have been used in research commissioned by the NCCA to provide information of student achievement in junior cycle. Tests were administered to pupils participating in the JCSP as part of the review of that programme, and to pupils in the case study schools in the cohort study as a baseline against which subsequent examination performance can be measured.

In testing, questions of purpose fall under three headings:

- What is the purpose of the test?
- How will the data collected be used?
- Who will have access to the data?

Clarity on these three questions is vital when planning any assessment or testing developmental work. For example, if the stated purpose of a test is to provide a national picture of pupil progress, the data collected are used to generate this picture, but the data are then made available to the general public on a school-by-school basis, the initial stated purpose of the test is radically changed. Similarly, if the effectiveness of any educational initiative is to be measured by its impact on test scores, the scope and nature of the initiative is going to be determined by this fact.

Clarity of purpose will also have an influence on the timing of testing. The proposals for the introduction of standardised testing outlined in July 2004 referred to three points of testing during the period of compulsory schooling. The proposals suggest that testing would occur during the first and sixth class of primary schooling with the third point being at some other stage – to be advised by the NCCA – during the period of compulsory schooling. The issue of the role of standardised testing in the junior cycle of

post-primary schooling arises, and as a consequence, the relationship that might be envisaged between such testing and the existing Junior Certificate examination.

### **Standardised testing across the curriculum**

Standardised tests are generally used to assess student achievement in literacy and numeracy, and, although some tests have been developed to assess student attainment of science concepts, standardised testing is generally confined to these two areas of achievement.

The Primary School Curriculum emphasises the importance of literacy and numeracy in the educational experience of children and highlights their vital role in enabling pupils to access the rest of the curriculum. The curriculum for the junior cycle of post-primary education also flags the importance of continuing to support mastery in literacy and numeracy, building on what has been achieved in primary school.

The administration of standardised tests in literacy and numeracy reflects their particular importance. However, there is a danger that an over-emphasis on standardised testing could lead to the establishment of an ‘assessment hierarchy’ with testing at the top and other forms of assessment perceived as of lower status. Thus a knowledge and subject hierarchy is created with those subjects particularly relevant to the tests (English and mathematics) being accorded more than their recommended time at the expense of the other curriculum areas. For learners, the message is clear – some forms of achievement in particular areas of the curriculum are more valuable than others.

One particular issue that would be faced by schools in Ireland is that standardised tests have not been developed for use by schools where Irish is the medium of instruction. To do so poses a number of challenges given the wide range of linguistic experience of pupils in Gaelscoileanna and in scoileanna sa Ghaeltacht. Establishing norms for these tests would be an exceptionally difficult task. The ERC published standardised tests for English, Maths and Gaeilge for the general population in the mid 1970s. The Gaeilge

test was developed for children with Irish as a second language. It was standardised on all schools, rather than with a sample of children who had Irish as their first language. Currently, the ERC is revising their maths test and it will be published in Irish.

### **Frequency and timing of standardised assessment**

In general, the earlier an assessment is conducted (for diagnostic purposes) the more likely it is to lead to profitable interventions on behalf of the pupil. On the other hand, it may be more developmentally appropriate to use norm-referenced standardised tests with pupils in second class than in first class as reliability of the test results increases as pupils grow older and skills become stabilised.

At the other end of the period of primary schooling, testing at fifth class instead of sixth, it can be argued, facilitates further diagnosis of learning difficulties and implementation of appropriate interventions during the pupil's primary school years. However, if one of the purposes of testing is to contribute to the transfer of information from the primary to the post-primary school, it could be argued that testing in sixth class would provide more up-to-date information. The choice of timing relates to the primary purpose of the test.

Within a school year, testing at the beginning of the year enables schools to develop appropriate interventions for certain pupils, while testing at the end of the year allows schools to make placement and progress decisions based on assessment results. Given the variation in the pace at which the curriculum is covered with classes, and the sequence of coverage, timing the testing can be problematic. Again, the purpose of the assessment will determine the optimal time for administering tests during the school year.

A further related issue is the matter of what test, or what tests? Currently, schools make use of different tests available for Irish primary schools, and, in some cases, tests that are not normed for the Irish primary school population. If the purpose of testing is to

gain a comprehensive national picture, the issue arises of whether a single test should be made available for schools.

### **The question of stakes**

When the results of any assessment, not just a standardised test, are shared with parents/guardians or with pupils themselves the process of testing and reporting is generally seen as ‘low-stakes’. Such low stakes exchanges of information are ‘high value’ for the pupil, the teacher and the parents/guardians.

When the pupils’ assessment results are shared between teachers, principals and inspectors the stakes are generally seen as ‘medium’ as information other than the assessment results may now be inferred about teachers, about classes or about schools. The site of ‘high value’ also shifts slightly, away from the pupil and parent/guardian and towards the school principal and inspectors.

High-stakes assessment involves sharing the assessment outcome with those further removed from the student, such as resource allocation agencies, evaluation agencies and the general public. The ‘high value’ of these tests is for the system as a whole – such tests may provide important data about the quality of the education system. It is argued, however, that in the case of high stakes tests the information may be of little use for the individual student; it may even have a negative impact on the quality of his/her educational experience. Commentators have documented a range of unintended effects of high stakes tests on students and classrooms in countries where such testing is widely used. These include

- measurement-driven instruction or ‘teaching to the test’ resulting in a narrowing of the curriculum
- exclusion of pupils with special educational needs, as well as children who don’t have the language of the test as their first language

- increased referral of pupils with special educational needs, retention of children (in the same class), ‘encouraged absenteeism’ on test days

Consideration of the sixth class test raises many of the issues associated with ‘stakes’. Testing in sixth class might well provide useful data to support transfer to post-primary school. But for a child taking the test in sixth class for the purpose of providing transfer data, the stakes become very high indeed.

A range of effects of ‘high-stakes’ tests has also been identified for schools, teachers, parents and the system at large although it is debatable whether these can be classed as ‘unintended’ since they are usually associated with the publication or dissemination of results on a school-by-school basis. The results can take the form of raw scores and rankings that are often unadjusted for family and socio-economic background factors that can effect learner characteristics and test scores. Some of these effects include:

- demoralising of schools and parents where there are high numbers of students with low scores – generally serving the most socio-economically disadvantaged communities
- positive reinforcement of schools with high scores – generally those serving the most socio-economically advantaged communities
- the emergence of subtle ‘selection’ policies in schools in an attempt to raise test scores
- pressure on teachers to coach children for tests, and to focus teaching and learning on test practice

- pressure on parents to ‘buy’ coaching/grinds for children in preparation for tests

## **Logistical and cost issues**

One final issue to consider is that of the cost of testing pupils (56,000 per class group) three times in the period of their compulsory education. Primary schools currently fund the cost of tests from within the learning support grant or from funds gathered through a ‘general purpose’ contribution from parents.

Currently, the test booklets for Sigma-T and Micra-T, the most widely used tests, are €1.52 and €1.20 respectively. The scoring manual is €3.00 per level, or €20.00 for all levels on CD. The Drumcondra Primary Tests cost €5.10 for each group of five pupils. The same costs apply in English as in Mathematics. The scoring stencil varies between €1.00 and €6.50 per level. As noted elsewhere in this paper, these tests are for pupils in primary school only.

In the 1970s the ERC developed Drumcondra Attainment Tests (DATs) in English, Reading and Maths for use by 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year post-primary students. While the tests have not since been standardised on a nationally representative sample of pupils, they are still used in some post-primary schools. In the absence of recently normed tests for Irish post-primary students, tests developed in the UK are also used in some schools.

The introduction of testing for all pupils as a requirement will have cost implications and the allocation to schools for the purchase and processing of tests would need to match the costs incurred.

The use of more than one test – as is currently the case in Ireland – also has implications. While both sets of tests for primary children have been standardised for an Irish setting, they generate different kinds of results, and thus connecting or comparing

results can be difficult. This is further compounded by the fact that other tests beyond the two mentioned are also in use in primary schools.

Considerable investment would be required to develop a test/tests for use in post-primary schools if the third point were to be identified at some stage in junior cycle. Similarly, were a single test to be developed or identified for use in Irish schools, (as opposed to the multiple test instruments currently in use) this would also have resource implications. The need to provide tests for schools where Irish is the medium of instruction is also an issue as the tests currently available are normed for pupils who learn through the medium of English. Added to the cost of developing and standardising a new test, is the issue of the time required for this process.

Standardised testing is a specialised and complex assessment activity. Additional costs associated with its effective implementation relate to the professional development of those charged with conducting, processing and interpreting the test results. The introduction of a specific programme of standardised testing in all schools would also need to be supported by a public information campaign explaining standardised testing in accessible terms for parents and the general public.

In general terms, the fundamental question of purpose is the most salient one in considering logistical and cost issues. The logistical complexity and the level of investment needed will be determined by the specific purpose(s) of any testing or assessment initiative.

## Section Two – Moving Forward

Assessment – along with the allocation of resources – is generally considered to be one of the most powerful policy tools in education. What is assessed, how, when and to what purpose has implications well beyond the assessment process itself. Some commentators would suggest that assessment plays the role of the mediator of the relationship between education and society. In a world where measurement, evaluation and accountability are becoming an ever-increasing part of public life, the ‘measurement’ of education comes in for increasing scrutiny and the object of growing debate.

In recent times, many countries have invested considerable research and development funding into the formulation of assessment policy, into support for assessment practice in schools, and into the reporting on assessment data to parents and the public at large. In Scotland and Wales for example, the devolved assemblies have recently initiated major changes in the assessment policies for compulsory schooling, shifting the focus away from externally administered tests to a greater emphasis on supporting teacher assessment practice in classrooms. In England, formal end of year testing of seven year olds has been abolished. In the future equal weight will be given to teachers’ assessments of how pupils are doing, and tests will be taken whenever teachers think that the pupils are ready for them. Assessment is also the focus of review in Northern Ireland, in addition to the proposals for the replacement of the transfer test at the end of primary schooling.

In their survey of research papers published over the past ten years by the journal *Assessment in Education*, Broadfoot and Black (2004) note a very significant growth in assessment activity. They also note the use of assessment, especially what Connell (1993) calls ‘standardised competitive assessment’ as an instrument of social control. However, of particular note in the Broadfoot and Black review is their analysis that in recent times, belief in the power of these forms of assessment to provide a ‘rational, efficient and publicly accepted mechanism of judgement and control has reached its

high point' (p.19). They argue that much recent research in assessment has challenged the presumed objectivity and efficiency of conventional summative assessment techniques (Harlen and Deakin-Crick 2003, Whetton 2004 ). They point to an emerging interest in policy-makers in a different set of assessment principles born out of educational priorities which view assessment as a 'powerful force in supporting learning, and a mechanism for individual empowerment' (Broadfoot and Black, 2004, p,22).

Ireland has not had a similar level of attention to assessment policy nor to research in assessment. Teacher practice in assessment has developed largely due to the work of teachers themselves, and their concerns for improvement. Despite the absence of policy-makers' attention, assessment has been the focus of an upsurge of public interest in and debate about the quality and outcomes of schooling. While schools and classrooms have been the focus of considerable teacher work on assessment, that work has not been supported, nor informed, by comprehensive and considered national policy on assessment in schools.

In a review of assessment policy in primary education in the Republic of Ireland, Hall (2000) and Hall and Kavanagh (2002) conclude that assessment policy and practice here are characterised by conceptual uncertainty, by vagueness about goals and purposes and by lack of clarity about the place of assessment information in classrooms and in the education system as a whole. This uncertainty about assessment may be compounded to some degree by the lack of clear statements of what 'literate' and 'numerate' mean at each stage of education. While the administration of standardised tests may be generally advocated for first and fifth classes example, we do not have clear statements about what 'standards' are expected at these stages. Similarly, the outcomes for the end of junior cycle make particular reference to literacy and numeracy but offer no further description for teachers or parents of a literate or numerate 15 year old.

