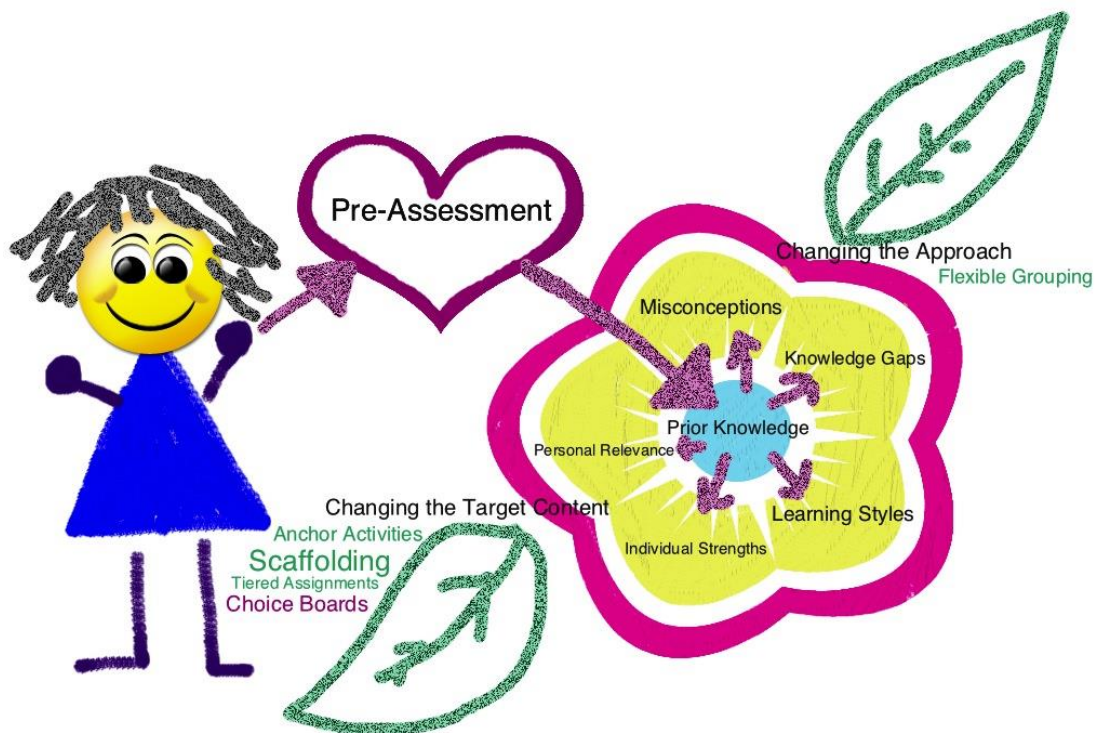


St Brigid's Primary School



ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING POLICY



Assessment for learning should be part of effective planning of teaching and learning

A teacher's planning should provide opportunities for both learner and teacher to obtain and use information about progress towards learning goals. It also has to be flexible to respond to initial and emerging ideas and skills. Planning should include strategies to ensure that learners understand the goals they are pursuing and the criteria that will be applied in assessing their work. How learners will receive feedback, how they will take part in assessing their learning and how they will be helped to make further progress should also be planned.

Assessment for learning should focus on how students learn

The process of learning has to be in the minds of both learner and teacher when assessment is planned and when the evidence is interpreted. Learners should become as aware of the 'how' of their learning as they are of the 'what'.

Assessment for learning should be recognised as central to classroom practice

Much of what teachers and learners do in classrooms can be described as assessment. That is, tasks and questions prompt learners to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills. What learners say and do is then observed and interpreted, and judgements are made about how learning can be improved. These assessment processes are an essential part of everyday classroom practice and involve both teachers and learners in reflection, dialogue and decision making.

Assessment for learning should be regarded as a key professional skill for teachers

Teachers require the professional knowledge and skills to: plan for assessment; observe learning; analyse and interpret evidence of learning; give feedback to learners and support learners in self-assessment. Teachers should be supported in developing these skills through initial and continuing professional development.

Assessment for learning should be sensitive and constructive because any assessment has an emotional impact

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 that focus on the work rather than the person are more constructive for both learning and motivation.

