



The Valley School

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Assessment Policy

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ASSESSMENT

Aims

- To make significant gains in raising learner attainment
- For learners to take responsibility for their own learning
- To work towards all learners being independent learners
- To facilitate personalised learning
- For learners to be involved in the setting of their own learning goals
- For learners to be involved in their own assessment

A useful definition:

“Assessment for Learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for the use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there.” (Assessment Reform Group 2002)

Background

- Assessment is at the centre of The Valley School’s whole school developments and should be firmly embedded in all teaching areas. It allows for improvement in educational standards by ensuring that learners know what they are aiming for and are involved in their own learning and assessment. When Assessment is clearly evident in classroom practice, learners develop the skills necessary to take charge of their own learning. They will be able to assess the quality of their own work and assess the work of others. Learners will recognise aspects of their own work that need improvement and therefore set their own targets. Consequently, this leads to a happier, better behaved student.
- We must distance ourselves from seeing that learners are empty vessels waiting to be filled and instead recognise that they are active learners of many things. They learn in a variety of ways, through play and movement, through language and symbols, through emotions and through thinking. This is important as it emphasises the multi-sensory nature of good learning which leads to the use of varied styles and media in assessment. The person ‘assessing’ becomes student, peer, teaching assistant, real audience as well as teacher.

Why develop Assessment?

Research presented by Paul Black, Dylan William and their colleagues at King’s College, London (1998, 2002) found that learners’ learning is dramatically enhanced when:

- Learners know what it is that they are aiming for and
- When they play some part in deciding how to set about achieving their aims.

What is fundamental for Assessment to have any significant impact on learning and raising attainment is that Assessment needs to be actively pursued as a whole-school approach.

10 key principles of Assessment

- Is part of effective planning
- Focuses on how students learn
- Is central to classroom practice
- Is a key professional skill
- Is sensitive and constructive

- Fosters motivation
- Promotes understanding of goals and criteria
- Helps learners know how to improve
- Develops the capacity for self (and peer) assessment
- Recognises all educational achievement

POLICY CRITERIA TO BE ACCEPTED AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF ALL CLASSROOM PRACTICE:

Subject Area Schemes of Work

Schemes of Work should show how assessment is addressed in each subject area.

Each department should ensure at least an annual subject review for development in relation to Assessment. Department self-evaluation questions should include such questions as: How well do our assessment practices enable learners to understand their own learning goals and success criteria? How well do our assessment practices enable learners to set about their activities and evaluate their decision-making?

Schemes of work should therefore make it clear how learners will receive feedback, how they will take part in assessing their learning and how they will be helped to make further progress.

Learners need to be made aware of the 'how' of their learning as well as the 'what.' This has to be planned for.

Lesson objectives and learning outcomes

- Whenever possible, lessons should be objective-led.
- Share lesson objectives and learning outcomes with the class at some stage of each lesson.
- Ensure that everyone is aware of the difference between objectives and outcomes.
- A learning objective is what the teacher intends students to learn.
- A learning outcome is how achievement will be demonstrated by the learners, i.e. putting what they have learned into practice.
- All learning outcomes should be measurable.
- In good practice, lesson objectives could evolve from starters or better still from the learners themselves!
- Learning objectives are derived directly from teaching objectives and may be relevant for a given lesson or series of lessons.

Peer assessment/self-assessment, marking and feedback

- Learners should be given the opportunity and actively encouraged to look at each other's work and to suggest improvements. This skill needs to be taught to learners.
- Peer assessment can be effective because learners can clarify their own ideas and understanding of both the learning intention and the assessment criteria while looking at other learners' work.
- Self-assessment is an important tool for teachers. Once learners understand how to assess their current knowledge and gaps in it, they will have a clearer idea of how they can help themselves progress. Teachers should ensure that time is available in lessons for:
 - peer/self-assessment
 - reflection on their own work
 - time to work problems out

Reflection

Time needs to be built in to lesson design for reflection in order to allow learners to consolidate learning, consider what went well or could be improved on and what new targets need to be set. The term “ponder moments” sums up the reflection concept.

Sampling learners’ work

Year Heads should regularly sample learners’ work. This activity promotes sharing good practice, standardises marking and provides evidence of self-evaluation.