The data collected in the course of the first phase of the primary curriculum review shows that teachers lack confidence in assessment, and that while teachers are fully

aware of the exhortation in the curriculum documentation that ‘assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning’, they are only beginning to translate it into practice. While the Primary School Curriculum provided the educational rationale and imperative for assessment in primary schools, it is only in 2003/2004 that the NCCA made significant progress in developing advice on assessment policy – including on standardised tests – in primary schools<sup>3</sup>.

Given the dominance of the post-primary stage of education of the two certificate examinations, it might be expected that assessment practice, and teacher confidence in assessment might be more well-developed in that sector. However, the report on the consultation process associated with the first phase of the review of junior cycle would suggest otherwise. It showed that teacher understanding and application of assessment practice was dominated by preparation for the junior certificate examination. In response to this finding the NCCA began the Assessment for Learning Initiative (AFL) to support classroom practice in assessment, to develop teacher understanding of the potential of assessment in teaching and learning and to improve the quality of reporting to parents on student progress. Work on this project continues, with the participation of additional teachers and schools planned for 2005.<sup>4</sup> In January 2005 OECD published a report on a cross-national project on formative assessment in lower secondary education that highlighted the following:

- Higher levels of student achievement and greater equity of student outcomes are among the goals promoted by formative assessment.
- Teachers who use formative assessment systematically make fundamental changes: in their interactions with students, the way they set up learning situations and guide students toward learning goals, even how they think about student success.
- With formative assessment, teachers guide students toward the development of their own "learning to learn" skills (OECD/CERI, 2005).

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<sup>3</sup> The first document in the suite *Supporting Assessment in Schools*

<sup>4</sup> A report on this initiative is presented in the second document in the suite

## **Assessment in the public domain**

Many of those working within education have deeply held convictions, beliefs, and sometimes, suspicion, about assessment. While ‘learning’ is generally presented as an educational ‘good’, this is not always the case with ‘assessment’. Because it can function as means of control or accountability, assessment can become the focus of concerns about the education system that may need to be addressed, but for which assessment is not, and never can be the ‘solution’. Thus while the literacy and numeracy levels of some students in some schools may give legitimate cause for concern, standardised testing of literacy and numeracy will not improve the levels of student achievement in these areas.

Debate about assessment in Irish schools, particularly about assessment in primary schools, will inevitably connect to concerns about information on school effectiveness. Successive Ministers for Education and Science have made it clear that comparison between schools in any ‘league-table’ scenario is not envisaged. In recent times, despite this political will to the contrary, the creation of proxy performance tables for post-primary schools by the national press using data on student entry to third level education has shown that, in the absence of other meaningful information, data intended for one purpose will be used to ‘rank’ schools. The information vacuum will be filled.

In the context of this absence of information, standardised test and other assessment data may become the focus of considerable attention. The intention may be to develop ‘low stakes’ assessment. The reality is that in the absence of other data, assessment information might well become high-stakes.

## **International Practice**

The publication of the most recent Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results by the OECD serves as a useful illustration of the limitations of international comparisons. The education system in Finland (presented in most

commentaries on the study, as the ‘top performer’) is characterised by low levels of school and teacher accountability. There is no programme of assessment in literacy and numeracy and data on school performance is not published. In Canada, (the ‘second highest’ performer) teachers and schools are subject to rigorous accountability policies including the collection of test scores on a school-by-school basis and their publication for parents and the general public. No one set of policies ‘guarantees’ a ‘good education system’ (or good scores on comparative tests). Education systems have particular cultures and contexts that make them impossible to replicate.

The review of international practice presented in the final document in the suite *Supporting Assessment in Schools* offers no commentary or evaluation of the practices in each country, state or province – no one approach to the testing of literacy and numeracy is advocated as ‘better’ than the other. Across the many different approaches, it is evident that the development of assessment and testing has been focused on three different sets of purposes;

- to support work in classrooms.
- to provide information on the effectiveness of the education system.
- to provide information to parents on the progress of their children and on how the education system is serving their family and community.

It is equally evident in the countries surveyed that different assessment and reporting tools have been used to meet different needs. Developments in Australia offer an interesting example of the differentiated approach. Work there began with the articulation of what are called ‘national benchmarks’ in literacy and numeracy for three stages of education. These are used to guide curriculum planning in schools and they are the basis for reporting on how well the system is doing. Parents are provided with details on how well their child is doing in relation to the benchmarks. Parents are also provided with details of how well all children of the same age are doing. This latter data is collected by a national agency using light sampling of schools to capture a national profile of the % of students achieving the benchmark, % of exempted, % absent, and %

of students ‘with a language base other than English’. School by school data is not made available, but the agency responsible for ‘reporting to the nation’<sup>5</sup> makes data available for comparable school types to assist schools and school boards with evaluation and planning. In Ontario, Canada, a similar approach has been developed, but, in line with Canadian policy, the tests also serve an accountability function and data is published on a school-by-school basis. Developments in Canada and Australia are relatively new; further more extensive research could provide valuable information on the effectiveness and impact of the approaches taken.

Because Ireland is coming to its work in assessment late relative to other countries this does mean that work here can be informed by the decisions – and revisions – undertaken in other countries. It also gives an indication of the degree of consideration and debate, and scale of work needed to support any initiative in assessment in schools. If, as Broadfoot and Black suggest, the ‘peak’ of assessment for accountability and control in schools has passed, Ireland is well placed to learn from the experiences of others in creating an approach to assessment in compulsory education that is based in sound research and suits the particular features of the Irish education system, its culture and context.

### **Developing assessment and testing in Irish schools - recommendations**

Before proposing a number of short and medium term actions, it is useful to recall a number of the points made in both sections of this paper:

- Standardised tests are currently used in primary schools to provide teachers, schools and parents with information on children’s achievement in reading and mathematics. They are also used by many post-primary schools at the beginning of first year for diagnostic purposes and to assist with assignment to class groups.

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<sup>5</sup> Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs

- Standardised tests and the results of such tests can serve a number of purposes; clarity about the purpose of any test is essential and informs the timing and nature of the tests as well as the processing and sharing of results.
- Depending on the purposes of the tests, they are generally classified as being ‘low-stakes’ or ‘high-stakes’, although most tests can be placed somewhere on a continuum between the two extremes. In general, although not always, low-stakes test provide results that are more useful for teachers and students; high-stakes tests provide results that are more useful for policy-makers and the public at large.
- Standardised testing is just one of a range of assessment tools used by teachers in assessment pupil progress across the curriculum as a whole.
- Teachers have not been well supported to date in the development of their assessment practice.
- The NCCA is currently working with teachers and schools to develop good practice in assessment and reporting in primary schools and in the junior cycle of post-primary schools.
- To-date, assessment policy in Ireland has not been well defined. Of late, considerable public attention has focused on the outcomes of schooling, and national media have used data on student entry to third level to produce crude ‘league tables’ of post-primary schools.
- Ireland can learn from the developments elsewhere in forging an approach to assessment that meets the needs of Irish students and schools and the Irish education system.

The advice on moving forward is presented below. It is based on current work in schools, on the developmental work underway by the NCCA and reflects consideration of research and international practice. It is premised on promoting assessment – of all kinds – that meets the needs of children and young people, supports the work of teachers and schools, and contributes to the general development of the education system.

### **Supporting and promoting good practice in assessment and reporting**

It is important for the quality of student learning and for teacher planning that teachers make good use of all assessment information and that it is reported to parents and used to provide appropriate feedback to students.

Arising from this statement of principle, the NCCA will continue its current work with teachers and schools on developing advice for teachers on the process of gathering, recording, interpreting, using and communicating information about a child's progress and achievement. At primary level, this advice includes guidance on the selection and use of standardised tests as part of this process.

As part of this work, the NCCA will develop a common template for recording assessment information and reporting such information to parents. The development of a national report card template would make an important contribution to a level of consistency in teachers' assessments across schools and within schools while still offering schools the flexibility to meet their own needs and the needs of local communities. Such work would also promote common procedures in recording and reporting the results of standardised tests and in reporting on student progress generally. It would support schools in meeting their responsibilities to report to parents and guardians as set out in the Education Act. The national report card template would be developed and piloted by the NCCA during 2005-2006 in preparation for a wider introduction in the school year 2007-2008.

The Assessment for Learning initiative will continue to support improvement in the quality of reporting to parents of young people in the junior cycle of post-primary education.

The NCCA will extend the guidance currently being developed for parents to support their involvement in their children's learning. This guidance will include practical advice on supporting literacy and numeracy in the home as well as information on understanding assessment data from schools.

The successful implementation of any of these initiatives will depend on engagement with and support for teacher assessment and reporting practice, an aspect of the professional practice of teachers that has, to date, been relatively unsupported. A comprehensive programme of professional development for teachers will be required to support these developments.

### **Standardised tests supporting assessment practice**

Standardised tests are a useful assessment tool for teachers and schools. Already, the majority of pupils in primary schools take standardised tests. Building on this established current practice, all pupils in primary schools should be tested in literacy and numeracy at end of first/beginning of second and end of fourth/beginning of fifth class. Schools can choose the most appropriate point for the administration of the tests within those parameters, taking into account the circumstances of the school and age of the students.

It is envisaged that tests will continue to serve current purposes - monitoring student progress, flagging potential difficulties, and providing information for teacher and school planning. For these reasons, the end of fourth/beginning of fifth is suggested as the second point to allow for action to be taken in the event that a difficulty is identified.

It is envisaged that test scores should be included on each student report card – the best format for this reporting should be explored in the piloting of the National Report Card template.

Tests normed for the Irish population should be used, and, it follows that if all students are to have access to tests schools should be provided with the resources to purchase and administer the tests without having recourse to additional funding being provided by parents.

The *Guidelines for Teachers of Students for whom English is an Additional Language* to be published shortly by the NCCA will include advice on the use of standardised tests in classrooms where students have a range of first languages.

This extension of standardised testing should be introduced as soon as is feasible given the need for professional development for teachers and principals and for the provision of funding for the purchase of tests. It may also be necessary to review the tests currently available to assess their suitability for contemporary classroom settings. A comprehensive evaluation of standardised test use in primary schools should be commissioned two years after the introduction of this extension of testing.

This requirement should not be seen as restricting schools in the tests they use or when they are used. Learning support teachers will continue to use a variety of diagnostic tests to provide them with the particular information needed about a student. Similarly, if a teacher believes that a child's test score is at odds with the results of other assessments or does not seem to reflect the child's achievement, the teacher should feel free to administer another test. The identification of difficulties is part of the ongoing monitoring work done by teachers – it is important that it not be confined to the times identified for standardised testing.

Given that schools where Irish is the medium of instruction do not have access to appropriate test instruments, the Department of Education and Science should commission a programme of test development for Gaelscoileanna and schools in the Gaeltacht as soon as possible.

### **Supporting the judgement of teachers**

Recent work with teachers by the NCCA in primary and post-primary has shown that teachers require support in assessing student work and providing meaningful feedback on that work.

Work should begin on providing a bank of annotated examples of student work to illustrate each stage of schooling to guide and support teacher judgement in classrooms. These examples, which will be sourced from and with teachers, can also show how teachers use a range of assessment tools to develop a full picture of student progress in the period of compulsory education.

While the examples alone can be useful, the addition of a commentary on each example will afford the opportunity to show

- how the example illustrates the achievement of a particular objective of the curriculum for the relevant level or class group
- the degree to which the objective has been met
- how a particular teaching methodology contributed to the student work
- how assessment might provide useful feedback to the student

These examples and the commentaries on them should also be accessible to parents, and to the general public.

Work should also begin on the development of brief summaries of what it is envisaged that pupils should have achieved at each level in their schooling based on the curriculum

for each level. Such summaries should be prepared in consultation with teachers and schools and illustrated using the bank of examples outlined above. These illustrations will be important in showing different learning styles and rates and in supporting teachers in differentiating in planning, in teaching and learning and in assessment.

The main purpose of this work would be to support teachers in conducting assessment activity in the classroom. In addition, these summaries can assist teachers in making critical judgements in relation to the need for interventions to support children's learning.

### **Developing assessment in the junior cycle of post-primary school.**

Plans are already underway to continue the successful Assessment for Learning initiative at junior cycle. This initiative focuses on improving the assessment practice of teachers and the quality of feedback given to learners.

