St Nicholas Mission statement

Through an inquiry based international education, St. Nicholas School develops responsible, confident and caring citizens of an ever-changing world.

By setting high academic standards and celebrating cultural diversity, we nurture individual talents and embrace a shared passion for learning.

Purpose of document

These essential agreements on assessment and reporting have been drawn up as part of a documented policy to be implemented by all teachers. They clarify the responsibilities and expectations of teachers, students, and parents, and increase consistency and reliability of good assessment practices. They make explicit what is going to be assessed, how it is going to be assessed, and when it is going to be assessed. Assessment and reporting should be experienced by students and parents as integral parts of the learning process, and not just as culminating activities.

Philosophy and principles of assessment

St. Nicholas School views assessment as an ongoing process of gathering, analysing, reflecting and acting on evidence of student learning to inform teaching. Assessment is everything we do to understand what students know, understand, can do and feel, and aim to meet the various needs of students and their approaches to the learning process. It should be authentic, relevant and integral to all learning.

Assessment is integral to all teaching and learning. It is central to the goal of thoughtfully and effectively guiding students through the five essential elements of learning: the *understanding of concepts*, the *acquisition of knowledge*, the *mastery of skills*, the *development of attitudes* and the *decision to take responsible action*.

Everyone concerned with assessment, including students, teachers, parents, and administrators, must have a clear understanding of the reasons for the assessment, what is being assessed, the criteria for success and the method with which the assessment is carried out.

Both students and teachers should be actively engaged and involved in assessing student progress as part of the development of their wider critical thinking and self-evaluation skills. Teachers will also be concerned with evaluating the efficacy of the curriculum. Teachers will use their assessments to reflect upon their planning and make necessary adjustments. All parties to the learning process should therefore be enabled to become *assessment-capable*, and this aim should inform and guide the development of assessments as well as the vision of assessment practices and purposes.

The taught curriculum is the written curriculum in action. By using the written curriculum, and by working in collaboration with colleagues and students, the teacher generates questions which guide structured inquiry and instruction. These questions address key concepts which help lead to productive lines of inquiry or a meaningful discussion of inquiry questions. Assessment focuses on the quality of student learning during the process of inquiry and instruction and on the quality of the products of that learning. Assessment is, therefore, integral to the taught curriculum. It is the means by which we analyse student learning and the effectiveness of our teaching and acts as the foundation on which to base our future planning and practice. It is central to our goal of guiding students through the learning process. (from *Primary Years Programme Assessment Handbook, 2001*)

The school's approaches to assessment can be divided into the four key areas
- **Monitoring:** where the learning progress is checked against goals students set for themselves as well as given success criteria
- **Documenting:** the process where evidence of learning and progress is recorded
- **Measuring:** where student work is examined at various stages in order to provide evidence on teaching and learning
- **Reporting:** how student learning is described and communicated

Why we assess

St Nicholas School Alphaville sees the purpose of as assessment as threefold:

- **To promote student learning** by actively engaging the student in the learning process in a manner that both builds on the students' existing knowledge and diverse needs and abilities.
- **To provide information on student learning** by collecting evidence of learning through examples of work, portfolios, benchmark data and test results.
- **To inform the development of the curriculum** by measuring performance and progress against the general and specific expectations of the curriculum and using this information to relevant adjustments to the curriculum as well as teaching and learning practices.

Assessment capability

As assessment is a process that is neither unilateral nor one-dimensional, the school sees it as its responsibility to develop a community of assessment, where all members take part in the assessment process by contributing to it, developing it, and retrieving valuable information from it that informs teaching and learning. Each party must therefore be equipped with certain skills and understandings that support equal access to the process.