When work is displayed on boards, subject leads should be mindful of exhibiting a range of Levels.

Questioning techniques

- Whole-class and individualised questions need considering by teachers in advance of a lesson so that teachers gain information and learners are able to make the next step in their learning process.
- Bloom’s taxonomy is a useful basis for framing questions and ensuring the complete range of questions are asked, including higher-order questions such as evaluating and synthesising.
- High-level questioning can be used as a tool for assessment. Teachers should use questions to find out what learners know, understand and can do. Also, teachers can use questions to establish student misconceptions and therefore inform future lesson planning.
- Types of questions that are effective in providing assessment opportunities are:
 - How can we be sure that...?
 - What is the same and what is different about...?
 - Is it always true/false that...?
 - How would you explain...?
 - What does that tell us about...?
 - What is wrong with...?
 - Why is...true?

Poppins - sharing good practice

Year Heads should provide regular opportunities to observe/team teach/plan together on Assessment activities.

This part of the policy refers to the ‘Assessment of Learning (Marking policy)’

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

Different types of assessment

There are three key types of assessment:

- **Formative assessment** records development in progress, rather than completed development. It is an ongoing part of classroom activity, it is cumulative and provides information which informs teachers’ future planning. This forms part of ongoing teacher assessment in the class.
- **Summative assessment** summarises completed learning. This type of assessment usually takes place at the end of a period of teaching, such as at the end of a topic, the end of a year or the end of a key stage. Summative assessment statements may be compiled

using information from formative assessments in addition to tests taken at given points within students' school careers.

- **Assessment for learning**, an extension of formative assessment, is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there. It should be ongoing and part of effective learning and teaching. Assessment for learning uses assessment in the classroom to raise students' achievement. It is based on the principle that students will improve most if they understand the aim of their learning, where they are in relation to this aim and how they can achieve the aim.

Overarching Guiding Principles - Educating students on their learning journey

A good teacher establishes where the students are in their learning; identifies the learning destination; carefully plans the route; begins the learning journey; makes regular checks on progress on the way and makes adjustments to the course as conditions dictate.

Effective feedback and marking

- Marking must recognise, encourage and reward students' efforts and achievements and celebrate success over time. Positive behaviour points can be directly linked to students' work.
- Copies of rewarded work can be used for a subject portfolio, for display purposes or for evidence of levelling/grades for internal year team use.
- Marking books is an important part of student feedback but inordinate amounts of writing in books is not the most effective use of teacher time. It is more important that teachers show that they are helping students to develop and progress, whether that is through dialogue or written feedback, than that they are able to present beautifully detailed, marked books.

Marking is an essential tool that checks on the learning taken place. It should be clear, appropriate feedback about the strengths of their work and areas for development.

Professor John Hattie ('Visible Learning') argues that, "Formative assessment is vital in quality teaching and teachers should constantly be using evidence to reflect on the impact their practice had on their learners."

Hattie says, "Assessments are more for teachers than students; they are for you to find out what you taught well and to whom."

Hattie argues that this reflective, evidence-based mindset, "Captures the essence of what educational research concludes has a high-impact on achievement."

Hattie says, "Teaching is to D.I.E for:

- **D** Diagnose what they do/don't know,
- **I** Intervene,
- **E** Evaluate your impact. Repeat."

Marking enables teachers to make judgements about their students' attainment, keyed into national standards. It develops and refines teachers' understanding of progression in their subject, provides diagnostic information about the strengths and weaknesses of individual students and groups of students.

It enables teachers to track students' progress over time, informs curriculum planning and facilitates the setting of meaningful curricular targets that can be shared with students and parents. It promotes teaching that is matched to students' needs. **It is not a 'bolt-on' exercise.**

Targets can be set based on accurate diagnostic assessment of students' weaknesses. Progress must be made very clear to: the teacher, the students and external observers. Learners should be given constructive advice as to how to improve. They need information and guidance in order to plan the next steps in their learning. Aim for at least one specific action point as to how a student can improve his/her work. Comment on strengths of a particular piece of work. Build time in to lesson design for learners to improve their work.

No learners' work should be just tick marked.

Ticks that are given should clearly tie in with valid points connected to the question. Constructive comments are the most effective form of marking and allow learners to recognise their own strengths and weaknesses. Teachers should be aware of the impact that comments, marks and grades can have on learners' confidence and enthusiasm and should be as constructive as possible in the feedback that they give.

