



# **ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS POLICY**

## **Meán Scoil Mhuire**

<b>Chairperson:</b>	Ms. Karen Clabby
<b>Principal (A):</b>	Ms. Mairéad Lyons
<b>Date:</b>	20th June 2024

## Introduction

We in Meán Scoil Mhuire Longford endeavour to foster a fully inclusive school environment in line with our school's ethos. This policy has been devised in keeping with the school ethos espoused by the CEIST charter and is guided by the relevant Department of Education and Skills' publications and circulars.

## Rationale

This policy sets out the rationale for the administration of assessment instruments used by the Career Guidance Department and the Special Education Teaching (SET) team in Meán Scoil Mhuire Longford.

## Definition of Assessment Instruments for the purpose of this policy

There are several types of assessment instruments as outlined in Circular 0001/2023.

**Standardised ability tests** (sometimes referred to as psychometric tests) are designed to be curriculum-independent and measure more enduring and long term traits than the attainment of learning, that is, they measure what a student is capable of knowing rather than what is known.

**Standardised achievement tests** (sometimes referred to as attainment tests) 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.

On foot of information garnered from various assessment practices including ability and achievement tests, further information may be gathered through the administration of diagnostic tests to provide a more detailed view of a student's learning strengths and needs.

**A diagnostic test** is designed to provide specific information about a student's strengths and needs in some aspect of learning, for example, word identification skills or understanding of number concepts.

## Purpose of Testing in the School

Testing informs actions that best address students' learning needs. Special Education Teachers use assessments and outcomes of ability tests to guide and support student learning. Guidance counsellors may use interest tests to guide and support student's decision-making regarding subject choice and senior cycle programme options and to support their career development, including planning for higher education and/or further education and training. Assessment results are not regarded as definitive. Students' needs and other contextual information are always taken into consideration.

EAL student assessment is carried out to assess level of English proficiency, to indicate a starting point for teaching and learning and to ensure that students' receive additional support in English language acquisition to gain access to mainstream classroom learning and socialisation in the school.

The State Examinations Commission may require Psychometric Testing Scores for RACE applications for the State Examinations.

Assessments may be required for evidence to support applications to access additional supports for students with SEN.

## **Informed Consent**

Parental consent for the administration of assessment instruments is sought at the time of enrolment, prior to the invitation to attend for CAT4 testing. Informed consent is received via the Consent Form for Administration of Assessment Instruments to Students included in the Enrolment pack (Appendix 1).

In the case of students with SEN or students wishing to apply for RACE, consent to administer diagnostic testing will be sought on an individual basis in consultation with the parents/guardians prior to the tests being administered.

## **Assessments in Common Use:**

A range of Assessment Instruments (including tests and web-based resources) are used in the Guidance and Learning Support Departments in Meán Scoil Mhuire. The list of tests below is neither prescriptive or exhaustive. Other specialist tests may be administered to support educational development and learning as well as career development. All tests in use are selected from the approved DES lists outlined in Circular Letter 0001/2023 and updated each May on the Department's website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

Advice on the use of assessment instruments/tests for Guidance or for additional and special educational needs (SEN) in post-primary schools revising 0067/2020; 0058/2019

- CAT 4 (Level E for 1<sup>st</sup> Years / Level F for 3<sup>rd</sup> Years ) A group administered ability and aptitude test measuring the four principal areas of reasoning- verbal, non-verbal, quantitative, and spatial, providing a profile of the core abilities relating to learning.
- The Post-Primary Assessment and Diagnosis – English (PPAD-E) is a new standardised test of literacy in English for use in post-primary schools as a screening and diagnostic tool for assessing literacy skills. This assessment has been developed by the Department of Education and Skills, through the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) in collaboration with the Educational Research Centre (ERC).
- Post-Primary Assessment Kit (EAL)- Available through the NCCA. Some group and some individually administered tests to ascertain competency levels with English and ability to access the curriculum.
- Eirquest- ( for Transition Years) A group administered test yielding a profile on forty broad career areas, designed for use with students taking the Irish Leaving Cert.
- Diagnostic Tests for SEN and RACE Accommodations
  - WIAT 3- An individually administered test assessing reading, comprehension and spelling
  - NGRT 3- A group administered test which assesses reading ages from 10-13
  - NGRT 4-A group administered test which assesses reading ages from 14 to 16
  - WRAT 4-an individual or group administered test containing multiple choice sub-tests including reading comprehension, maths and non-verbal reasoning

- Dyslexia Screening Test- An individually administered diagnostic test to identify students at risk of dyslexia.