Assessment capable teachers:

- Employ different means of assessment to inform teaching
- Use assessment to bring out the best in each student
- Understand the use of different assessment strategies as means to different ends
- Involve the student as an active agent in the assessment process
- Are fair and objective in their assessments
- See feedback as an integral component of assessment

Assessment capable students:

- Understand their role in the assessment process
- Appreciate the value of feedback and reflection in making progress
- Are able to show initiative when it comes to using and designing assessment in the classroom
- Assume responsibility for their own learning by actively participating in assessments
- Demonstrate an understanding of their progress and articulate it reflectively as part of conferences with teachers and parents

What we assess

In the earliest stages of planning, good assessment practice requires that teachers ensure that assessment tasks are linked to the central idea of a unit of inquiry or the stand-alone unit of instruction. The significant content identified by the school supports the outcome of students becoming internationally-minded and independent learners. Once this content is identified, teachers plan multiple opportunities for their students to develop knowledge, conceptual understandings and skills to support self-regulatory learning in each of these areas. Assessment therefore aims to gain a better understanding not only of the content a student has learned, but also the way they have learned, and the understandings they have gained of bigger ideas that connect to their specific focus of inquiry. This is achieved by not only collecting examples of student work, but also by encouraging student reflection and self-assessment, as well as through continuous assessment in the form of discussions, feedback, and observations of independent and group work performed by students.

How we assess

Assessment at St Nicholas is carried out using a variety of means and at various stages of the learning process. The key approaches to assessment at St Nicholas are:

- **Diagnostic assessment** is used to determine the current status of a student or a group of students at a particular point in time in the curriculum.
- **Formative assessment** is the assessment of processes of learning, and serves to help teachers and students find out what the students already know in order to adjust and plan the next stage of learning. This type of assessment takes place throughout a unit, and serves both as a feedback tool for teachers to adjust their teaching to student needs, but also for

students to set their own individual targets in order to meet the requirements of the unit and the summative assessment

- **Summative assessment** takes place at the end of the teaching and learning processes, usually at the end of a unit, and gives students opportunities to demonstrate what has been learned. Its purpose is to help students and teachers discover each student's acquisition of knowledge, understanding of central ideas or key concepts, and the development of attributes and transdisciplinary skills.
- **Self-assessment** involves students reviewing and evaluating their knowledge, conceptual understandings and skills. It then leads to students monitoring and adjusting their behaviour and planning, making corrections and implementing improvements in their learning. This particular assessment process also involves peer assessment, where students reflect critically on each other's work and give feedback based on their understanding of the concept, content, or task at hand.

Assessment strategies and tools

The following methods of assessment have been identified as central to the process of providing authentic and student-centered assessment. They cover a broad range of approaches, and it is essential that they be seen as a package since they have been selected to provide a range of approaches reflecting a variety of learning styles and multiple intelligences, and therefore a balanced view of students and their varying experiences of the learning process. This list is not exhaustive, but serves instead to provide an insight into the multifaceted approach to assessment as defined and implemented by the school.

- **Observation** involves working with or alongside pupils, the focus being on either a group of students or individuals, in order to monitor learning taking place and assessing understanding as the learning is taking place.
- **Performance** entails goal-directed tasks with established criteria, where the focus is on producing solutions or products that address authentic challenges or situations. These can include artistic performances, debates, presentations, or athletic competitions, to name but few.
- **Process-focused** assessment focuses on the learning process, where transdisciplinary skills are examined in particular through the observation of behaviours and thought processes, for example as they appear in interviews, process journals, or think-aloud activities.
- **Selected responses** aim to assess learning by asking students to recall factual information or apply strategies in a one-dimensional way, for example through quizzes or tests.
- **Open-ended tasks** is where students communicate an original response based on a stimulus, that is open to a range of interpretations and submission options (essay, photo essay, presentation, video, bar graphs, posters etc.)
- **Portfolio** is where students show progress and growth through a selection of drafts and completed projects and samples of thought processes and development of ideas.

Feedback

Transdisciplinary themes and key concepts provide a focus for inquiry, while literacy and numeracy, and subject-specific content provide the tools for inquiry. Therefore, **constant feedback** needs to be provided given on progress and performance on a regular basis. in each of these areas. Feedback also needs to be provided on the learner profile attributes. Continuous assessment provides insights into children's understanding, knowledge, skills and attitudes. It is also a means of exploring the learning styles and individual differences of pupils in order to differentiate instruction. *(Primary Years Programme Assessment Handbook p. 3-4)*. In order to maximise the value of feedback as a meaningful tool for learning, the school adheres to the following principles of feedback, adapted from Shute's (2008) principles of feedback:

