



Holy Family Community School
Education is Opportunity
Assessment Policy

Title:	Assessment Policy
Approved by:	The Board of Management
Date:	June 2025
Responsibility for implementation	The Board of Management and all staff
Policy Review Date:	June 2028

Introduction

At Holy Family Community School, our motto—*Education is Opportunity*—guides all aspects of school life. Every student deserves the opportunity to thrive, not only academically but also in terms of personal growth, skill development, and preparing for future success. Central to this vision is a robust and dynamic approach to assessment, one that goes beyond merely measuring what students know, and focuses on how they learn, progress, and apply their knowledge.

This Assessment Policy is designed to ensure that assessments at all stages are meaningful, fair, and reflective of the diverse talents and abilities of our students. Through a combination of formative and summative assessments, the school aims to provide accurate, constructive feedback that supports continuous improvement. Assessment is viewed not as an endpoint, but as an ongoing opportunity for students to understand their strengths, identify areas for development, and become confident, self-reflective learners.

By creating a clear framework for assessment, the school strives to promote a culture where every student can experience success and, in turn, seize the opportunities that a high-quality education offers. This policy is central to our commitment to fostering an environment where all learners are empowered to achieve their full potential.

Purpose

The overarching purpose of this assessment policy is:

- to define what assessment is
- to explain the rationale for assessment in Holy Family Community School
- to detail the assessment practices, including formative and summative, currently in use in the school
- to outline the systems in place in the school for collecting, storing and using assessment information to inform and improve teaching and learning
- to describe how the school tracks students' results, offers feedback, and reports on assessment results
- to provide a framework for planning the continuous review and improvement of assessment practice in the school

Definition of Assessment

For the purposes of this policy, the term assessment refers to the gathering and interpretation of information related to a student's learning abilities, learning attainments, learning strengths, learning needs, and learning targets. Circular 0058/2019 refers to the different types of psychometric assessment and offers a definition of each type of assessment:

- Standardised ability assessments are designed to be curriculum-independent and measure more enduring and long-term traits than the attainment of learning. They measure potential and what a student can know rather than what is known.
- Standardised attainment/achievement assessments measure what a student knows and can be used to assess, for example, students' knowledge and skills in literacy and numeracy, and to determine progress in these areas.
- Diagnostic assessments may be administered after information garnered from various assessment practices including ability and achievement tests to provide a more detailed view of a student's learning strengths and needs. These assessments are designed to provide specific information about a student's strengths and needs in some aspects of learning.

Rationale for Assessment & Staff roles and responsibilities in relation to this policy

- Assessment is an essential part of a teacher's role and integral to good teaching and learning, as outlined in the Education Act (1998).
- Effective assessment enables students to be aware of their learning goals and recognises the standards for which they are aiming and to engage actively and constructively in their own learning.
- Effective assessment enables teachers and subject department coordinators to monitor and evaluate student progress and learning needs, to review, plan and adapt teaching strategies and/or learning activities as appropriate and to assess student needs and eligibility for additional support. It also allows them to prepare students for state examinations.
- Effective assessment enables the Management Team to engage in timely and considered discussion about assessment matters, trends, patterns, challenges, improvements and implementation strategies. It assists the Management Team in making informed decisions in respect of planning for assessment.

- Effective assessment enables parents/guardians to support their child's learning and to stay informed about their child's progress throughout their time in school.
- Effective assessment enables the Board of Management to be informed of the needs and challenges of the school community and the strategies being deployed to address these, and to review and evaluate overall progress in relation to assessment of student learning and adapt the policy as required.

Formative & Summative Assessment

Formative Assessment

Formative Assessments are ongoing and designed to inform instruction. They provide immediate feedback, promote active learning, encourage self-reflection, and support differentiation. Formative assessments are essential tools in supporting student success by ensuring that teaching is responsive to student needs throughout the learning process. The school uses a range of strategies to embed formative assessment into our practice. These may include:

- **Quizzes** which provide immediate feedback to both students and teachers to allow us to identify the areas where a student needs additional help.
- **Exit Tickets** which allow students to show what they have learned during the lesson and identify concepts that may need further clarification in future lessons.
- **Peer Reviews** which promotes students to review and provide feedback on each other's work, promote critical thinking, and provide teachers with insight into student understanding from different angles.
- **Think-Pair-Share** which encourages participation from all students and provides opportunities for peer-to-peer learning.
- **Mind Maps** which help students organise and integrate knowledge.
- **Journals and reflection sheets** encourage reflection and help students track their progress over time and provide teachers with a window into individual students' thinking and learning.
- **Classroom Surveys** allow teachers to quickly assess whether the class is understanding the material and adjust instruction in real-time.
- **Educational Apps** provide an enjoyable and motivating way for students to demonstrate learning, while giving teachers instant feedback on areas of difficulty.