Assessment for learning should take account of the importance of learner motivation

Assessment that encourages learning fosters motivation by emphasising progress and achievement rather than failure. Comparison with others who have been more successful is unlikely to motivate learners. It can also lead to their withdrawing from the learning process in areas where they have been made to feel they are 'no good'. Motivation can be preserved and enhanced by assessment methods which protect the learner's autonomy, provide some choice and constructive feedback, and create opportunity for self-direction.

Assessment for learning should promote commitment to learning goals and a shared understanding of the criteria by which they are assessed

For effective learning to take place learners need to understand what it is they are trying to achieve - and want to achieve it. Understanding and commitment follows when learners have some part in deciding goals and identifying criteria for assessing progress. Communicating assessment criteria involves discussing them with learners using terms that they can understand, providing examples of how the criteria can be met in practice and engaging learners in peer and self-assessment.

Learners should receive constructive guidance about how to improve

Learners need information and guidance in order to plan the next steps in their learning. Teachers should:

- pinpoint the learner's strengths and advise on how to develop them
- be clear and constructive about any weaknesses and how they might be addressed
- provide opportunities for learners to improve upon their work.

Assessment for learning develops learners' capacity for self-assessment so that they can become reflective and self-managing

Independent learners have the ability to seek out and gain new skills, new knowledge and new understandings. They are able to engage in self-reflection and to identify the next steps in their learning. Teachers should equip learners with the desire and the capacity to take charge of their learning through developing the skills of self-assessment.

Assessment for learning should recognise the full range of achievements of all learners

Assessment for learning should be used to enhance all learners' opportunities to learn in all areas of educational activity. It should enable all learners to achieve their best and to have their efforts recognised.

Assessment for learning involves using assessment in the classroom to raise pupils' achievement. It is based on the idea that pupils 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 (or close the gap in their knowledge).

Effective assessment for learning happens all the time in the classroom. It involves:

- sharing learning goals with pupils
- helping pupils know and recognise the standards to aim for
- providing feedback that helps pupils to identify how to improve
- believing that every pupil can improve in comparison with previous achievements
- both the teacher and pupils reviewing and reflecting on pupils' performance and progress
- pupils learning self-assessment techniques to discover areas they need to improve
- recognising that both motivation and self-esteem, crucial for effective learning and progress, can be increased by effective assessment techniques.

Research has shown that being part of the review process raises standards and empowers pupils to take action to improve their performance.

Assessment for learning (formative assessment) is different from assessment of learning (summative assessment), which involves judging pupils' performance against national standards (level descriptions). Teachers often make these judgements at the end of a unit of work, year or key stage. Test results also describe pupils' performance in terms of levels. However, an important aspect of assessment for learning is the formative use of summative data.

Key characteristics of assessment for learning are:

- using effective questioning techniques
- using marking and feedback strategies
- sharing learning goals
- peer and self-assessment.

Using effective questioning techniques

High-level questioning can be used as a tool for assessment for learning. Teachers can:

- use questions to find out what pupils know, understand and can do
- analyse pupils' responses and their questions in order to find out what they know, understand and can do
- use questions to find out what pupils' specific misconceptions are in order to target teaching more effectively
- use pupils' questions to assess understanding.

Some questions are better than others at providing teachers with assessment opportunities. Changing the way a question is phrased can make a significant difference to:

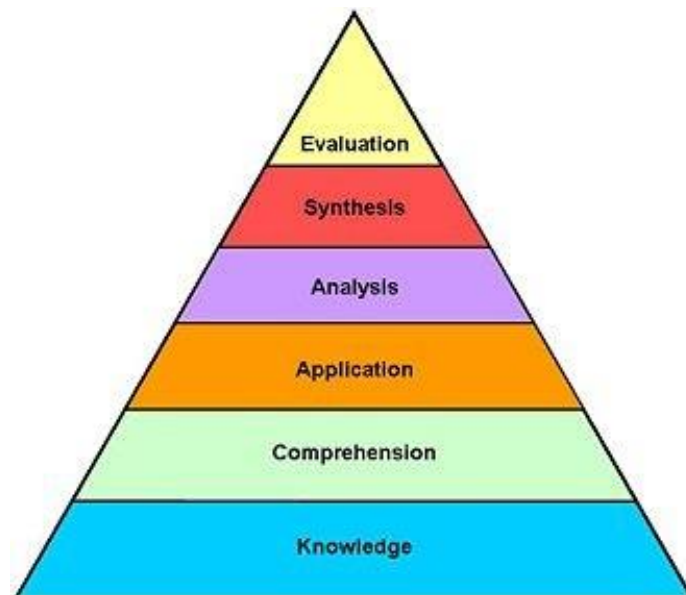
- the thought processes pupils need to go through

- the language demands made on pupils
- the extent to which pupils reveal their understanding
- the number of questions needed to make an assessment of pupils' current understanding.