- Focus feedback on the task not the learner (do not give feedback that could be understood as character judgement)
- Provide detailed feedback in manageable units
- Be specific and clear with feedback messages
- Keep feedback as simple as possible but no simpler
- Establish a clear link between current performance and the end goal
- Promote a learning goal orientation via feedback
- Ensure that feedback is recorded where possible
- Provide feedback after learners have attempted a solution

Differentiation in assessment

As part of St Nicholas' mission to celebrate diversity, the school's view of assessment as a means to provide differentiation means that assessment is as important for the teacher to gain an accurate understanding of a particular student's abilities, prior knowledge, and approaches and attitude to learning as it is for the student to understand where they are at in their learning process at the time of assessment. The school therefore values the importance of continuous and formative assessment, both formal and informal, as a means to design learning that is suited to the needs of all students. Assessment in the initial stages of learning should always consider the ultimate learning goal of the unit or the lesson, and what skills students should be able to apply, and the information gathered should be used to ascertain how students can arrive at that point at a pace and via the means that best suit their capabilities and learning aptitudes (Tomlison and Moon, 2013).

Recording and reporting

The purpose of assessment reports at St Nicholas is to inform students and parents of progress in learning and their performance against the established curricular or IB criteria, and to provide guidance on further improvement and steps to take with regards to the development of autonomy and self-assessment.

Reporting to parents takes place via two different means of communication. The first is progress reports and end-of-year reports, and the second is via student-led parent conferences. Recording and reporting should always aim to achieve the following:

- Reflect the school's values in what is assessed and how it is assessed
- Provide an accurate, objective, and fair representation of the students' progress across the curriculum
- Reflect the students' use of transdisciplinary skills in addition to disciplinary or academic attainment
- Be clear and accessible to all stakeholders
- Provide data that informs future curriculum development and assessment for teachers
- Be based on evidence gathered over the course of the learning progress from a range of sources
- Place the student at the center of their own learning, and enforce the principles of agency, autonomy, and responsibility.

Documenting learning

Where possible, learning should be documented so as to provide an accurate portrayal of how students progress in their learning over the course of a unit or a year. This is achieved through the use of an electronic portfolio such as Seesaw or Managebac, depending on the age of the student. Student work and reflections are shared on these virtual platforms, where they are accessible to all parties. The work should be selected and uploaded by students themselves, and be used as the basis for reports and conferences.

Reports

Reports are shared with parents at three points over the school year. The first report is released in November, or towards the end of the first term, the second comes out towards the end of March, or halfway through the second term. A summative end-of-year report is then shared with parents and students at the end of the school year. Reports will be accompanied by a virtual portfolio that contains a selection of formative and summative assessments for each criteria in all of the subject groups, as well as a narrative comment on the students' progress and suggestions for further improvement. These portfolios will form the basis of the student-led parent conferences, as will be elaborated upon here below.

Student-led parent conferences

As part of the school's commitment to developing learner agency and autonomy through learning and assessment for learning, students are, with the guidance and support of their teachers, responsible for delivering or taking part in two parent conferences a year, that will take place in the week after the publication of the formative reports in November and March. These conferences are an opportunity for the student to achieve the following:

- Share their assessment, progress, and learning and their interpretation thereof with their parents and teachers
- Reflect on both successes and challenges in a constructive and supported manner
- Set realistic long-term and short-term goals, and reflect on strategies and methods with which to achieve them
- Gain a better understanding of their responsibility as the agent at the center of the learning process through the discussion of past and upcoming assessments

As students move through the school, they will gradually assume greater responsibility over the student-parent-teacher conferences, starting in the latter stages of their Early Years education, with the aim of them being able to lead these conferences with minimal support as they enter middle school.

Other means or occasions of reporting

When and if necessary, the school may choose to communicate assessment results and processes of individual students or groups with parents outside the regular reporting times. This will be done with the consent and involvement of both the student(s) and the senior leadership team, and it may be done for the following reasons (this list is not exhaustive):

- When students have achieved outstanding results
- When students show outstanding improvement over a set period of time
- When predicted grades are to be shared with the IB (in middle school only)
- When there are suspicions of academic dishonesty

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is integral to the school's values, and it should be one of the guiding principles when it comes to middle school assessment design, be it for formative or summative assessment purposes. The school's Academic Honesty Policy should be referred to for further guidance in cases where there is suspicion of academic dishonesty.