•**Homework** fosters responsibility, teaches time management skills, and allows students to practice the skills they have learned in class.

Summative Assessment

Summative Assessment happens regularly throughout the school year providing opportunities for assessment of learning and assessment as learning. Formal school examinations take place at the end of the Christmas and Summer Terms. Students sit state examinations, Junior Cycle, Leaving Certificate, and Leaving Certificate Applied.

Assessment may include:

- CAT4 Ability Test
- New Group Reading Test (NGRT)
- Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs)
- Additional Assessment Components (AACs)
- Assessment Task
- Teacher-led class assessments
- Peer-led assessment
- Common biannual term examinations
- Other relevant assessments

Summative assessments are evaluations used to measure students' learning at the end of an instructional period. These assessments aim to summarise the overall effectiveness of instruction, as well as the students' mastery of the content. The school uses a range of strategies to embed summative assessment in our practice. These include:

•**Examinations** including in-class, formal end of term, and state examinations which provide a clear measure of student achievement and standardises assessment across all students, making it easy to compare results.

•**Projects and Presentations** allow students to demonstrate creativity and practical skills and provide a more holistic view of students' abilities than a single exam.

• **e-Portfolios** offers a comprehensive view of student progress and development and provides opportunities for reflection on learning.

• **Oral and Aural Examinations** allow students to showcase their learning in a format other than written.

•**Performance Based Assessments** such as interviews and practical examinations measure a student's ability to apply knowledge in practical situations.

- **Classroom Based Assessments** provide a structured and meaningful way to assess student progress and compare it against a school-wide and nationwide standard.

Assessment and Additional Needs

Assessment allows the school to identify and evaluate the specific needs of individuals requiring support. This process typically involves gathering detailed information about the individual's circumstances, challenges, and goals. The 'Continuum of Support Framework' is used, and the advice of external professionals is taken under advisement, as appropriate. This is a collaborative process involving staff, students and their families. The following standardised assessments may be used:

- New Group Reading Test (NGRT)
- Cognitive Ability Test (CAT4)
- WIAT-III-T
- Diagnostic Reading Test (DRA) and Diagnostic Mathematics Test
- Dash 2

In addition, the school uses:

- Class assessments
- My Thoughts About School
- NEPS Checklists
- SEN Continuum of Support Document
- Target setting and review

Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations (RACE)

The Department of Education and Youth, in collaboration with the State Examination Commission (SEC), offers an examination-accommodation scheme for students with various special-educational needs, including learning difficulties and other physical, sensory, emotional, or medical conditions. The school refers to the SEC's annual publication, *Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations – Instructions for Schools*, for acceptable tests and ensure they are up to date. The school stays informed about deadlines and updates from the SEC when submitting RACE applications and adjusts testing schedules accordingly.

Disability Access Route to Education (DARE)

DARE is a third level alternative admission scheme for school-leavers whose disabilities have impacted their post-primary education. The relevant students may access third level courses with

reduced CAO points offers. Students wishing to apply for DARE liaise with the AN Department and the career guidance department, and complete and submit the required forms. Extra testing may be required and may be arranged by the AN Department.

Assessment re Exemption from the study of Irish

All students should have the opportunity to learn Irish to the best of their ability, but certain exceptional circumstances may warrant an exemption from studying Irish, as outlined in Circular 0055/2022. Students with significant literacy difficulties can apply for an exemption if there is evidence that these difficulties persist despite receiving tailored support. The school must provide evidence from ongoing assessments, including results from standardised tests.

