

2nd October 2023

Dear Parent/Guardian

As a school we endeavour to provide the best possible education for our students. The importance of quality assessment is one of our highest priorities. Management along with teaching staff in the school are continuously trying to develop our assessment strategies.

Assessment plays a major role in how students learn, their motivation to learn, and how we as teachers can adapt and differentiate our teaching to best meet the needs of our student's.

Assessment is embedded in the learning process. It is tightly interconnected with curriculum and instruction. As teachers and students work towards the achievement of curriculum outcomes, assessment plays a constant role in informing instruction, guiding the student's next steps, and checking progress and achievement. In St. Munchin's College teachers may use many different processes and strategies for classroom assessment, and adapt them to suit the assessment purpose and needs of individual students.

Assessment must be planned with its purpose in mind. **Assessment of Learning** (formal exams/Christmas/ Summer/ Junior Cycle & Leaving Certificate exams) and **Assessment for Learning** (thumbs up/ thumbs down for understanding, traffic lights for learning, teacher observations, project work, etc.) all have a role to play in supporting and improving student learning, and must be appropriately balanced. *The most important part of assessment is the interpretation and use of the information that is obtained for its intended purpose.*

Over the past few years, we have developed assessment initiatives that will empower our students to become independent learners who can plan and manage the next steps in their learning. These assessment techniques are collectively named Assessment for Learning (AfL) or in some instances they are referred to as **Formative Assessments.**

What is AfL?

Assessment for Learning is best described as a process by which assessment information is used by teachers to adjust their teaching strategies, and by students to adjust their learning strategies.

Your son's October report will be a **Comment Only Report**. This report is one of the initiatives in our AfL programme.

How is this Report Different to Others?

This report has no numeric result and no grade. It has the **level** at which your child is sitting the subject, it has a teacher **AfL comment** for each subject, and it has the level of **effort** your child is investing in that particular subject.

Why is there no Result or Grade?

In AfL the focus is on providing the student with feedback on their learning. This feedback should help to inform, guide and shape future learning experiences. **Effective formative feedback is given without results as research has shown that students who were presented with grades and comments felt that the grade cancelled out the beneficial effects of the comments (in many cases students report that when they see the grade they ignore the very valuable written comments made throughout the exam by their teacher, comments that are designed to help the student in answering exam style questions).**

The comments in the October Formative Report are intended to help the student with the direction they need to move in to improve their learning and ultimately their results. Teachers have based their comments on various AfL assessment techniques and of course teacher professional observations, which have been undertaken in their classrooms since our return in August/September.

When you receive your child's Christmas, Summer and Pre-Examination reports, results and grades will be included in these reports along with teacher comments.

This assessment initiative is one of many that we have introduced over the past few years. It should not be viewed in isolation, but as another important effort in helping your child to understand and achieve the most from their learning experiences in St. Munchin's College.

If you wish to receive any further information on AfL or need further clarification on any of the above, please feel free to contact us.

David Quilter
Principal

Lorraine Shiels
Deputy Principal