To-date, the work has not included standardised tests in the repertoire of assessment approaches for junior cycle. The use of standardised tests for 11-15 year olds is not well-researched. There are no tests available for use in Irish post-primary schools. As part of a wider comparative study, the NCCA will gather data on international practice on testing for this age group before advising on the issue.

### **Supporting transfer from primary to post-primary school**

Research conducted by the ESRI for the NCCA showed that 26 different tests are currently administered by post-primary schools to provide them with information about pupils leaving primary schools. These tests are drawn from a variety of sources, and provide schools with a range of information, depending on the test chosen. The research pointed to poor transfer of information between the two sectors – as evidenced by the need of so many schools to administer their own tests, and showed a lack of continuity and progression for students.

As part of its remit to advise on the transition between primary and post-primary schools, the NCCA is proposing to establish a number of pilot projects across the country to build on and consolidate good practice in transfer. A critical component of these projects will be their evaluation, an evaluation that will be ongoing as the projects are developed and implemented. The outcome of these pilots will be advice on a national policy on transfer from primary to post-primary schools.

### **Providing robust data on system effectiveness**

The current programme of national sampling provides valuable data for the education system on a sampling basis every five years. However, system-wide information is needed on a more regular basis to assist schools in planning, to provide policy-makers with data on system effectiveness and improvement, to guide those who allocate resources, to inform the work of the NCCA and to report on the education system to the public at large. This information should include data on standards in literacy and numeracy, but it should also build up, over time, a picture of progress across the curriculum.

The NCCA recommends that the work of the current programme should be built upon to establish an expanded Programme of National Monitoring that, through national testing on a sampling basis, would provide more regular data on achievement at system level. While literacy and numeracy would be the focus of initial work, the programme should be elaborated over time to include other aspects of the curriculum. The reporting of this data should be developed to provide details of progress by school type/size/socio-economic context and other criteria. The sample will need to be large enough to allow for the data provided through the Programme of National Monitoring to serve a wide range of purposes including

- reporting to the public on literacy and numeracy standards in the education system as a whole
- assisting schools in the process of school and curriculum planning

- supporting the Department of Education and Science in planning for system progress and improvement
- informing the curriculum and assessment work of the NCCA and its processes of rolling review
- assisting in the efficient allocation of resources to schools to target the needs of individual children and groups of children, including those with special educational needs and those who are educationally disadvantaged
- informing the work of the inspectorate in supporting school improvement
- identifying teachers' professional development needs.

## **Conclusion**

The actions suggested would mark the initiation of a significant phase of 'assessment activity' for Irish education. Moving ahead on standardised testing without wider developments in assessment and reporting would place too great an emphasis on the tests and the test results as the only source of meaningful information before the Junior Certificate Examination. What is intended as 'low stakes' could quickly become 'high stakes' in the absence of other data on student progress and system effectiveness and quality. The common approach to reporting, and the development of the Programme of National Monitoring will provide important additional information. A single test score – or even two test scores – should not be the basis for important decisions about individuals or groups (Hamilton, 2004).

Assessment of any kind, is a social process – it is not an exact science, nor is it a clinical procedure. Assessment takes place in a context that includes the classroom setting, classroom peers, the environment in and around the school, teacher and parental expectation, as well as student self-esteem. At a broader level, as stated in the introduction to the paper, assessment acts as a mediator of the relationship between education and society. Issues of gender, class and ethnicity arise. At a time when there are already concerns that the benefits of education are shared equally, the development of an assessment system must take particular account of the needs of those who may

already be losing out. At the very least, it must not add to their disadvantage. At its best, it could be a significant step towards a more equitable system. Moving forward carefully, working with teachers, students and parents, and evaluating vigilantly should be the hallmarks of ‘assessment activity’ that takes account of the social processes and implications of assessment.

Supporting the development of assessment in schools means supporting teachers and school principals. The qualities of the feedback for learners, the quality of the reporting to parents – all depend on the professional competence and confidence of teachers and principal. Supporting them and their professional development will be critical to the success of any developmental work.

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## Your child and standardised testing

### Information leaflet for parents

During your child's time in primary school he/she will complete standardised tests in English reading and in maths. Most primary schools in the Republic of Ireland have been using these tests for many years. From 2007 schools must use the tests at certain times and share the results with you. This leaflet explains what standardised tests are and how they can help your child's learning.

#### **What is a standardised test?**

We are all familiar with the idea of tests in school. Your child probably tells you how he/she did in a spelling or tables test prepared by the teacher. A standardised test is another kind of test. It is used to measure a child's achievement in **English reading** and **maths** compared to other children throughout the country **at the same class level** or **age level**. The English reading test gives information about how well your child can understand what he/she has read. This test does not gather information on your child's written or spoken English. The maths test finds out how well your child can use numbers for different purposes and solve maths problems.

Schools can choose from a number of standardised tests which have been developed for use in primary schools in Ireland. These tests are based on the curriculum. There are different levels of the tests so, for example, the test your child does in first/second class will relate to your child's age and the curriculum for that class level.

#### **Are standardised tests the same as intelligence tests?**

No. Standardised tests are not intelligence tests. The main purposes of using standardised tests are to help the teacher plan your child's learning, and to inform you about how well your child is doing in English reading and maths. When the test scores are used alongside other information gathered by the teacher through observing your child at work, talking with him/her and looking at his/her work, they show how your child is getting on in English reading and maths, and help the teacher to identify your child's strengths and needs.

## **What are standardised tests used for?**

Standardised tests are used to

- report to you as a parent on your child's achievement in English reading and maths
- help to find out if your child has learning difficulties in English reading and maths so that the school can put appropriate supports in place
- help to find out if your child is a high achiever in English reading and maths so that appropriate learning experiences can be provided for him/her
- help your child's teacher plan for further learning across the curriculum because your child's achievement in English reading and maths is important for all his/her learning.

## **When are standardised tests carried out?**

Schools are required to use standardised tests twice during your child's time at primary school:

- at the **end of first class OR at the beginning of second class**
- **AND** at the **end of fourth class OR at the beginning of fifth class.**

Some schools use the tests in other classes too.

## **Do all children take standardised tests?**

A small number of children might not take the tests. For example, if your child's first language is not English, the teacher may decide that he/she should not take the English reading test. Your child may, however, take the maths test. If your child has a learning or physical disability, the teacher may decide not to give the test but to use a different way to check on your child's progress. In all cases, the teacher will use the information he/she has about your child to decide whether or not your child should take the English reading test and the maths test.

## **Should I help my child prepare for standardised tests?**

No. Standardised tests are one source of information about your child's achievement in English reading and maths. The teacher gathers information about your child's learning all the time. Your child will take the standardised tests on a regular school day as part of his/her daily work in the classroom. Indeed, your child may not even realise he/she has taken the tests!

## **How will I know how my child has done on the standardised tests?**

Your child's class teacher will share the test results with you, typically at a parent/teacher meeting or in a school report. You will see the results of the tests on your child's school report in first or second class and again in fourth or fifth class depending on when your child takes the tests.

## How will I know what the test scores mean?

You will be familiar with hearing your child say he/she got 62% in a maths test or 9 out of 15 in a spelling test. Standardised tests generally use other types of scores. Your child's teacher may tell you how your child did in the test using a **STen (standard ten) score**.

### *Understanding STen scores*

**STen scores** go from 1 to 10. The table below describes what the different STen scores tell you about your child's achievement in English reading and maths.

STen score	What the score means	Proportion of children who get this score
8-10	Well above average	$\frac{1}{6}$
7	High average	$\frac{1}{6}$
5-6	Average	$\frac{1}{3}$
4	Low average	$\frac{1}{6}$
1-3	Well below average	$\frac{1}{6}$

If your child's STen score is 5 or 6, you will know that his/her performance on the test is average. About one third of children in Ireland have STen scores in this band. You can see from the table that there are also STen scores above and below the average.

As with other tests your child does in school, his/her result on a standardised test can be affected by how he/she feels on the test day or by worry or excitement about a home or school event. This means that each test result is **an indication** of your child's achievement in English reading and maths. You play an important role in encouraging and supporting your child no matter what he/she scores on the test.

### **If my child's score is low, what does this tell me?**

A STen score of 1, 2 or 3 suggests that your child may have difficulties in English reading or in maths. One test score by itself does not give a complete picture of your child's learning in English reading or maths. The teacher might decide to gather more information about your child from other tests, as well as his/her observations in class. You too will have additional information from helping your child with homework, and hearing him/her talking about school work. The teacher may ask a colleague called the *learning support* teacher to look at your child's test scores and other assessment information. They may decide that your child would benefit from extra support with

reading or maths. This extra support may be given by the learning support teacher. Your child's teacher will talk to you about this.

You may find the DVD for parents, *The What, Why and How of children's learning in primary school* helpful in talking to your child about working with the learning support teacher. Courtney, a girl in second class, and her mum talk on the DVD about their experience in getting extra help with Courtney's English reading. If you don't have a copy of the DVD, you can view an internet video of it from the NCCA website homepage at: [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie). (Click on the button for Primary School Curriculum: Information for parents.)

### **If my child's score is high, what does this tell me?**

A high score on the test may suggest that your child is a high achiever in English reading or maths. As with low scores, one high score is not enough to confirm this. Your child's teacher will use information from other classroom assessments to understand more clearly how well your child is doing in English reading and maths.

### **Should I share the score with my child?**

You know your child best. No matter what the score is, you play an important role in encouraging your child to do his/her best, and in helping your child with English reading and maths. If the score is low and your child needs extra help with English reading or maths, it may be helpful to talk to him/her about this and to see the help in a positive way.

### **Helping my child to enjoy school and to succeed in learning**

Using standardised tests at least twice during primary school to gather information on your child's achievement in English reading and maths can play a vital part in supporting your child's learning. Ultimately, this support can help your child enjoy school and make the most of the many opportunities to learn created by you and by your child's teachers.

# Report card

For further information go to the  
National Council for Curriculum  
and Assessment website at

[www.ncca.ie/parents](http://www.ncca.ie/parents)




Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

☹️ Rarely    😊 Sometimes    😄 Most of the time    😁 Always

**Your child as a learner**

	☹️	😊	😄	😁
Interested in learning	○	○	○	○
Listens attentively	○	○	○	○
Works well independently	○	○	○	○
Works well with other children	○	○	○	○
Keeps trying even when tasks are difficult	○	○	○	○
Homework is of high quality	○	○	○	○
Presents work carefully	○	○	○	○

**Your child's social and personal development**

	☹️	😊	😄	😁
Happy at school	○	○	○	○
Behaves well in class	○	○	○	○
Mixes well with other children	○	○	○	○
Sensitive to others' feelings	○	○	○	○
Behaves well in the playground	○	○	○	○
Manages and expresses own feelings well	○	○	○	○

**Your child's learning during the year**

- ★ Experiencing significant difficulty
- ★ Experiencing some difficulty    ★ Managing comfortably
- ★ Capable and competent    ★ Highly capable and competent

**English**

	★	★	★	★	★
Listening comprehension	○	○	○	○	○
Oral expression	○	○	○	○	○
Reading	○	○	○	○	○
Written expression	○	○	○	○	○

**Gaeilge**

	★	★	★	★	★
Listening comprehension	○	○	○	○	○
Oral expression	○	○	○	○	○
(Pre) Reading	○	○	○	○	○
(Pre) Writing	○	○	○	○	○

**Mathematics**

	★	★	★	★	★
Understanding and recalling	○	○	○	○	○
Using procedures	○	○	○	○	○
Reasoning and problem solving	○	○	○	○	○
Explaining and communicating	○	○	○	○	○

**Social, Environmental and Scientific Education**

	★	★	★	★	★
History	○	○	○	○	○
Geography	○	○	○	○	○
Science	○	○	○	○	○

**Arts Education**

	★	★	★	★	★
Music	○	○	○	○	○
Drama	○	○	○	○	○
Visual Arts	○	○	○	○	○

**Physical Education**

	★	★	★	★	★
Physical Education	○	○	○	○	○
Social, Personal & Health Education	○	○	○	○	○
Religious/Ethical Education	○	○	○	○	○