Assessment Schedule

First Year

<u>Month</u>	<u>Assessment Type</u>
May (Pre-First Year)	CAT4 & NGRT Incoming 1 st Year Standardised Assessments
September - October	1 st Year in Class Assessment Testing for Junior Cycle RACE
November - December	Winter Assessments
May	Summer Assessments

Second Year

<u>Month</u>	<u>Assessment Type</u>
September - April	CBAs as per timetable distributed to students
November - December	Winter Assessments
May	Summer Assessments

Third Year

<u>Month</u>	<u>Assessment Type</u>
September - April	CBA's as per timetable distributed to students
January - February	Mock Examinations CAT4 Standardised Assessment, Indicator for Senior Cycle Subject & Career Choices
Ongoing	Junior Cycle State examinations, as per SEC timetable

Transition Year

<u>5-way Rotation (end date)</u>	<u>4-way Rotation (end date)</u>	<u>Assessment Type</u>
Continuous Assessment		ePortfolio
Rotation 1 – end of September	Rotation 1 – mid-October	Credits
Rotation 2 – mid November	Rotation 2 – Christmas	Credits
Rotation 3 – mid January	Rotation 3 – late March	Credits
Rotation 4 – early April	Rotation 4 – end of May	Credits
Rotation 5 – end of May		Credits
<u>Month</u>	<u>Assessment Type</u>	
January - February	CAT4 Standardised Assessment, Indicator for Senior Cycle Subject & Career Choices	

Fifth Year

<u>Month</u>	<u>Assessment Type</u>
November - December	Winter Assessments
May	Summer Assessments

LCA 1

<u>Month</u>	<u>Assessment Type</u>
January - May	Task Work
April/May	Gaeilge Oral exam (SEC)
May - June	Task Work Performance Examinations
June	Gaeilge written exam (SEC) State Examinations (As Per Timetable)

Sixth Year

<u>Month</u>	<u>Assessment Type</u>
October	October Assessments
January - February	Mock Examinations
Ongoing	Leaving Certificate State examinations as per SEC timetable

LCA 2

<u>Month</u>	<u>Assessment Type</u>
January - May	Task Work
January - February	Mock Examinations
May - June	Task Work Oral Examinations Performance Examinations
Ongoing	State Examinations (As Per SEC Timetable)

Additional Needs Tests

<u>Month</u>	<u>Assessment Type</u>
Throughout the year - Each Year Group	Referrals/RACE/DARE Investigation of Difficulties
September	Target Setting for all students receiving additional support
September	EAL Placement Tests
December	Review of Targets
January	Target Setting for all students receiving additional support
April/May	EAL Placement Tests
May	Review of Targets

There are two whole-school summative points each year for first, second and fifth-year students, which are reported via VSware. There is one summative point for third and sixth-year students which will be reported to parents/guardians. These may be mock examinations which are modeled on state examinations. Mock examinations for Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate will be externally set but marked internally in most instances. In accordance with the guidelines for assessment in the new Junior Cycle since January 2019, Classroom Based Assessments may replace whole-school summative assessments for the relevant year group as agreed by Senior Management.

The schedule for summative assessments is set by the Senior Management Team. Each subject department team will plan for teaching, learning and assessment in accordance with the schedule of summative assessments.

Transition year students complete modules and are expected to upload regular pieces of work and reflection pieces to their ePortfolio. Students are assessed based on subject progress, attendance and punctuality, work experience, and completion of ePortfolio.

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with additional needs. Some students with additional educational needs may follow a Level 1 Learning Programme (L1LP) or a Level 2 Learning Programme (L2LP) for Junior or Senior Cycle. These students will be assessed in an appropriate manner. Assistive technology will be used when approved by the SEC.

Provision of Feedback

Formative feedback may be used as follows:

Verbal feedback: Teachers give immediate oral comments during or after an activity in class. This is done in a more formal setting at Parent Teacher Student meetings. This allows students to ask questions and seek clarity on feedback.

Written feedback: Teachers provide constructive feedback on assignments, essays, and examinations. These can include strengths, areas for improvement, and specific suggestions for progress. Students may refer back to this written feedback.

Digital Feedback: Teachers use VSware to provide feedback on summative assessments and student progress. Teachers may also use online platforms or apps such as One Note to provide feedback. This might include written comments, audio recordings, or video explanations.

Reflective Feedback: Students use a reflection sheet with guided questions to analyse where they need to improve and how. This allows them to set targets to work towards.

Tracking

Incoming first year students undertake formal assessments before starting in the school. The results, with data from primary schools, are used to establish baseline academic data for students. Tracking continues throughout the student's journey in the school.

Students' assessment profiles on VSware are monitored and reviewed by Teachers, Tutors, Year Heads, the Student Support Team, and SMT. All class assessments and term assessments are recorded on VSware. Data is used to make provision for additional supports for students, where necessary, and to shape future planning for teaching, learning, and assessment. Results are discussed with students and reflection takes place which empowers students to track progress, set goals, see progression and promote independent learning.

GDPR & Storing of Assessment Data

Student data must comply with EU GDPR regulations, as per the school's Data Protection Policy.