

Meánscoil na mBráithre Críostaí, Cill Chainnigh
Christian Brothers Secondary School, Kilkenny.

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ASSESSMENT POLICY May 2017

School Name:	Christian Brothers Secondary School, Kilkenny
School Address:	James's Street, Kilkenny
School Details:	CBS Kilkenny is a Voluntary Roman Catholic Secondary School under the Trusteeship and the Patronage of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. The School is grant aided by the Department of Education & Skills and is a single sex (boys) school.
School Management:	The Board of Management of CBS Kilkenny is a statutory Board appointed pursuant to the provisions of the Education Act 1998.

Mission Statement

Inspired by its founder, CBS Kilkenny aims to provide Catholic education in the Edmund Rice tradition. The school endeavours to be a caring Christian Community which promotes to the best of its ability the personal, spiritual, physical and intellectual development of its students.

Ethos

As an Edmund Rice School, CBS Kilkenny seeks to promote the five key elements of an Edmund Rice School as espoused by the ERST Charter:

- Nurturing faith, Christian spirituality and Gospel-based values
- Promoting partnership in the school community
- Excelling in teaching and learning
- Creating a caring school community
- Inspiring transformational leadership.

LEGISLATION

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.

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

ASSESSMENT

The business of the school is teaching and learning. Assessment is the school's way of determining a student's starting point and the extent to which learning has taken place. Given that the state examinations are the ultimate determinant in evaluating students at second level, assessment throughout the school is for diagnostic rather than for certification purposes. Such assessment also serves as a useful tool for the self-evaluation of teaching practices.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS POLICY

The primary aims and objectives of the policy are:

- To facilitate improved teaching and pupil learning.
- To create a consistent and standardised assessment procedure for monitoring and reporting achievement in the school.
- To co-ordinate assessment procedures within departments on a whole school basis.
- To ensure that the actions and targets in the three School Improvement Plans (Literacy, Numeracy and Assessment) are addressed.

ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

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

THE PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT

- To measure and evaluate the progress of a student in a particular area over time.
- To provide feedback to students in a timely and constructive manner.
- To provide feedback to teachers on the success of particular teaching methodologies in the learning process.
- To highlight difficulties and shortcomings in the learning process in order to develop intervention strategies.
- To identify students who require additional supports and services such as learning support or consultation with the NEPS psychologist.
- To encourage and improve the skills of self and peer assessment.
- To keep records of attainment that will inform parents of progress through the school's reporting process.
- To identify students' levels and act as an incentive for students in the learning process.
- To ascertain whether it is appropriate for a student to continue studying in any given subject area.
- Plays an important role in subject choice, career guidance and progression to third level and future education.

FORMS OF ASSESSMENT

1. INFORMAL ASSESSMENT

The most common forms of assessment used in the school are of an informal nature and these take place regularly in the classroom. These informal assessments are at the discretion of individual teachers who use them constructively to support learning. Timely feedback and constructive advice are vital to this process. Where appropriate, teachers maintain records of these assessments to provide an insight into a student's progress over time and to fully support the learning process. Informal assessment methods include -

- Worksheets and written classwork
- Questions and answers in class
- Essays and assignments
- Reading and writing in class
- Sample exam questions
- Homework - written or learned
- Oral and aural work (in languages)
- Presentations
- Performances

2. FORMAL ASSESSMENT

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

- **Assessment On Entry** - Incoming First Year students sit a number of standardised tests prior to their entry to the school. These standardised tests are used to identify students' cognitive abilities such as verbal, quantitative, non-verbal and spatial. Tests are used to identify reading ages and students' abilities in Irish. Their results are collated and analysed. This assessment offers an early indicator to the school of a student's potential. This information is available to the Principal, the Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor and other teachers as appropriate. Learning difficulties are discussed confidentially with parents, disclosed to the relevant teachers, and an appropriate programme of learning support is put in place.
- **Monthly/End of Topic/Chapter Test** - These forms of assessment are conducted at the discretion of the teacher on a monthly or end of chapter basis. These formal tests are a vital component in providing feedback to teachers, students and parents on the level of each student's attainment and learning in that specific subject area. Constructive feedback is given by teachers to students who partake in these tests and the results of these tests are used in the school's formal reporting structure where appropriate.
- **House Exams - First, Second and Fifth Year** students sit their Christmas Exams in December and their Summer Exams at the end of May. These exams are of a very serious nature, and this is recognised by students, parents and teachers alike. The purpose of these exams is to measure student learning and attainment in each subject area and to give students experience in sitting formal exams similar in nature to the state exams. The results of these Christmas exams and Summer Exams are reported in the Christmas Reports and Summer Reports respectively.

Second and Fifth Year students will also receive midterm reports in October and February based on class tests given by each teacher.