**How you can further support your child's learning**

**Standardised test results (if applicable)**

**Comments**

**Attendance**

**Punctuality**

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

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

# Report card

For further information go to the  
National Council for Curriculum  
and Assessment website at

**[www.ncca.ie/parents](http://www.ncca.ie/parents)**



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Your child as a learner				
	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
Interested in learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Listens attentively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Works well independently	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Works well with other children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Keeps trying even when tasks are difficult	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Homework is of high quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Presents work carefully	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Your child's social and personal development				
	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
Happy at school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Behaves well in class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mixes well with other children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sensitive to others' feelings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Behaves well in the playground	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manages and expresses own feelings well	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Your child's learning during the year**

- 1 Experiencing significant difficulty    2 Experiencing some difficulty  
 3 Managing comfortably    4 Capable and competent  
 5 Highly capable and competent

English	1	2	3	4	5
Listening comprehension	<input type="radio"/>				
Oral expression	<input type="radio"/>				
Reading	<input type="radio"/>				
Written expression	<input type="radio"/>				

Gaeilge	1	2	3	4	5
Listening comprehension	<input type="radio"/>				
Oral expression	<input type="radio"/>				
(Pre) Reading	<input type="radio"/>				
(Pre) Writing	<input type="radio"/>				

Mathematics	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding and recalling	<input type="radio"/>				
Using procedures	<input type="radio"/>				
Reasoning and problem solving	<input type="radio"/>				
Explaining and communicating	<input type="radio"/>				

Social, Environmental and Scientific Education	1	2	3	4	5
History	<input type="radio"/>				
Geography	<input type="radio"/>				
Science	<input type="radio"/>				

Arts Education	1	2	3	4	5
Music	<input type="radio"/>				
Drama	<input type="radio"/>				
Visual Arts	<input type="radio"/>				

Physical Education	1	2	3	4	5
Physical Education	<input type="radio"/>				
Social, Personal & Health Education	<input type="radio"/>				
Religious/Ethical Education	<input type="radio"/>				

**How you can further support your child's learning**

**Standardised test results (if applicable)**

**Comments**

<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Punctuality</b>
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Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

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



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

**Your child as a learner**

**Your child's social and personal development**

**Your child's learning during the year**

**Learning and Using English**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Learning and Using Gaelge**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Learning and Working with Mathematics**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Learning about Myself and Others**

(Social, Personal & Health Education/Religious/Ethical Education)

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Learning about Myself and the Wider World**

(History/Geography/Science)

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Creative Development**

(Visual Arts/Music/Drama)

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Physical Education**

**How you can further support your child's learning**

**Standardised test results (if applicable)**

**Comments**

**Attendance**

**Punctuality**

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

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



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

**Your child as a learner**

Blank space for notes under 'Your child as a learner'.

**Your child's social and personal development**

Blank space for notes under 'Your child's social and personal development'.

**Your child's learning during the year**

- ★ Experiencing significant difficulty
- ★ Experiencing some difficulty ★ Managing comfortably
- ★ Capable and competent ★ Highly capable and competent

**English**

	★	★	★	★	★
Listening comprehension	<input type="radio"/>				
Oral expression	<input type="radio"/>				
Reading	<input type="radio"/>				
Written expression	<input type="radio"/>				

**Gaeilge**

	★	★	★	★	★
Listening comprehension	<input type="radio"/>				
Oral expression	<input type="radio"/>				
(Pre) Reading	<input type="radio"/>				
(Pre) Writing	<input type="radio"/>				

**Mathematics**

	★	★	★	★	★
Understanding and recalling	<input type="radio"/>				
Using procedures	<input type="radio"/>				
Reasoning and problem solving	<input type="radio"/>				
Explaining and communicating	<input type="radio"/>				

**Social, Environmental and Scientific Education**

	★	★	★	★	★
History	<input type="radio"/>				
Geography	<input type="radio"/>				
Science	<input type="radio"/>				

**Arts Education**

	★	★	★	★	★
Music	<input type="radio"/>				
Drama	<input type="radio"/>				
Visual Arts	<input type="radio"/>				

**Physical Education**

	★	★	★	★	★
Physical Education	<input type="radio"/>				
Social, Personal & Health Education	<input type="radio"/>				
Religious/Ethical Education	<input type="radio"/>				

**How you can further support your child's learning**

Blank space for notes under 'How you can further support your child's learning'.

**Standardised test results (if applicable)**

Blank space for notes under 'Standardised test results (if applicable)'.

**Comments**

Large blank space for 'Comments'.

**Attendance**

**Punctuality**

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

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



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Rarely   Sometimes   Most of the time   Always

**Your child as a learner**

Interested in learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Listens attentively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Works well independently	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Works well with other children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Keeps trying even when tasks are difficult	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Homework is of high quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Presents work carefully	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Your child's social and personal development**

Happy at school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Behaves well in class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mixes well with other children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sensitive to others' feelings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Behaves well in the playground	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manages and expresses own feelings well	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Your child's learning during the year**

**Learning and Using English**

**Learning and Using Gaelige**

**Learning and Working with Mathematics**

**Learning about Myself and Others**

(Social, Personal & Health Education/Religious/Ethical Education)

**Learning about Myself and the Wider World**

(History/Geography/Science)

**Creative Development**

(Visual Arts/Music/Drama)

**Physical Education**

**How you can further support your child's learning**

**Standardised test results (if applicable)**

**Comments**

**Attendance**

**Punctuality**

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

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



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Your child as a learner	

Your child's social and personal development	

Your child's learning during the year	
1 Experiencing significant difficulty    2 Experiencing some difficulty 3 Managing comfortably                    4 Capable and competent 5 Highly capable and competent	
English	
Listening comprehension	1 2 3 4 5
Oral expression	1 2 3 4 5
Reading	1 2 3 4 5
Written expression	1 2 3 4 5

Gaeilge	1	2	3	4	5
Listening comprehension	1	2	3	4	5
Oral expression	1	2	3	4	5
(Pre) Reading	1	2	3	4	5
(Pre) Writing	1	2	3	4	5

Mathematics	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding and recalling	1	2	3	4	5
Using procedures	1	2	3	4	5
Reasoning and problem solving	1	2	3	4	5
Explaining and communicating	1	2	3	4	5

Social, Environmental and Scientific Education	1	2	3	4	5
History	1	2	3	4	5
Geography	1	2	3	4	5
Science	1	2	3	4	5

Arts Education	1	2	3	4	5
Music	1	2	3	4	5
Drama	1	2	3	4	5
Visual Arts	1	2	3	4	5

Physical Education	1	2	3	4	5
Physical Education	1	2	3	4	5
Social, Personal & Health Education	1	2	3	4	5
Religious/Ethical Education	1	2	3	4	5

How you can further support your child's learning

Standardised test results (if applicable)

Comments	

Attendance	Punctuality

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

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



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

**Your child's learning during the year**

**Learning and Using English**

**Learning and Using Gaelige**

**Learning and Working with Mathematics**

**Learning about Myself and Others**  
(Social, Personal & Health Education/Religious/Ethical Education)

**Learning about Myself and the Wider World**  
(History/Geography/Science)

**Creative Development**  
(Visual Arts/Music/Drama)

**Physical Education**

**Your child as a learner**

	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
Interested in learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Listens attentively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Works well independently	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Works well with other children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Keeps trying even when tasks are difficult	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Homework is of high quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Presents work carefully	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Your child's social and personal development**

	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
Happy at school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Behaves well in class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mixes well with other children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sensitive to others' feelings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Behaves well in the playground	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manages and expresses own feelings well	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**How you can further support your child's learning**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Standardised test results (if applicable)**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Comments**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Attendance**

**Punctuality**

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

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



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

**Your child as a learner**

	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
Interested in learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Listens attentively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Works well independently	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Works well with other children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Keeps trying even when tasks are difficult	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Homework is of high quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Presents work carefully	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Your child's social and personal development**

	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
Happy at school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Behaves well in class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mixes well with other children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sensitive to others' feelings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Behaves well in the playground	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manages and expresses own feelings well	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Your child's learning during the year**

- ★ Experiencing significant difficulty
- ★ Experiencing some difficulty    ★ Managing comfortably
- ★ Capable and competent    ★ Highly capable and competent

**English**

	★	★	★	★	★
Listening comprehension	<input type="radio"/>				
Oral expression	<input type="radio"/>				
Reading	<input type="radio"/>				
Written expression	<input type="radio"/>				

**Gaeilge**

	★	★	★	★	★
Listening comprehension	<input type="radio"/>				
Oral expression	<input type="radio"/>				
(Pre) Reading	<input type="radio"/>				
(Pre) Writing	<input type="radio"/>				

**Mathematics**

	★	★	★	★	★
Understanding and recalling	<input type="radio"/>				
Using procedures	<input type="radio"/>				
Reasoning and problem solving	<input type="radio"/>				
Explaining and communicating	<input type="radio"/>				

**Social, Environmental and Scientific Education**

	★	★	★	★	★
History	<input type="radio"/>				
Geography	<input type="radio"/>				
Science	<input type="radio"/>				

**Arts Education**

	★	★	★	★	★
Music	<input type="radio"/>				
Drama	<input type="radio"/>				
Visual Arts	<input type="radio"/>				

**Physical Education**

	★	★	★	★	★
Physical Education	<input type="radio"/>				
Social, Personal & Health Education	<input type="radio"/>				
Religious/Ethical Education	<input type="radio"/>				

**How you can further support your child's learning**

**Standardised test results (if applicable)**

**Comments**

**Attendance**

**Punctuality**

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

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

# Report card

For further information go to the  
National Council for Curriculum  
and Assessment website at

[www.ncca.ie/parents](http://www.ncca.ie/parents)




Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

☹️ Rarely    😊 Sometimes    😄 Most of the time    😁 Always

**Your child as a learner**

	☹️	😊	😄	😁
Interested in learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Listens attentively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Works well independently	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Works well with other children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Keeps trying even when tasks are difficult	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Homework is of high quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Presents work carefully	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Your child's social and personal development**

	☹️	😊	😄	😁
Happy at school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Behaves well in class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mixes well with other children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sensitive to others' feelings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Behaves well in the playground	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manages and expresses own feelings well	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Your child's learning during the year**

- 1 Experiencing significant difficulty
- 2 Experiencing some difficulty
- 3 Managing comfortably
- 4 Capable and competent
- 5 Highly capable and competent

English	1	2	3	4	5
Listening comprehension	<input type="radio"/>				
Oral expression	<input type="radio"/>				
Reading	<input type="radio"/>				
Written expression	<input type="radio"/>				

Gaeilge	1	2	3	4	5
Listening comprehension	<input type="radio"/>				
Oral expression	<input type="radio"/>				
(Pre) Reading	<input type="radio"/>				
(Pre) Writing	<input type="radio"/>				

Mathematics	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding and recalling	<input type="radio"/>				
Using procedures	<input type="radio"/>				
Reasoning and problem solving	<input type="radio"/>				
Explaining and communicating	<input type="radio"/>				

Social, Environmental and Scientific Education	1	2	3	4	5
History	<input type="radio"/>				
Geography	<input type="radio"/>				
Science	<input type="radio"/>				

Arts Education	1	2	3	4	5
Music	<input type="radio"/>				
Drama	<input type="radio"/>				
Visual Arts	<input type="radio"/>				

Physical Education	1	2	3	4	5
Physical Education	<input type="radio"/>				
Social, Personal & Health Education	<input type="radio"/>				
Religious/Ethical Education	<input type="radio"/>				

**How you can further support your child's learning**

**Standardised test results (if applicable)**

**Comments**

**Attendance**

**Punctuality**

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

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



# Information for schools

## USER GUIDE 1

### MANUALLY COMPLETING AND SAVING THE REPORT CARD TEMPLATES

#### Introduction

The Report Card Templates can be completed in two ways:

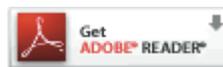
- (a) Manual completion: Print a blank template and handwrite your reports.
- (b) Electronic completion: Download and save a blank template, type your reports, then save and print them.