Specific features of assessment in the Middle School

Using subject criteria and determining achievement levels

Assessment in the middle school is neither norm-referenced, nor criterion-referenced, but instead it is 'criterion-related', whereby student assessment is guided by established criteria laid out by the IB. Teachers will then use the criteria to determine the students' achievement levels in conjunction with standards set by each department as to what constitutes work that fits into each criteria level. The levels for the four criteria within each subject group are aligned with numerical levels on a scale of 1 to 8 that are in turn divided into four bands (see example in Figure 1 below). The number 0 should be awarded to work that does not meet the description for the quality of work described in levels 1 or 2. A full list of the criteria for each subject group can be found in Figure 3 below.

Figure 1: Sample criteria and achievement levels

Year Group: Grade 6 (MYP 1)	Subject: Science
Criterion A: Knowing and Understanding	

Achievement level	Level descriptor
0	The student does not reach a standard described by any of the descriptors below.
1-2	The student is able to: i. select scientific knowledge ii. select scientific knowledge and understanding to suggest solutions to problems set in familiar situations iii. apply information to make judgments, with limited success.
3-4	The student is able to: i. recall scientific knowledge ii. apply scientific knowledge and understanding to suggest solutions to problems set in familiar situations iii. apply information to make judgments.
5-6	The student is able to: i. state scientific knowledge ii. apply scientific knowledge and understanding to solve problems set in familiar situations iii. apply information to make scientifically supported judgments.
7-8	The student is able to: i. outline scientific knowledge ii. apply scientific knowledge and understanding to solve problems set in familiar situations and suggest solutions to problems set in unfamiliar situations iii. interpret information to make scientifically supported judgments.

Once each criteria in the subject group has been awarded a grade out of 8, the final achievement level for the subject group at that point is determined by adding up all four grades for each criteria, and that number is then converted to a scale of 1 to 7 (see figure 2 below).

Figure 2: Conversion table for final achievement levels per subject group

Final subject grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Grade boundaries	1-5	6-9	10-14	15-18	19-23	24-27	28-32

Figure 3: Assessment criteria per subject group

Middle school subject groups	Criteria in each subject	Highest attainment value of each criterion
Language and literature	**A** Analysing **B** Organising **C** Producing text **D** Using language	8
Language acquisition	**A** Listening **B** Reading **C** Speaking **D** Writing	8
Mathematics	**A** Knowing and understanding **B** Investigating patterns **C** Communicating **D** Applying mathematics in real life contexts	8
Sciences	**A** Knowing and understanding **B** Inquiring and designing **C** Processing and evaluating **D** Reflecting on the impacts of science	8
Individuals and societies	**A** Knowing and understanding **B** Investigating **C** Communicating **D** Thinking critically	8
Design	**A** Inquiring and analysing **B** Developing ideas **C** Creating the solution **D** Evaluating	8
Visual and performing arts	**A** Knowing and understanding **B** Developing skills **C** Thinking creatively **D** Responding	8
Physical and health education	**A** Knowing and understanding **B** Planning for performance **C** Applying and performing **D** Reflecting and improving performance	8
Each criterion contains a number of objectives and strands of assessment. All assessment guidelines will outline the details of the criterion being assessed.		

Further information on the assessment process that leads to the determination of a final achievement level for each criteria can be found in the next section.

Designing a middle school assessment

All assessment tasks, be they formative or summative, should be designed with the following principles in mind. They reflect both the standards laid out by the IB, as well as the values of the school with regards to the purpose and value of assessments.