Third and Sixth Year students sit timetabled exams at Christmas and also receive Christmas Reports. Third and Sixth Year students undertake Pre-Junior and Pre-Leaving Cert exams in Spring each year to prepare them for their state exams in June. These Pre-exams are seen as being very beneficial to the students in measuring their progress in their Junior Cert and leaving Cert years. Students gain valuable experience in time management and answering technique through sitting these Pre-exams which use external papers and are corrected both internally and externally. The results of these Pre-exams form the Pre-Junior Cert and Pre-Leaving Cert Reports sent out in March/April. The results of these exams are also used to decide on the levels the students will take in the State Exams in June. Third and Sixth Year students do not sit formal house exams at the end of May and do not receive Summer Reports.

Transition Year students do not sit timetabled exams in the school. Their Christmas and Summer Reports are based on continuous assessments and formal class tests particularly in the core subjects, conducted by their individual subject teacher. A summary of their Work Experience reports from their employers is included on the Christmas and Summer Reports. In Transition Year, standardised testing is mandatory to assist students to support subject choice. The scores identify aptitudes in a range of areas which may assist students to rule in or rule out certain subject areas. As Transition Year is focused on experiential learning and personal development, the forms of assessment used may vary from the standard practices used in other years. TY assessments may involve the following, external certification, portfolio, oral presentation, multimedia, self and peer evaluation.

- **Fitness tests** - All students from First Year to Transition Year take part in a 'Bleep Test' during their PE class. This test is repeated annually. Students from First to Transition Year also do a timed run in the Castle Park twice yearly.
- **State Exams** - The school strives to ensure that all Third and Sixth Year students participate - as directed by the State Exams Commission - in the many assessments that make up the Junior Cert and Leaving Cert exams. These assessments which include orals, aurals, course work, practical work, portfolio work, etc. are operated in accordance with the regulations set down by the State Exams Commission.
- **Other Assessments** - The school engages in other forms of assessment from time to time. Standardised testing is completed at various intervals throughout the students' time in the school. If queries arise, students are screened for dyslexia using the WRAT4 which gives a standardised score in spelling and word reading. The continuum of support is used to gather information on the student and should all of this information point towards a need for formal assessment then a referral to NEPS can be made.

Standardised testing required for Junior Cert reasonable accommodations are completed if a need is identified and/or where students have a diagnosed Specific Learning Difficulty. Test results, even within the criteria, are not sufficient on their own to confer reasonable accommodations. Other criteria must be adhered to.

Students whose applications give rise to Reasonable Accommodation in Certificate Examinations (RACE) have their applications reactivated for Leaving Certificate. Standardised testing must be completed for Leaving Cert students who are not covered by reactivation. The criteria for RACE must be met.

All assessment methods will progress in line with best practice and be reviewed in line with any changes made by the Department of Education & Skills. Should national standardised testing be introduced by the DES then the school shall comply with the department guidelines.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

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

All forms of assessment above strive to meet additional needs of students when they arise. Classroom strategies such as differentiated assessment, visual aids, hearing aids, spelling waivers, increased time and dictionaries, etc. may be used from time to time, as determined by the individual subject teacher.

Where feasible, and as determined by each department plan, common assessments across a year group are used in each subject area. This provides for increased cooperation and a common benchmark across each subject area.

REPORTING

There are different methods whereby the results of formal and informal assessments are reported to students and parents/guardians.

- **Student Journal** - students record continuous assessment results in their journals for all subjects. A specific page has been dedicated to this, Mapping My Progress. The teacher may communicate the outcome of any assessment to the parents of a student by writing a result or a note in the student's journal. The parent is expected to acknowledge receipt of this note by countersigning it.
- **Direct Contact** - the teacher may decide as they see fit to contact the parent directly with respect to the outcome of an assessment undertaken by a student. If a teacher, tutor or Year Head has concerns regarding the student's progress, an Interim Report may be completed with a result/comment from each teacher.
- **Signature of Parent on Assessment** - the teacher may send the corrected assessment itself home with the student to be viewed and signed by the parent.
- **Parent Teacher Meetings** - a parent teacher meeting is held for each Year Group throughout the academic year. At these meetings it will be possible for teachers to relay the outcomes of varying assessments to parents of individual students, thereby generating an accurate picture of the student's progress.
- **VSWare** - Results are recorded onto a database for each individual student and parents can access their child's academic records through the VSWare system.

- **Written reports (guideline dates)**

First Year	Jan / June
Second Year	Oct / Jan / March / June
Third Year	Jan / Pre-exams
Transition Year	Jan / June
Fifth Year	Oct / Jan / March / June
Sixth Year	Jan / Pre-exams

The report template is computerised and allows teachers to distinguish levels. A mark and grade are awarded and a comment can be generated from a menu.

APPROVAL

This policy has been approved by CBS Kilkenny Board of Management.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Chairperson, Board of Management