This user guide explains how to **manually** complete and save the templates by following these steps:

1. How to view and download the templates
2. How to print the templates
3. How to customise the templates

#### 1. How to view and download the templates

To view and download the templates you must have Adobe Reader installed on your computer. Most new computers will have Adobe Reader pre-installed. If you do not have the programme it can be downloaded at [www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com) or by clicking the icon below:



There are nine templates in total. The templates are in portable document format (PDF). To view a report card, click on the report card name. The file will open in a new window on your computer screen. It can then be printed (see 'how to print the templates').

To download a copy of a template to your computer right click the template name and select save target as. A dialogue box will appear which will enable you to save the file on your desktop.

## 2. How to print the templates

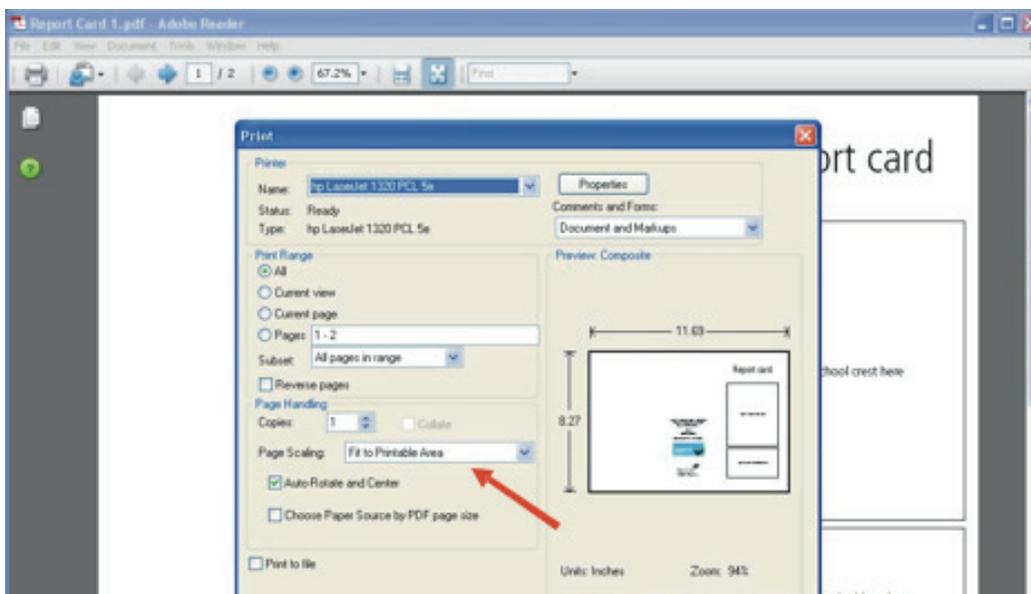
There are two options for printing the templates:

- a. Print photocopy masters
- b. Print back-to-back (if your printer has such a facility)

### a. Print photocopy masters

When you have opened your chosen report card template you must adjust your printer settings to ensure the printed report card is centred on the page, making accurate folding possible.

Select File/Print on your menu bar. A dialogue box similar to that below will appear. Look for the section marked Page Handling. Check that the Page Scaling box reads Fit to Printable Area. If not, select this option. Click OK and the two page document should print correctly.



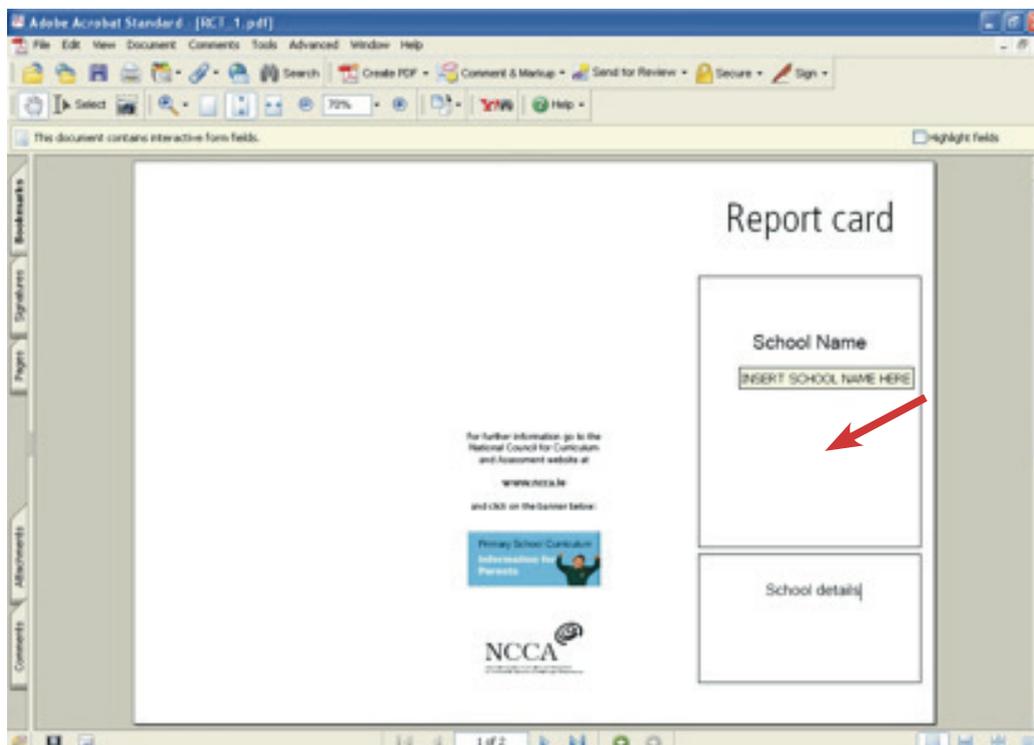
Screen shot 1: Printing

### b. Printing back-to-back

The templates are automatically configured to print double-sided as a landscape (horizontal) document. However, some printers may over-ride the print properties of the document. In these instances, it will be necessary to change the print properties on your printer, to ensure the page flips on the correct side when printing double-sided. It is not possible to give universal instructions on back-to-back printing. Refer to the operating instructions for your printer.

## 3. How to customise the templates

Should you wish, you can add text to the front cover of the report cards. For example, you may wish to insert the school name in the upper box and further details in the lower box. To do this, click the appropriate box; a text insertion cursor will appear. You can then enter text as you would in a Word document. It is not possible to save this text.



Screen shot 2: Customise the front cover



# Information for schools

## USER GUIDE 2

### ELECTRONICALLY COMPLETING AND SAVING THE REPORT CARD TEMPLATES

#### Introduction

The Report Card Templates can be completed in two ways:

- Manual completion: Print a blank template and handwrite your reports.
- Electronic completion: Download and save a blank template, type your reports, then save and print them.

This user guide explains how to **electronically** complete and save the templates by following these steps:

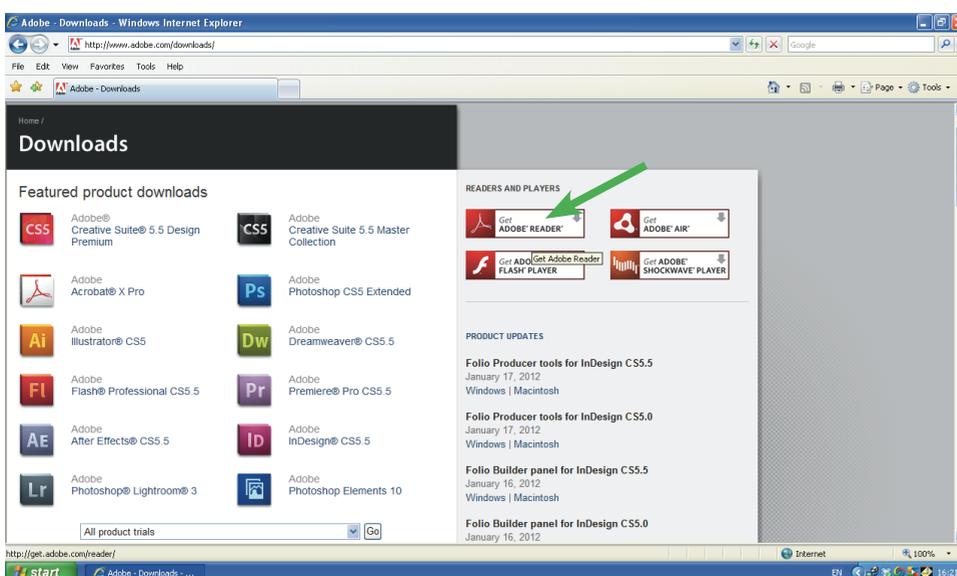
- |                                      |                            |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Get started                       | 2. Choose a template       |
| 3. Create and save a master template | 4. Add the child's details |
| 5. Save the child's report           | 6. Print the report cards  |

#### 1. Get started

##### Download Adobe Reader 9

In order to save any text you type into the templates you will need Adobe Reader 9, the newest version of Adobe Reader.

You can download this for free from [www.adobe.com/downloads](http://www.adobe.com/downloads). Click on 'Get ADOBE READER' and follow the instructions to install it.



Screen shot 1:  
Downloading adobe reader

*If you already have an older version of Adobe Reader on your computer the system will automatically detect this and replace it with the newer version.*

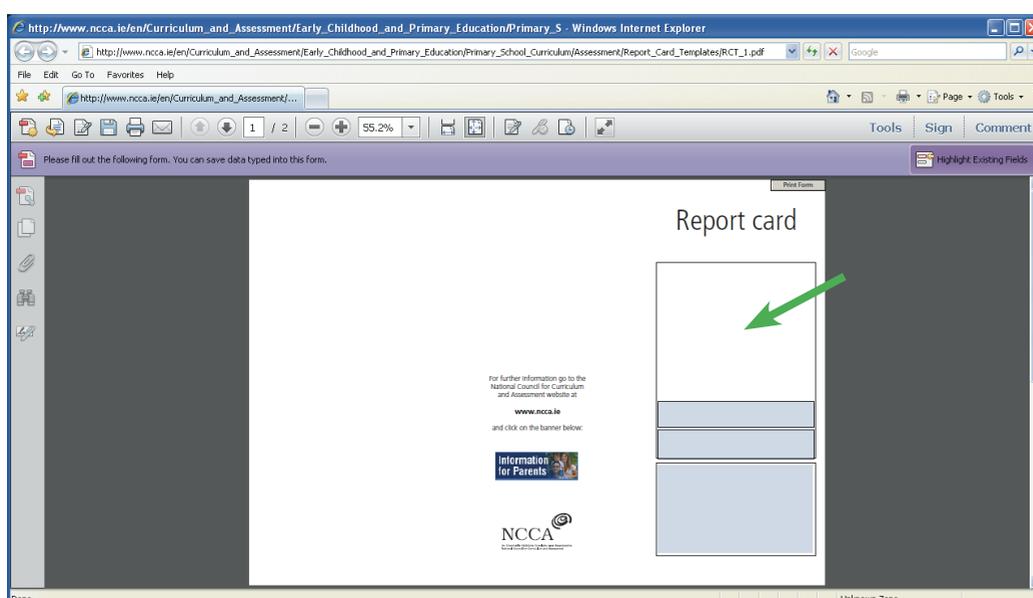
## 2. Choose a Template

There are 9 different templates. Each includes the same key areas for reporting children's progress and achievement, but with variations in layout and options for reporting and commenting.

The templates can be downloaded from [www.ncca.ie/reportcardtemplates](http://www.ncca.ie/reportcardtemplates).