When designing middle school assessments, teachers should always aim to ensure that tasks:

- Address one or more middle school criteria or strands
- Are adaptable to a variety of learning needs and abilities
- Involve a range of critical and creative thinking skills, and address the development of ATLs
- Provide an opportunity to develop the transfer of skills, interdisciplinary learning, and application of knowledge and skills in different contexts
- Include clear and consistent use of command terms
- Be adaptable to students with identified learning needs
- Provide checkpoints for student reflection
- Provide opportunities for group work, communication with teachers, and peer feedback as far as possible
- Allow for timely and constructive feedback on performance
- Deliver a healthy balance between ongoing formative assessments and more conclusive summative assessments

Standardisation

As part of the school's commitment to ensuring fair and objective assessment that is in line with expected outcomes as defined by the school, teachers work towards standardisation of their assessments by collaborating with teachers within their subject group or through the planning of their interdisciplinary units. When teachers are the only teacher teaching a particular subject, they may choose to work with the MYP coordinator, or similar subject groups may join their efforts to implement standardisation, especially in cases where both subject groups may only have a single teacher.

The ways in which teachers achieve standardisation are many and varied, including:

- Moderation of task sheets
- Comparative judgement of sample tasks to determine standards for each achievement level
- Definition of success criteria
- Comparison of marked assessments before final grade is awarded

Teachers are also encouraged to engage in sharing and discussion practices with practitioners in other schools or institutions through online platforms, social media, webinars, or other means of collaboration and/or discussion.

Types of assessment

Formative assessments

Over the course of each unit, the teachers are expected to carry out a range of formative assessments. These serve to provide a holistic picture of the progress of the students as they move forward with their learning, and provide constructive suggestions for next steps in assessments. They can also provide important points of reflection for students, where they reflect on their own progress, articulate their concerns or challenges, or provide feedback for peers. Lastly, formative assessments can provide important feedback for teachers that may guide the design of a summative assessment task, as well as improvements to instruction or unit design. These assessments should be designed to address different strands of the four criteria for each subject group, but they can also serve as occasions where the development of ATL skills is evaluated.

Examples of formative assessments may include (but are not limited to):

- Process journals
- Mock performances
- Research project based on a stimulus
- Questionnaires/reflection sheets
- Mind maps/brainstorming visuals
- Problem-solving processes
- Socratic seminars

Formative assessments may be evaluated against IB criteria to give students as accurate a representation of their current level as possible, but evaluation may also come in the form of narrative paragraphs, verbal feedback, or discussions with students. All written feedback and assessment should be recorded on Managebac, and dates and topics of feedback discussions should be documented as well. Student reflections on formative assessments should be recorded and stored electronically so as to support learner autonomy and a heightened understanding of the learning processes for each individual student.

Summative assessments

Summative assessments should be carried out at the end of each unit, and aim to comprehensively evaluate the students' learning against the established IB criteria for each subject. While all forms of assessment are essentially formative in that they help inform a student about what they know or can do, summative assessments are a snapshot of learning towards the end of a learning period in a work unit and contributes to the final achievement levels in each subject. They must always relate to the statement of inquiry for the unit, and they must be varied in nature and scope so as to develop a clear picture of the students' learning and refinement of skills.

Examples of formative assessments include (but are not limited to):

- Tests/exams
- Essays
- Laboratory plans and investigation/research
- Data analysis tasks
- Oral, written and visual presentations/tasks
- Individual and group projects
- Performances of understanding

Teachers should record evidence of learning and data on performance as well as feedback on the students' progress towards reaching the objectives of the task, but a final grade in the form of a numerical value on a scale of 0 to 8 should be given according to the subject group criteria and given achievement levels. The awarding of grades for summative assignments should align with the publication of reports (see above), and the overall 1-7 grade in each subject should represent a calculation based on <u>at least</u> two summative tasks for each assessment criteria. All summative assessments should be recorded on Managebac together with the grade and the feedback given after submission.

External: Personal Project and eAssessment

The Personal Project is an independent student project that is developed by each individual student with the support and guidance of a teacher mentor, and its aim is to be a reflection of the students' ability to conceive of, manage and direct their own inquiry. It is internally assessed by each student's teacher mentor before it is submitted for moderation with the middle school coordinator and the Personal Project Coordination Team before it is submitted to the IB for external moderation.

