



Tarbert Comprehensive School
ASSESSMENT POLICY

The National Context

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

Further to this the DES Inspectorate issued a series of guidelines to schools regarding School Self Evaluation and Improvement Planning, the most recent guidelines being produced in 2016. SSE provides a framework for professional conversation and investigation into areas of teaching and learning in schools, including those concerned with assessment practices and their impact on student attainment and experiences.

Tarbert Comprehensive School

Tarbert Comprehensive School was established in 1973 and is comprehensive in the sense that it is a co-educational establishment catering for all ranges of abilities, embracing all social groupings, offering the widest possible range of subjects and being open to all religious persuasions. In our school we recognize the responsibility of parents as the first and most important educators of their children and we acknowledge that our role is to work in partnership with parents to enable our students to grow intellectually, physically, socially, culturally, creatively, morally and spiritually.

Definition and Rationale:

'Assessment' refers the gathering and interpretation of information related to student learning. It takes the form of Assessment **of** Learning which is summative in nature and provides a 'snapshot' of student attainment and progress at a given time; and Assessment **for** Learning which is formative in nature, and intended to inform teaching and learning, to impact positively on student engagement and to guide student progress.

Aims of our Assessment Procedures:

- To ensure that students are aware of the Learning Intentions set out by teachers, and are able to participate in dialogue and reflection aimed at monitoring their progress in relation to these intentions
- To ensure that students are engaged and motivated to achieve their full potential at every level
- To identify the next steps in progressing the students' learning; to adapt or modify teaching strategies and or learning activities as appropriate
- To establish baseline data in relation to a student's attainment in certain subjects
- To ascertain appropriate levels for students for State Examinations in Junior Cycle and at Senior Cycle

- To assist in the identification of students who may need to be referred to an outside professional (NEPS psychologist) or agency for assessment or direct intervention
- To provide parents with information regarding student progress, to involve them directly in their child's learning and enable them to understand and encourage their child's progress

Assessment Types:

Formative Assessment: This involves a range of strategies designed to provide students, teachers and parents with information regarding students' understanding and progress. Its purpose is to use the process of assessment to help learners improve their learning. Its intention is to form, shape or guide the next steps in learning. It is about 'learning to learn.'

As part of the school process of School Self Evaluation and School Improvement Planning we have chosen Assessment for Learning as an area of focus in the coming years. To date we have evaluated AfL practices within the school, devised a School Improvement Plan based on the findings of this evaluation, and undertaken whole staff CPD aimed at improving teaching and learning through the implementation of the plan. Specifically, in accordance with the plan, teachers will undertake to explicitly clarify Learning Intentions during their classes, in order that students are aware of, and able to take responsibility for, their own learning. Teachers will also in the course of the plan aim to link such learning intentions to success criteria when marking tests or homework, thus ensuring students are confident in knowing how to reach the next level in their learning. Over the life of the plan teachers will continue to engage in relevant CPD. Further details can be found in our ***School Improvement Plan: Assessment for Learning.***

CPD in the specific areas outlined for improvement as well as in the methodologies of Paul Ginnis and Guy Claxton (Building Learning Power) have been delivered to staff. Teachers regularly adopt a wide range of strategies aimed encouraging students to become more active and reflective learners, including group and pair work, and practices involving peer and self-evaluation. Such strategies can be differentiated to meet the needs and abilities of the individual particularly as the majority of classes have a mixed ability setting.

Homework: Subject teachers set regular homework, the purpose of which is to reinforce the learning done in class. The amount of homework given and the form it takes varies according to the demands of the subject and the year group. As with classwork, homework is differentiated to meet the needs of individual pupils where necessary. Feedback can be provided verbally or in writing, using either comments or grades, or a combination of both as appropriate. The purpose of such feedback is to help ensure that students realise where their strengths lie and where and how improvements can be made. (See separate Homework Policy)

Parent Teacher Meetings: Parent teacher meetings are held for each year group during the course of the academic year. From 2016 the school is trialling a new system, whereby students will be invited to accompany parents to the meeting. It has been decided to confine this initiative to Senior Cycle students for the purpose of the trial. Initial feedback from all parties - students, teachers and parents - has been

generally positive regarding the change and its impact on teaching and learning. The new format was seen as providing a time and space for specific discussion around the progress of the individual student allowing them to take greater responsibility for their learning.