## 3. Create and save a master template

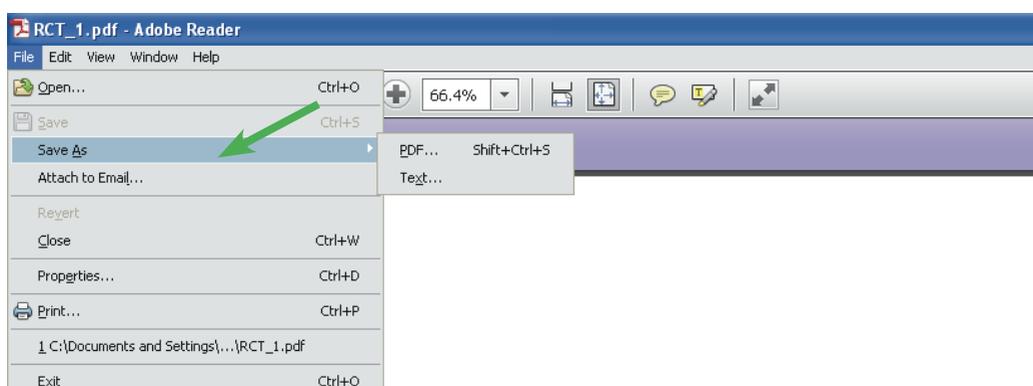
Type the school name and other details into the boxes on the cover. The font face and size is fixed and will be centred automatically, these settings cannot be changed. You can use the return key if you wish to move the text downwards in the box.



Screen shot 2: Customising the cover page

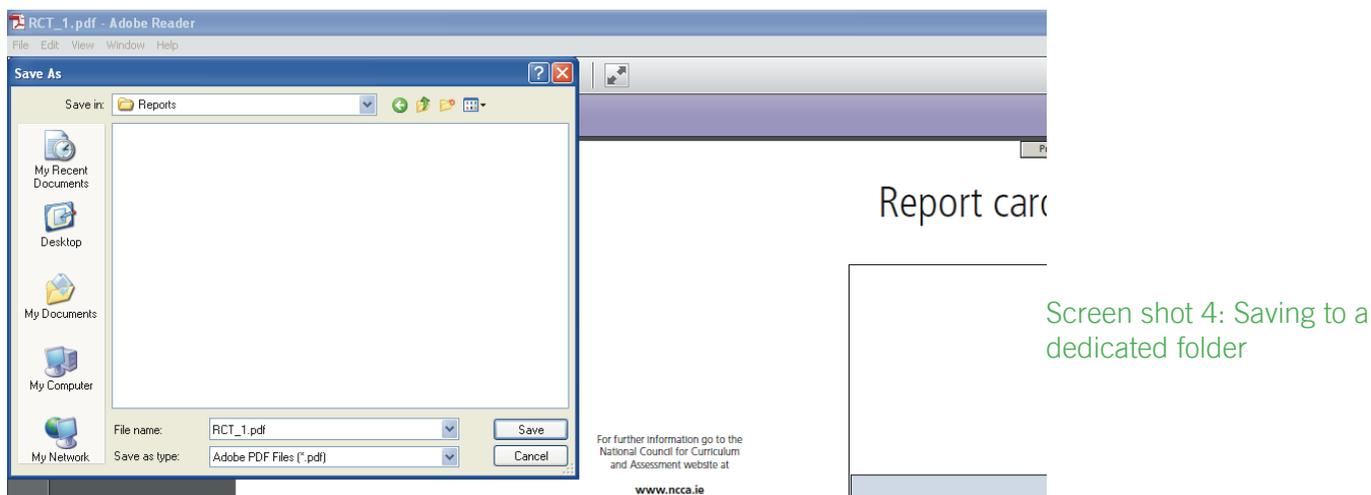
Alternatively, you may wish to put the school name in the second box, and leave the first box blank, in order to photocopy the school crest onto this page to create your own personalised cover page.

Save this as the master template. It is a good idea to create a new file specifically for report cards, and save all the cards together, grouped by class.



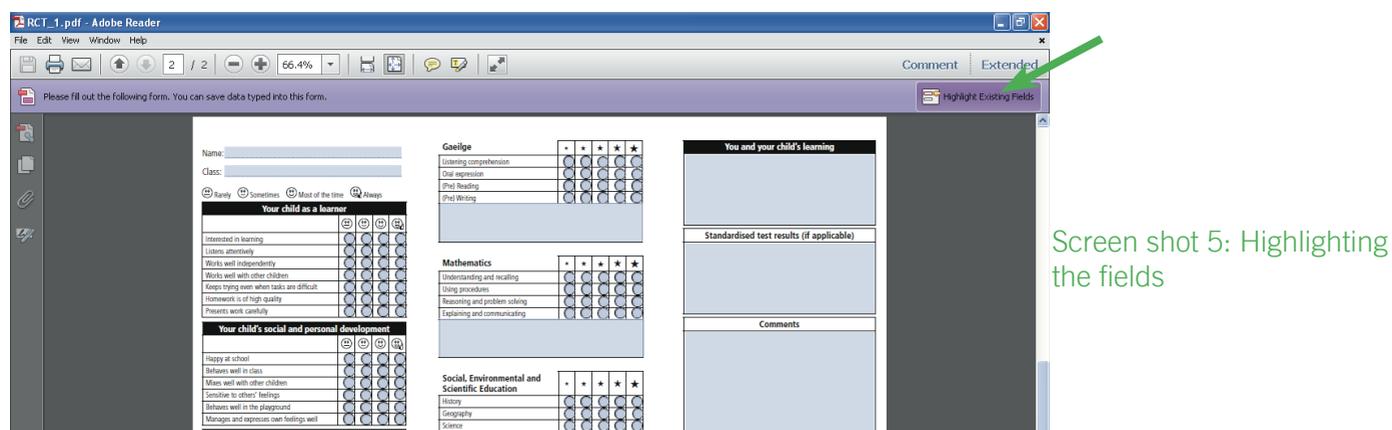
Screen shot 3: Saving the master template

It might be useful to create a new folder specifically for report cards, and save all the cards together, grouped by class and year, as shown in screen shot 4.



## 4. Add the child's details.

You can now create individual reports. Fill in the details on page 2 of the template. All the places where you can enter information should be highlighted in grey. If the fields are not highlighted you can do this by clicking on the button in the top right, as shown below.



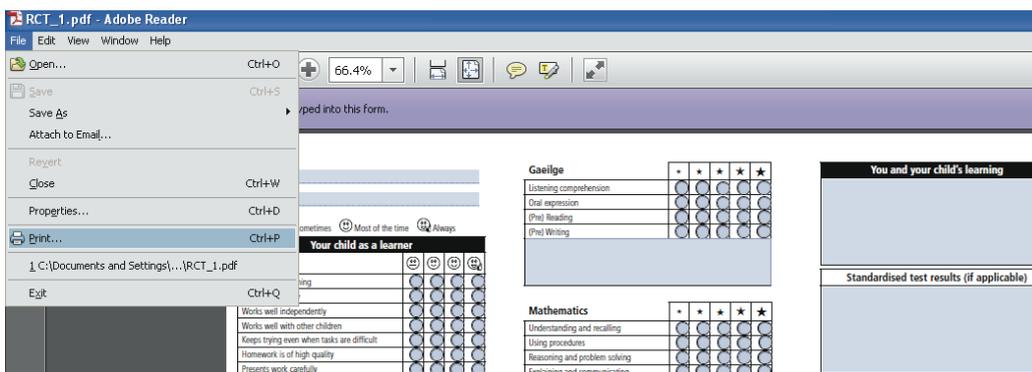
- The font face, size and alignment is fixed in all boxes where you can type in a comment, and cannot be changed.
- The template in this example has 'radio buttons' to rate the child's progress in certain areas. Click to choose the rating. If you wish to change the rating, click in a different circle – note that only one option can be chosen in any one line of the form.
- There is space at the end of the template for the teacher and principal to sign the report card. If you intend to print the cards to give to parents, then these boxes can be left blank until printed out. If the report cards are to be emailed to parents then you can fill in these details electronically.

## 5. Save the child's report

Choose 'Save as' again (see screen shot 3 above) to save the individual report. It's important to choose a new unique file name for each child's report, probably child's name. You will need to repeat this for every child.

## 6. Print the report cards

You can also print the report cards. The print command is in the 'File' menu.



Screen shot 6: Printing

- The printer settings you choose depend on your own printer and on individual school arrangements. Two possible scenarios are outlined below.
  - if you have typed the school name and details on the cover, you can choose to print both pages of the report back to back (dual sided)
  - if you left a space in the box on the front cover and photocopied the school crest onto the template, you may already have cover pages ready in your printer. In this case you can choose to print just the second page with the individual details onto the cover page.

The printer settings for printing dual sided reports depend on your own printer. You can usually choose the settings you want by clicking on 'Properties'.

Check that the Page Scaling box reads Fit to Printable Area. If not, select this option as in screen shot 7).



Screen shot 7

How you can further support your child's learning

Blank area for notes on supporting learning.

Comments

Large blank area for comments.

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Education Passport  
Pas Oideachais

Supporting your child's transition from primary to post-primary school

Ag tacú le haistriú do linbh ón mbunscoil go dtí an iarbhunscoil

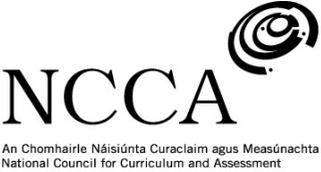
[www.ncca.ie/transfer](http://www.ncca.ie/transfer)



6th Class Report Card

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Moving to post-primary school**  
To support your child's move to post-primary school, we will send a copy of this report card to his/her new school. We will do so after the post-primary principal has confirmed your child's enrolment for the new school year.



[www.ncca.ie/parents](http://www.ncca.ie/parents)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Likes to be known as (if different): \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent(s)/guardian(s): \_\_\_\_\_

If your child has a plan to support learning, an extra tick is placed in the column marked 'P' beside any item(s) that relates to this plan. 'P' is used in place of the word 'plan'. Information shared about your child's learning reflects progress based on this plan.

### Your child as a learner

1 Rarely    2 Sometimes    3 Most of the time    4 Always

	P	1	2	3	4
Interested in learning					
Listens attentively					
Works well on his/her own					
Works well with other children					
Keeps trying even when tasks are difficult					
Homework is completed to his/her ability					

### Your child's social and personal development

1 Rarely    2 Sometimes    3 Most of the time    4 Always

	P	1	2	3	4
Manages and expresses feelings well					
Is sensitive to others' feelings					
Mixes well with other children					
Behaves well in class					
Behaves well in the playground					
Participates well in Religious or Ethical Education					

### Your child's learning

In general, information shared about a child's learning reflects expectations based on the primary school curriculum objectives for 6th Class.

- 1 Working towards expectations
- 2 Meeting expectations
- 3 Ahead of expectations

#### English

	P	1	2	3
Communicates with others in a clear and effective way				
Understands what is said by others				
Reading				
Writing				

#### Gaeilge Exemption: No \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_

*Certification of exemption will be forwarded with this report card to the post-primary school.*

	P	1	2	3
Communicates with others in a clear and effective way				
Understands what is said by others				
Reading				
Writing				

#### Mathematics

	P	1	2	3
Understands and uses mathematical knowledge				
Understands and uses mathematical skills				
Uses knowledge and skills to solve problems				

### Social, Environmental and Scientific Education

	P	1	2	3
Science				
History				
Geography				

### Arts Education

	P	1	2	3
Music				
Drama				
Visual Arts				

### Physical Education

	P	1	2	3
Physical Education				
Social, Personal and Health Education				

### Standardised test scores

	STen Score		
	2nd class	4th class	6th class
Maths			
English reading			
Irish reading*			

**STen scores:** 1-3 Well below average, 4 Low average, 5-6 Average, 7 High average, 8-10 Well above average  
*\*Irish reading test for Irish language medium primary schools only.*

### Attendance

### Punctuality

absences to date of report card	Very good	
	Needs improvement	

Report card completed on: \_\_\_\_\_

### THE 6TH CLASS REPORT CARD TEMPLATE CAN BE COMPLETED IN TWO WAYS:

- (a) Handwritten
- (b) On computer

This user guide explains how to save and printing a blank template if you wish to *handwrite* the report card. Should you wish to type the report card on computer, please see User Guide 2.

The following steps explain how to *save and print a blank template*. This option should be selected if you intend to *handwrite* the children's report cards.

