An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

Supporting schools in providing end-of-year written reports to parents of children in primary school

Frequently Asked Questions   May 2020

1. Should written reports be completed at the end of this school year?

Yes, end-of-year reports should be completed and sent to parents in June.

2. How should schools report on children's progress and achievement this year?

There is considerable scope for schools in how they report on children's progress and achievement in the 2019/2020 school year. Circular 56/2011 requires schools to report on four areas:
- the child as a learner
- the child's personal and social development
- the child's progress with learning in curriculum areas or subjects
- next steps in the child's learning, including ways for parents to help.

As in other years and as per their school policy, schools should draw on a range of assessment methods and different sources of evidence and information gathered during the year to make statements about children's learning and progress.

In deciding how to report, schools can choose from the following:
1. templates customised and generated using the online NCCA Report Card Creator at www.reportcard.ncca.ie
2. the nine stand-alone NCCA templates at ncca.ie/en/primary/reporting-and-transfer/report-card-templatescreator

In light of COVID-19 and the measures in place, including the closure of schools, to help curb the spread of the virus, schools might find it useful to revisit the various templates and/or the Report Card Creator on the NCCA website in order to adopt a slightly different approach to reporting on children's progress and achievement. For example, this might involve moving away from using a number of scales and tick-boxes to using a more narrative style of reporting based on comments and suggestions. Both the stand-alone templates and the Report Card Creator offer these possibilities while retaining the four areas listed above.

3. **How should schools report on children's learning progress during the school closure phase (March 13ᵗʰ to the end of the academic year)?**

While schools will likely rely on classroom-based assessments to report on children's learning progress in 2019/2020, reports should also consider the child's remote learning experiences. In doing so, schools could add a short narrative to their preferred report template to comment on the child's engagement during the school closure period, keeping their wellbeing at the heart of the communication. Suggested comments might acknowledge the efforts and creativity that children demonstrated, their positive attitude and engagement and/or make reference to some of the projects they shared or skills they demonstrated during the period. For varying reasons, some children may not have been in a position to engage with distance learning during this period. It is important that this is not reflected negatively in the report.

4. **Our school uses the NCCA reporting templates and Report Card Creator to generate reports. Can we expect that changes will be made to these templates this year?**

As noted above, there are nine stand-alone reporting templates which schools can choose from as well as an online tool to create a customised template. Collectively, these provide a wide range of choices for how schools might report on children's progress in this school year. In light of this, no changes are planned for the templates or the online Report Card Creator.

As schools begin work on the end-of-year written reports for parents and given the unprecedented situation that exists for everyone this year, schools might consider the following.

- Where the template(s) in use was generated through the online Report Card Creator, the school might consider making some appropriate adjustments to it.
- Where the template(s) in use is one of the nine available on the NCCA website, the school might review the other template options and select an alternative template to use this year, for example, see NCCA reporting template 3 which uses comments.

5. How should teachers report on standardised test scores in the end-of-ear reports?

The Department of Education and Skills confirmed on 27 April 2020 that standardised testing was cancelled for children in second, fourth and sixth classes in this school year. If schools decide to use a reporting template that references standardised testing, this section of the report can be left blank. Alternatively, schools could insert the text 'Standardised tests were not used in the summer term as advised by the Department of Education and Skills'.

In the case of children in sixth class, schools will use the sixth Class Report Card template which forms part of the Education Passport. This template includes space for results from standardised tests completed in second, fourth and sixth class. For the 2019/20 school year, standardised test scores for second, fourth and fifth class (where tests were administered) should be provided. This will provide the post-primary school with useful information about the trend in test performance over a period of time.

6. Should schools report the child's test scores from the 2018/2019 standardised testing period?

There is no need for schools to report on test results from last year as these results will already have been reported to parents as part of the 2018/2019 end-of-year report.

7. In our school, standardised tests were administered to children in autumn 2019. Can or should these test results be reported to parents as part of the end-of-year progress report?

It is good practice to report to parents on the progress of their children. If these test results are available, it is likely that they were already discussed at the parent/teacher meeting in the autumn/early spring. It is at the school principal's discretion in collaboration with teachers as to whether these results are included in the written end-of-year report. If the results are included, the date of the test(s) should be clearly indicated to parents as their children's learning is likely to have progressed further since then.

8. For schools that purchased standardised testing this year, will these schools be eligible to receive the annual grant for standardised testing?

Where a school purchased standardised testing material for use this year and had already made payment to their supplier, the Department will pay the grant in this school year. The materials should be kept for use in the 2020/2021 school year. No grant payment will issue to those schools in the 2020/2021 school year as the materials will already be available for use.

9. Given that schools do not have to wait for standardised test administration and results, can report cards be sent to parents sooner than in previous years?

It is advised that schools continue to issue end-of year reports to parents in June. This will enable schools to report, as far as is practicable, on children's engagement with work from their teacher(s) and to give feedback on work samples shared with their teacher online during the school closure period. As a matter of continued good practice, schools should forward reports to parents in a timely manner and at least two weeks before the end of June to allow parents to correspond with teachers about their children's report.

10. How can schools share children's completed report cards with their parents?

As in other years, schools may post or email children's report cards to their parents. If a school opts to send the reports by email, it should ensure that:

- parents have agreed in writing to receiving the report cards by email. This consent may already have been gathered by the school at the start of the year when requesting parental consent for other school practices, for example, using the child's photograph in school publications.
- the email addresses for all parents are correct.
- the completed report cards are emailed as flattened PDFs. A flattened PDF cannot normally be modified or edited. Please refer to User guide 2, Section 4, pp.8-12 for information about saving report cards.

Schools are required to ensure that the ways they gather, store and share information comply with all data protection legislation.