Students are introduced to the Personal Project towards the end of middle school 4/Grade 9, and they will have completed and submitted a final version of their project towards the end of February in their last year of middle school (middle school 5/Grade 10). The stages of development of their project represent a culmination of the skills and knowledge they have acquired over the course of their middle school experience, and their work requires them to put into practice the attributes the school has aimed to help them develop into assessment capable and autonomous learner, including:

- Determining their own lines of inquiry and project focus
- Developing a structured plan with long and short-term goals, as well as specific deadlines
- Create their own proposals and success criteria for their project
- Keep detailed records of the development of their project and their research
- Initiate communication with their teacher mentor and/or the middle school coordinator

Links to other policies

The school's assessment policy is linked to St Nicholas' guiding documents and supports IB standards and practices. The following policies and protocols are therefore of particular relevance to assessment at the school:
- The St Nicholas Academic Honesty Policy
- The St Nicholas Inclusion Policy
- The St Nicholas Language Policy
- The St Nicholas Parent Handbook
- The St Nicholas Middle School student handbook

The following IB standards and practices are relevant to assessment at St Nicholas:

Standard (0404): Learning, teaching, and assessment effectively inform and influence one another.
Practices:
- Students and teachers use feedback to improve learning, teaching and assessment. (0404-01)
  - Students and teachers use feedback to support stated outcomes and expectations, in accordance with IB philosophy and assessment documentation. (0404-01-0100)
  - The school uses specific and constructive school-based reporting to provide students and teachers with information that can be used to improve learning, teaching and assessment. (0404-01-0200)
- The school uses assessment methods that are varied and fit-for-purpose for the curriculum and stated learning outcomes and objectives. (0404-02)
  - Teachers use a variety of assessment methods that are connected to stated learning objectives and outcomes. (0404-02-0100)
  - PYP: Teachers document and analyse student learning over time to design learning experiences based on data. (0404-02-0111)
  - The school demonstrates that assessment practices are formed around conceptual learning. (0404-02-0200)
  - The school ensures that from the time of enrolment students and legal guardians are aware of and have access to documentation describing the relevant programme regulations and requirements regarding assessment. (0404-02-0300)
- The school administrates assessment consistently, fairly, inclusively and transparently. (0404-03)
  - The school administrates assessment in accordance with IB rules, regulations, and/or relevant programme documentation. (0404-03-0100)
  - The school regularly reviews and ensures compliance with all access arrangements. (0404-03-0200)
  - The school ensures that external reporting and/or predictions are as accurate as possible, and are appropriately designed for the contexts in which they are required. (0404-03-0300)
  - The school implements, communicates and regularly reviews consistent and fair systems and processes for reporting student progress and handling appeals or challenges. (0404-03-0400)
  - The school monitors and evaluates the delivery of assessments to ensure that they are as seamless as reasonable. (0404-03-0500)
- Students take opportunities to consolidate their learning through assessment. (0404-04)
  - The school provides students with opportunities to consolidate their learning through a variety of assessments. (0404-04-0100)

Communicating the policy and review process

As the assessment policy is one of the fundamental documents that support teaching and learning at St Nicholas, the school ensures its dissemination as well as an ongoing discussion about the philosophy and values that underpin the practices laid out in the policy. The assessment policy will therefore be shared and discussed in the following ways:

- The policy will be made available on the school's website
- The policy will be accessible on Google Drive for both students and teachers
- The policy will be presented to parents during parent information sessions
- The policy will be communicated to and discussed with new teachers upon their joining the school
- Collaborative meetings will be arranged on a regular basis where the policy will be evaluated against teaching practices and curriculum requirements and vice versa
- The Student Council will be invited to regular meetings to discuss the policy

These continuous discussions with the school community about the principles and practices of the assessment policy will form a part of the regular review cycle that ensures the relevance and validity of the policy for the school. Collaborative meetings, continued discussions, and feedback from the student council will complement a review of developments in the school's demographics, new research, and other changes that may influence the alignment of the assessment policy with the school's curriculum and circumstances. These will take place throughout each school year, but a formal review will be carried out in the month of April each year.

Review process

This policy was modified and adopted in November 2019 based on a review process involving a range of teachers from all key stages, before it was ratified by the senior leadership team.

The next review will take place between August and November 2021.

References

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