Comments should focus on the work rather than the student.

Marking should be timely to be of benefit to both the teacher and the learner.

How should we mark?

Learning Objective (LO)

- Every piece of learning should have a clear learning objective displayed in the book.
- For each lesson, the LO needs to be marked against to show how well the child has achieved it.

Success Criteria (SC)

- The SC is displayed in the book under the LO. It must be marked off to show what elements of it the child has achieved. This will help them to quickly identify which areas need some further development.

Symbols or stamps

Symbol – stamp or drawn	Meaning
Smiley Face 	Acknowledgement of effort
v (tick)	To be used where work is factually correct
 VF	Verbal feedback has been given. This stamp/symbol MUST be accompanied by a short summary of feedback eg Use Commas,
 I  S	Identification of Independent (I) or supported work (S)
Written feedback	This relates to developmental marking of students who can access written feedback

Sp	Spelling
P	Punctuation

Non-negotiables of feedback

- All learning must be responded to in time for the next lesson.
- All feedback must be accurate in order for the students to identify quickly between their strengths and areas for development.
- Not every mistake needs to be corrected (especially in independent writing), as this may be counter-productive to a child's motivation.
- Students are encouraged and reminded to self-correct.
- Staff should model presentation to students which we expect of them to be working towards – handwriting should aim to be joined, clear and legible. Any mistakes the adult makes, should be crossed out with one clear line.
- High standards of grammar and punctuation should be modelled and are encouraged and mistakes are corrected as appropriate to the child's literacy development.
- Staff should take care to use vocabulary and expressions the students will understand – be mindful of their needs, their reading ability and how much they can take in/dissect.

Types of feedback

At The Valley School, we ensure that students receive a 'Different for Different' approach to feedback.

We recognise children can be overwhelmed and discouraged by lots of written feedback around their learning and are therefore aiming to write less in order to maximise impact.

a) *On-going dialogue* – this is carried out during learning time and is led by the adults working in the classroom at the time (teacher and learning partner). It is the intervention which promotes the children to think deeper and/or to revisit misconceptions made. It takes place verbally and may happen during whole class, small group or 1:1 support. This is often considered the most valuable type of feedback and should be evident in all lessons. When significant 1:1 verbal feedback is given, a verbal feedback stamp or the code 'VF' should be written in green pen and initialled by the adult giving it. The adult may wish to include a short comment on what they spoke to the child about.

b) *Developmental feedback* – It is where staff will usually provide a comment at the end of the piece of work which is based against the success criteria. Stamps or symbols may be used to support this style of feedback as long as it is accessible to the pupil. There is no expectation of how often this will happen.

This feedback will come in the form of 3 developmental areas;

Reinforcement – this is where the child has not achieved one of the statements of the success criteria and need further time to ensure a secure understanding and address misconceptions. This

will take place in the following lesson. This may take the form of a written comment or marking for children to act on.

Extension/enrichment – this is where the child has shown they have achieved the success criteria well. Within the following lesson, it should be apparent that the learning has been moved on. This may be that a child is asked to complete a task independently or given an extending task.

Guided – this is where the children will be asked to work with an adult to look further into their learning. It may be the children need further scaffolding or modelling to support their development. This could be due to misunderstandings and needing to clarify misconceptions. However guided marking may be given to a child who you feel is ready to move on to the next challenge but you know will need support to do so.

NB/ Marking in English, sometimes requires additional comments. This is particularly true when students carry out more sustained pieces of writing where they have a very individual success criteria. Additional marks may be made in the margin to show the students on particular lines that they have miss-spelt a key word (sp) or have missed out punctuation (P).

c) **Self and peer-assessment** – on occasions, students may be asked to mark their own learning. This may happen as frequently as the teacher feels necessary however it is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure the assessment is correct and to use it to inform future lessons. Encouraging students to identify what has gone well with their learning as well as identifying their next steps is integral to their development. Students should regularly be asked to reflect on their learning. At times, this will be in more depth than at other times.

Time should be given for reflection on teacher feedback.

Unless students are provided with the time to look at marked work and make changes, then the time and effort invested in the practice by staff will be completely wasted.