<b>STEP 1:</b>	How to view and download the template .....	2
<b>STEP 2:</b>	How to print the template .....	2
<b>STEP 3:</b>	How to customise the cover of the template .....	4



Click [here](#) or go to [www.ncca.ie/transfer](http://www.ncca.ie/transfer) to find the 6th Class Report Card template. To view the report card, simply click on the template option. The template will open in a new window on your computer screen. The template can then be printed.

To download a copy of the template to your computer, right click on the template and select *Save target as*. Firefox or Google Chrome users should select *Save link as*.

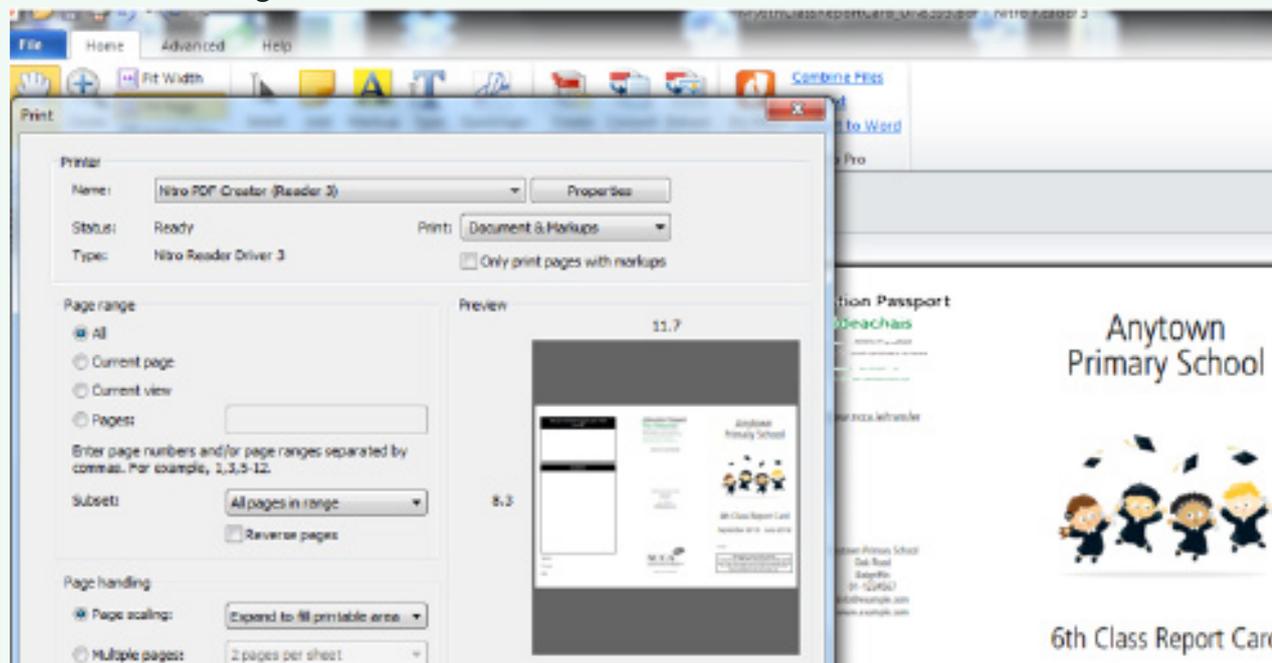
A dialogue box will appear which will enable you to save the file on your desktop.

## STEP 2: HOW TO PRINT THE TEMPLATE

Before printing your template/photocopy master, adjust your printer settings to ensure the report card is centred on the page to make accurate folding possible.

Select *File* and *Print* on your menu bar. A dialogue box similar to that below will appear.

Screenshot 1: Dialogue box



Look for the section marked Page Handling. Check that the *Page Scaling* box reads *Expand to fill printable area*. If not, select this option. Click *OK* and the two page document should print correctly.



## User Guide 1

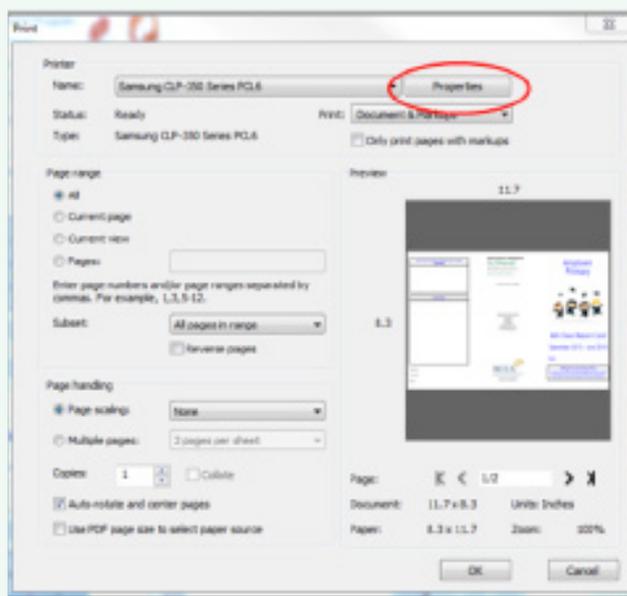
There are two options for printing the template/photocopy master:

- Print back-to-back (if your printer has such a facility)
- Single sided printing

### A. PRINTING BACK-TO-BACK

The templates are automatically configured to print double-sided as a landscape (horizontal) document. However, some printers may over-ride the print properties of the document. In these instances, it will be necessary to change the print properties on your printer to ensure the page flips on the correct side when printing double-sided. Click on *Printer properties* and change to duplex settings.

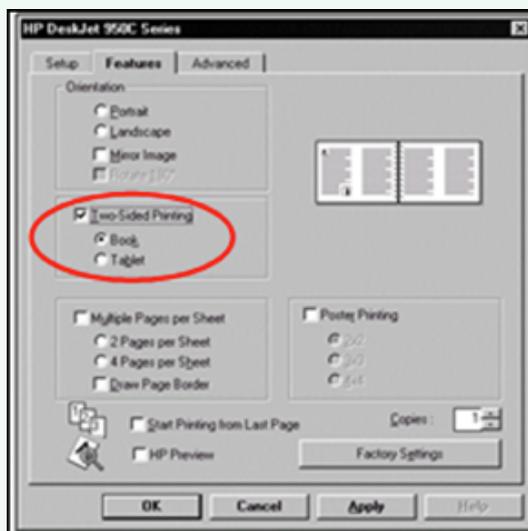
Screenshot 2: Printer properties and page scaling options



If you turn on duplex printing and the back page is printed upside down, fix this by changing the duplex side. Some printers may call this *long side* or *short side* or *Book* or *Tablet*. Tick the alternative option to change the resulting printout and retry. It may require some experimentation. For additional information please refer to the operating instructions for your printer.



Screenshot 3: Example of changing printer settings for duplex (dual sided) printers



## B. SINGLE-SIDED PRINTING

In the event that a double-sided printer/photocopier is unavailable, first print the required number of copies of one side of the template.

Next put the printed copies back into the printer paper tray and print the required copies of the other side of the template.

*Tip: When putting the printed copies back into the printer tray, first print just one copy to check that it prints correctly. If it prints incorrectly, change the orientation of the paper in the paper drawer and try again.*

## STEP 3: HOW TO CUSTOMISE THE TEMPLATE

Should you wish, you can add text to the front cover of the report card. For example, you may wish to insert the school name.

To do this, click into the appropriate box. A cursor will appear. You can then enter text as you would in a Word document. It is *not* possible to save this text. You will need to print from this page once your text has been entered.

The NCCA Report Card Creator at [www.ncca.ie/primaryreporting](http://www.ncca.ie/primaryreporting) is a user-friendly alternative to the report card template. The Creator facilitates the easy customisation of the 6th Class Report Card in three simple steps.



### THE 6TH CLASS REPORT CARD TEMPLATE CAN BE COMPLETED IN TWO WAYS:

- (a) Handwritten
- (b) On computer

This user guide explains how to save and complete the report card template on computer. Should you wish to handwrite the children's report cards, please see User Guide 1.

The following steps will explain how to electronically complete and save the template.

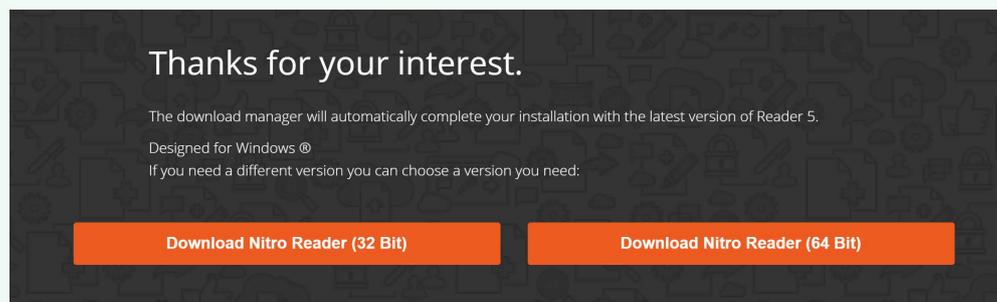
<b>STEP 1:</b>	Get started .....	2
<b>STEP 2:</b>	Create and save the master template .....	2
<b>STEP 3:</b>	Add the child's details .....	3
<b>STEP 4:</b>	Save the child's report .....	4
<b>STEP 5:</b>	Print the report card .....	4



### STEP 1: GET STARTED

Download the free software called **Nitro Reader** on your computer. If you do not already have the programme, it can be downloaded at <https://www.gonitro.com/pdf-reader/download>

In order to save any text you type into the templates you will need Nitro Reader.



Do I choose 32-bit or 64-bit?

#### Windows 7, 8, and 10

The majority of Windows 7, 8, and 10 users will need the 64-bit version (especially if you're on a pretty new version).

#### Windows Vista

Most Vista users need the 32-bit version.

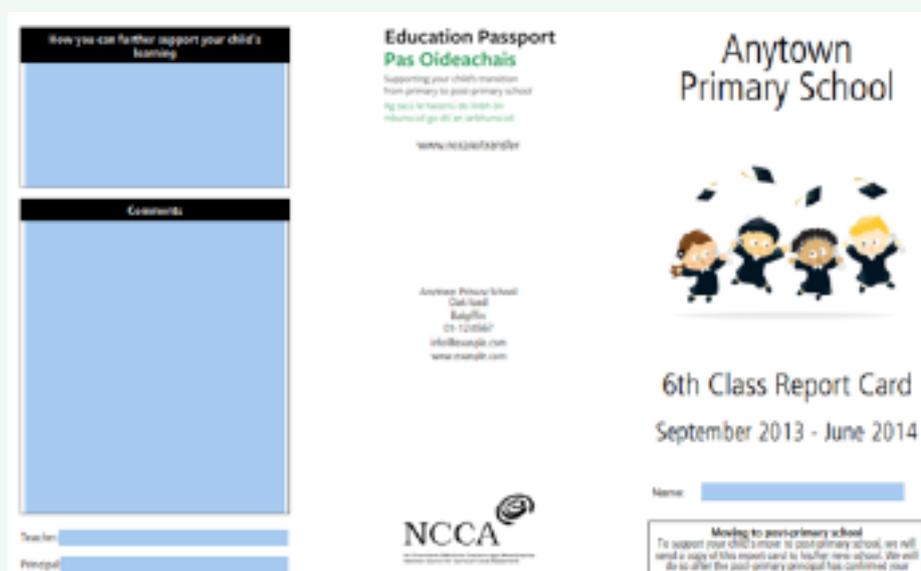
#### Spread the Reader love:



### STEP 2: CREATE AND SAVE A MASTER TEMPLATE

Type the school name and other details into the boxes on the cover. The font face and size is fixed and will be centred automatically, these settings cannot be changed. You can use the return key if you wish to move the text downwards in the box.

Screenshot 2: Customising the front cover.