Summative Assessment

- Formal exams take place in the school in late November and in May, and are co-ordinated by an Assistant Principal. The exams are timetabled over a period of approximately one week, during which time usual lessons are suspended
- These exams can be written, oral, aural, and practical, according to the requirements of each subject area and are broadly in keeping with the format of State Exam papers
- The November tests currently coincide with the Transition Year school trip, therefore TY exams occur during the week prior to the timetabled exams
- Leaving Certificate Applied Students are assessed on a continuous basis. Teachers award marks for completion of Key assignments and attendance over a 2 year period. External examiners award marks for seven Tasks completed over the two years. Pre examinations are completed in early February of both Year 1 and Year 2. Students also sit state exams at the end of both years.
- Junior and Leaving Certificate students sit 'Pre' exams in February of their exam year. Such exams are set and corrected externally

Assessment: Reporting and Evaluation

- The results of state exams in each subject, and their comparisons to national trends in achievement are collated each year. Subject departments and individual teachers reflect on these statistics and use the information to guide future planning
- The results of term tests in November and May are used by teachers to inform their teaching and as indicators of ability and levels in state exams
- Formal reports are issued to Parents/Guardians in December, and June, and following receipt of Pre Examination results for Third and Sixth Year students. These reports take the form of an agreed and regularly revised template, allowing teachers to indicate grades and to comment on student performance as appropriate
- All reports are signed off by the Year Head and where necessary further comment may be made on student progress to date
- The information in the reports forms the basis for discussion between teachers, students and parents about progress in general and specifically around levels for state exams
- Throughout the year teachers may at their discretion choose to contact parents and guardians regarding assessment and student progress either through the student journal or by phone, following discussion with the relevant Year Head
- As part of the requirements of the Junior Cycle, students may produce work themselves and store it online or may have work recorded and stored by their teachers. This occurs as part of CBA 1 and/or 2. BOM, School Management and teaching staff all have a role to play in the safe recording and storage of student work. Such work will be treated in accordance with the school's Acceptable Usage Policy. TCS will retain records and pieces of work, as appropriate, for the purposes

of Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR). These will be stored on a Google Drive account and will be kept for at least 24 months.

- The results of the CBA's, following a SLAR meeting, will be reported to parents and students in line with TCS reporting procedures and through the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).

Psychometric Tests:

The school has recently adopted the CAT 4 test, administered to incoming first years prior to their arrival in the school. Early in their first term, students also currently sit the GRTII Group Reading Test. The results of these tests are made available to teachers on the school's shared drive, and allow individual classroom teachers to make informed decisions about the needs of their students based on ability and potential. This information helps set targets for learning and public examinations and allows us to track student progress in a systematic way. The results of the CAT 4 tests are also used to ensure mixed ability grouping of new entrants. Along with information from their primary school, the results of the Cat 4 enable the school to identify pupils with individual learning needs.

Structures for resource provision for incoming students are determined by these results and other information received:

- Based on the results of initial testing, students who require learning support and resource are identified and letters are sent to parents/guardians stating the extra resources available for those students
- A programme is devised by the learning support/resource teacher depending on timetable and availability of learning support staff
- Student Support Files are drawn up by the Learning Support Team in conjunction with parents and school management. Details of the needs of individual students are described on the staff VS Ware facility, so that teachers can access this information and plan accordingly
- Student progress is monitored in first year through the delivery of common tests in English and Maths. This facilitates early intervention with students whose performance and potential are inconsistent, and allows procedures to be put in place to rectify this where possible. Where this occurs students, parents and management work together to put plans in place to help students achieve their potential
- Where an individual subject teacher has a concern about the performance of a student, procedures are in place to refer them to the SEN department where their needs can be determined.

This policy was adopted/amended by the Board of Management on:

Date: May 8th 2018

Signature of Chairperson: _____