We reserve the right to be part of pilot initiatives that aim to enhance and develop the area of psychometric testing.

### **Guidance Resources**

- Careers Portal- This is a website provides a free exploration Toolbox including an Interest Profiler. [www.classroomguidance.ie](http://www.classroomguidance.ie)
- Qualifax Interest Assessment- This website provides an interest assessment on Qualifax, the national courses database of post-secondary education. [www.qualifax.ie](http://www.qualifax.ie)

## **Staff involved in Administering Assessment Instruments**

### **Trained Personnel**

Administration of assessment tests in Meán Scoil Mhuire is restricted to appropriately qualified personnel who have been specifically trained in specialised psychometric testing including the selection, administration, scoring, interpretation and feedback of such assessment instruments. Such personnel in Meán Scoil Mhuire are the qualified Guidance Counsellors and teachers of special education with appropriate qualifications to administer specific tests. These teachers engage in regular and on-going training and continuous professional development in this area.

### **Mainstream Subject Teachers**

Some assessments, such as standardised group achievement tests, may be administered by subject teachers, under the supervision of a suitably qualified person.

## **Interpretation of Scores & Provision of Feedback**

Qualified SET teachers and Guidance Counsellors are involved in the interpretation of assessment scores. The results of any one test are never considered in isolation. Where applicable test results are always considered alongside other information such as parental information, information from primary school, information from teachers etc.

Feedback may be given to the student and is available to parents upon request. Feedback is given by appropriately qualified teachers, guidance counsellors or SET teachers who ensure that appropriate, accurate and constructive feedback is provided in a timely fashion upon request by students and parents. Students and parents should be made aware of the limitations of assessment results during this discussion and the importance of other factors including the student's interests, experience, and information available from other sources. The Guidance and SET teams in Meán Scoil Mhuire take into consideration 'the very particular difficulties associated with the assessment of children whose home culture is markedly different from the group on whom the test is standardised'. Care is also taken when interpreting results for students who are studying English as an additional language (EAL).

In order to ensure that teaching and learning that supports each student's development some information and results may be shared with teachers to ensure that teaching approaches can be adapted to accommodate the different learning needs and styles of students.

### **Data Storage & Retention**

In line with data protection requirements, the student information is kept securely in the individual student file at the Principal's office with access confined to the administration staff, SET and Guidance teachers, others only at request of principal. Electronic information is kept secure through the password protected administration system.

Meán Scoil Mhuire will retain the information for seven years after the student has left the school. This is in line with data protection requirements.

### **Access to Data**

The SET team and Guidance Counsellors may access the data to inform their work with the student. Under Data legislation, the student owns the data generated through testing. Access to assessment data will be on a need to know basis

### **Legislation Underpinning the Policy**

- Freedom of Information Act, 1997, 2014
- Freedom of Information (Amendment) Act 2003
- Data Protection Acts 1988, 2003, 2018

### **Links to Other School Policies**

- Admissions Policy
- Anti- bullying Policy
- Child Protection
- Data Protection Policy
- E.A.L. Policy
- S.E.N. Policy
- Whole School Guidance Policy

### **Reviewing and evaluating the policy**

The policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis by the SET team and Guidance Counsellors and will be reviewed and evaluated every two years by all the partners.

## APPENDIX 1

### CONSENT FORM



#### Administration of Assessment Instruments to Students

Dear Parent/Guardian and Student,

During your daughter's education in Meán Scoil Mhuire, she will have the opportunity to engage in a wide range of assessment activity as part of normal teaching and learning.

Other specialist tests may be administered to support your daughter's educational development and learning as well as her career development. Such tests may include achievement, ability, diagnosis and interest tests.

The results of all tests will be shared with parents and students in accordance with our assessment instruments policy. There may be occasion to administer tests on an individual basis to support your daughter's learning, progress, achievement in school and to inform the possible need for an application to be made for Reasonable Accommodations in the State Examinations (RACE).

The school policy on the use of assessment instruments is available on the school's website [www.scoilmhuirelongford.ie](http://www.scoilmhuirelongford.ie)

If you would like to find out more please do not hesitate to contact the Guidance Counsellors or Special Education Team Coordinator.

Yours sincerely,

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Principal

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I, the parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_ give consent for assessment instruments to be administered to my daughter while she is a student in Meán Scoil Mhuire.

Name of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_