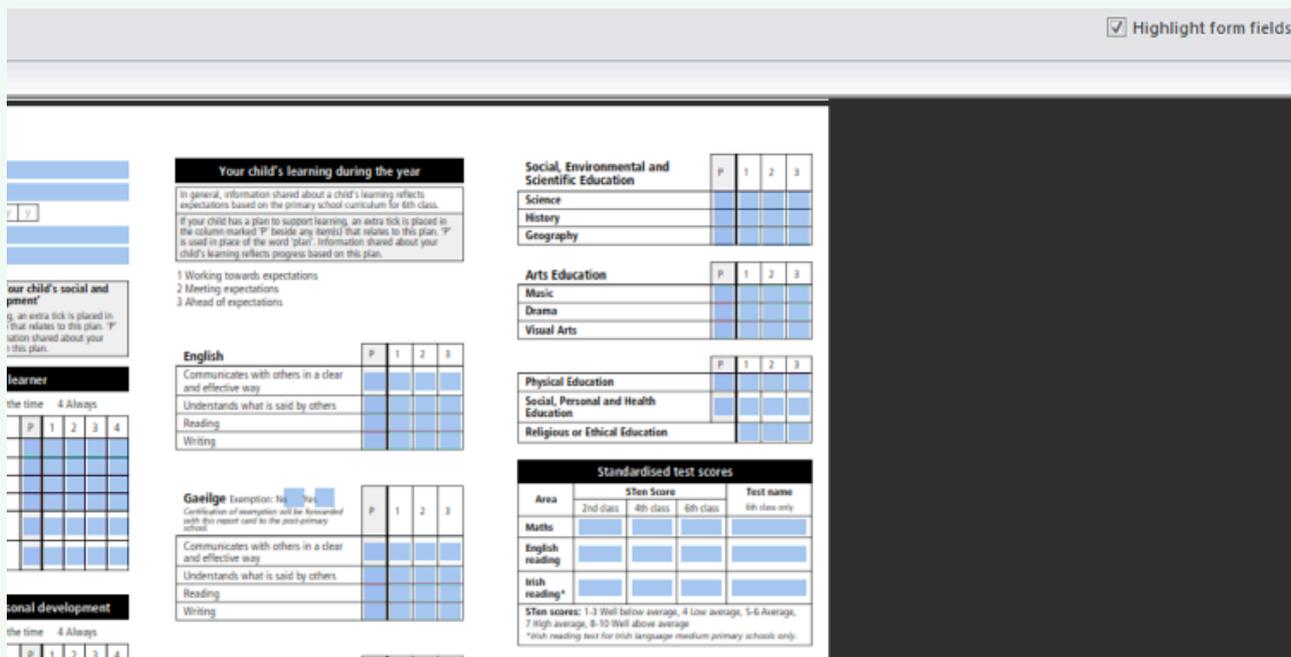
Save this as the master template. It is a good idea to create a new file specifically for report cards, and save all the cards together, grouped by class.



### STEP 3: ADD THE CHILD'S DETAILS

You can now create individual reports. Fill in the details on page 2 of the template. All the places where you can enter information are highlighted in blue. If the fields are not highlighted you can do this by clicking on the button in the top right, as shown below.

Screenshot 3: Highlight the fields by clicking on the button in the top right.



The font face, size and alignment is fixed in all boxes where you can type in a comment, and cannot be changed.

Click to choose the rating. It should be noted that multiple options can be ticked on each line so if you change your mind about a rating, you will need to re-click the unwanted tick to remove it or there will be two ticks on the same line.

There is space at the end of the template for the teacher and principal to sign the report card. If you intend to print the cards to give to parents, then these boxes can be left blank until printed out. If the report cards are to be emailed to parents then you can fill in these details electronically.



### STEP 4: SAVE THE CHILD'S REPORT

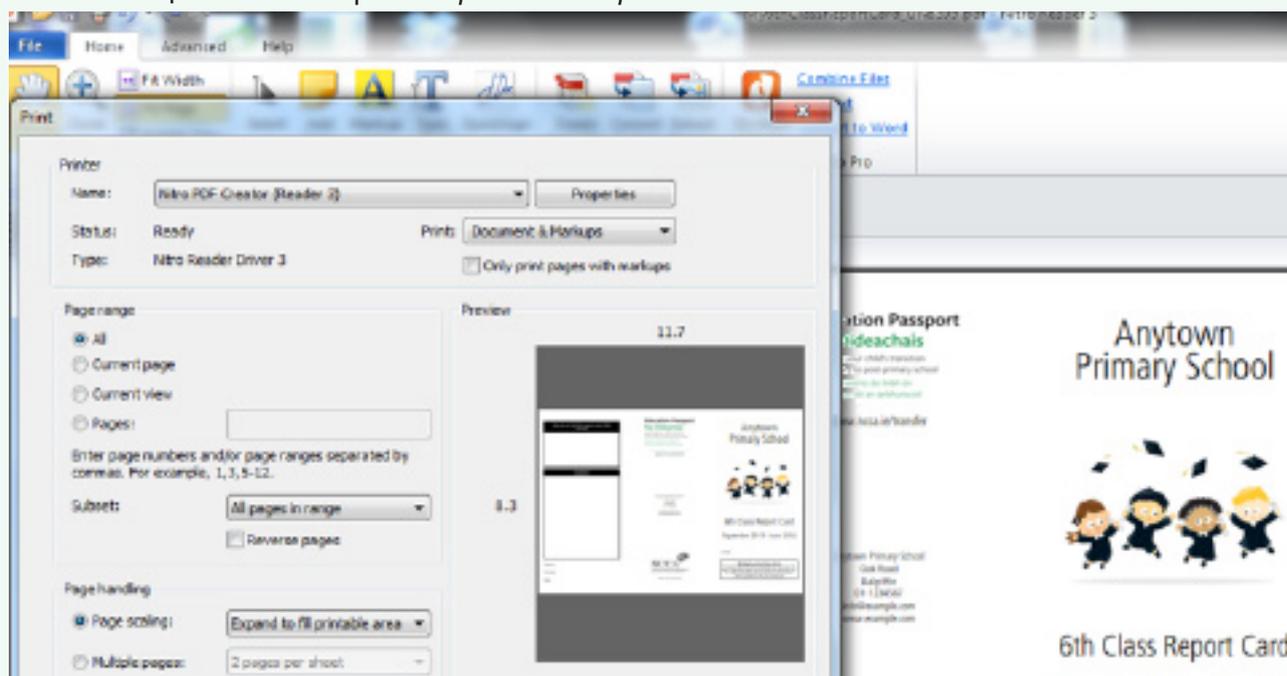
Choose Save as to save the individual report. It's important to choose a new unique file name for each child's report. Using the child's name is an option. You will need to repeat this for every child.

### STEP 5: PRINT THE REPORT CARDS

You can also print the report cards. The print command is in the *File* menu.

The printer settings for printing dual sided reports depend on your own printer. You can usually choose the settings you want by clicking on *Properties*. Check that the *Page Scaling* box reads *Expands to fill printable area*. If not, select this option as in screen shot 4.

Screenshot 4: Select the option *Expands to fill printable area*.



There are two options for printing the template/photocopy master:

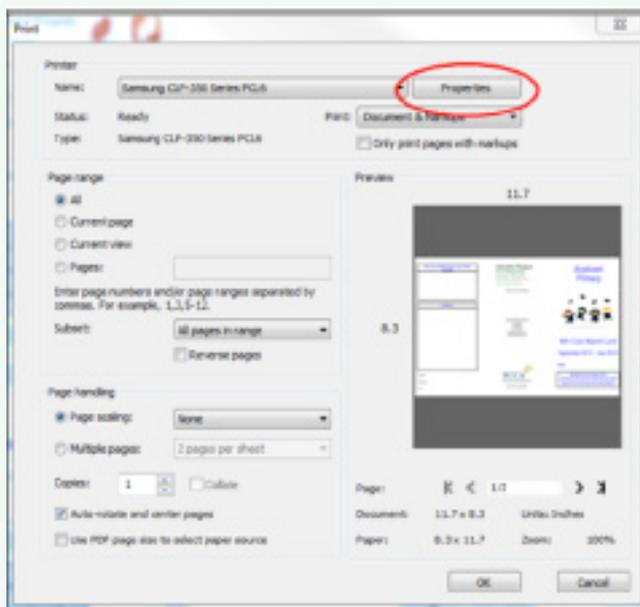
- Print back-to-back (if your printer has such a facility)
- Single sided printing

#### A. PRINTING BACK-TO-BACK

The templates are automatically configured to print double-sided as a landscape (horizontal) document. However, some printers may over-ride the print properties of the document. In these instances, it will be necessary to change the print properties on your printer to ensure the page flips on the correct side when printing double-sided. Click on *Printer properties* and change to duplex settings.

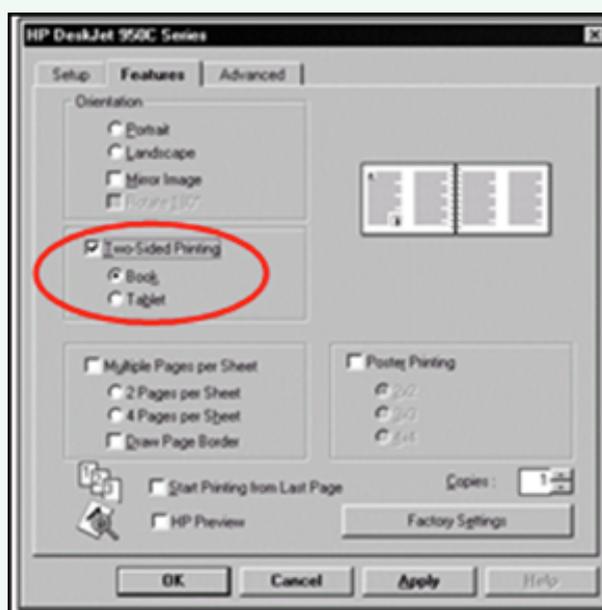


Screenshot 5: Printer properties and page scaling options



If you turn on duplex printing and the back page is printed upside down, fix this by changing the duplex side. Some printers may call this *long side* or *short side* or *Book* or *Tablet*. Tick the alternative option to change the resulting printout and retry. It may require some experimentation. For additional information please refer to the operating instructions for your printer.

Screenshot 6: Example of changing printer settings for duplex (dual sided) printers



### **B. SINGLE-SIDED PRINTING**

In the event that a double-sided printer/photocopier is unavailable, first print the required number of copies of one side of the template.

Next put the printed copies back into the printer paper tray and print the required copies of the other side of the template.

*Tip: When putting the printed copies back into the printer tray, first print just one copy to check that it prints correctly. If it prints incorrectly, change the orientation of the paper in the paper drawer and try again.*

The NCCA Report Card Creator at [www.ncca.ie/primaryreporting](http://www.ncca.ie/primaryreporting) is a user-friendly alternative to the report card template.

The Creator facilitates the easy customisation of the 6th Class Report Card in three simple steps.



Report cards provide teachers with an opportunity to share information in writing about children's progress and achievement in learning. They are a key part of the communication between school and home. The end-of-year 6th class report card also provides post-primary schools with a summary of children's learning progress and achievement.

### REPORT CARDS SHOULD INCLUDE...

- all relevant information about children's progress and achievement in a *clear* and *concise* manner
- information about *how* a child learns as well as *what* a child learns. This holistic information should identify and celebrate a child's current learning, and indicate next steps for future learning. Links between information about children's achievement, areas for development, and actions the school and parent/ guardians might take to support next steps should be made.
- information that is accurate and *based on evidence* gathered over time using a range of assessment methods. The assessment methods commonly used in the primary school are identified in [Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools](#) (NCCA, 2007).
- information that reflects the *trend* in the child's learning over the year
- information that is *consistent with feedback* shared with children and parents/ guardians throughout the year. In this way the report card confirms and affirms what parents/ guardians already know, and in turn, ensures that there should be no surprises.

### IN GENERAL, NARRATIVE COMMENTS SHOULD...

- be consistent with the information summarised in the rating scales
- focus on what was learnt and how well, where improvement is needed and what should be done next
- focus on key messages rather than become overly detailed
- avoid labelling children
- be presented in language that is easily understood by parents/guardians. For example, specialist terms like 'higher order thinking' should be avoided.
- be legible. Completing report cards on computer will ensure that comments are legible, and will also support their electronic management by your school.