Other types of questions that are also effective in providing assessment opportunities are:

- how can we be sure that...?
- what is the same and what is different about...?
- is it ever/always true/false that...?
- how do you...?
- how would you explain...?
- what does that tell us about...?
- what is wrong with...?
- why is...true?



Using marking and feedback strategies

Teachers recognise that feedback is an essential element in helping pupils improve. When using assessment for learning strategies, teachers need to move away from giving work marks out of 10 with comments that may not be related to the learning intention of the task (eg 'try harder' or 'join up your writing') and move towards giving feedback to help the pupil improve in the specific activity. This will help to close the learning gap and move pupils forward in their understanding.

It is important to establish trust between the teacher and the pupil before giving feedback.

Pupils benefit from opportunities for formal feedback through group and plenary sessions. Where this works well, there is a shift from teachers telling pupils what they have done wrong to pupils seeing for themselves what they need to do to improve and discussing it with the teacher. Giving feedback involves making time to talk to pupils and teaching them to be reflective about the learning objectives and about their work and responses.

Characteristics of effective feedback

Feedback is more effective if it focuses on the learning intention of the task and is given regularly while still relevant.

- Feedback is most effective when it confirms that pupils are on the right track and when it stimulates correction or improvement of a piece of work.
- Suggestions for improvement should act as 'scaffolding', ie pupils should be given as much help as they need to use their knowledge. They should not be given the complete solutions as soon as they get stuck and should learn to think things through for themselves.
- Pupils should be helped to find alternative solutions if simply repeating an explanation continues to lead to failure.
- Feedback on progress over a number of attempts is more effective than feedback on one attempt treated in isolation.
- The quality of dialogue in feedback is important and most research indicates that oral feedback is more effective than written feedback.
- Pupils need to have the skills to ask for help and the ethos of the school should encourage them to do so.

A culture of success should be promoted in which every pupil can make achievements by building on their previous performance rather than being compared with others. This is based on informing pupils about the strengths and weaknesses demonstrated in their work and giving feedback about what their next steps should be.

Sharing learning goals

Most schemes of work emphasise the need to clearly identify the learning objectives for a lesson. Teachers should ensure that pupils recognise the difference between the task and its learning intention (separating what they have to do from what they will learn).

Assessment criteria or learning outcomes are often defined in formal language that pupils may not understand. To involve pupils fully in their learning teachers should:

- explain clearly the reasons for the lesson or activity in terms of the learning objectives
- share the specific assessment criteria with pupils
- help pupils to understand what they have done well and what they need to develop.

Looking at a range of other pupils' responses to the task set can help pupils understand how to use the assessment criteria to assess their own learning.

Peer and self-assessment

Research has shown that pupils will achieve more if they are fully engaged in their own learning process. This means that if pupils know what they need to learn and why, and then actively assess their understanding, gaps in their own knowledge and areas they need to work on, they will achieve more than if they sit passively in a classroom working through exercises with no real comprehension either of the learning intention of the exercise or of why it might be important.

Peer assessment

Peer assessment can be effective because pupils can clarify their own ideas and understanding of both the learning intention and the assessment criteria while marking other pupils' work.

Peer assessment must be managed carefully. It is not for the purpose of ranking because if pupils compare themselves with others rather than their own previous attainment, those performing better than their peers will not be challenged and those performing worse will be demotivated.

Self-assessment

Self-assessment is an important tool for teachers. Once pupils understand how to assess their current knowledge and the gaps in it, they will have a clearer idea of how they can help themselves progress.

Teachers and pupils can set targets relating to specific goals rather than to national curriculum levels. The pupils will then be able to guide their own learning, with the

teacher providing help where necessary or appropriate. In addition, pupils will need to:

- reflect on their own work
- be supported to admit problems without risk to self-esteem
- be given time to work problems out.

Asking pupils to look at examples of other pupils' work that does and does not meet the assessment criteria can help them to understand what was required from a task and to assess the next steps they might need to take. Looking at different responses can also help pupils understand the different approaches they could have taken to the task. It is often helpful if the work is from pupils they do not know.

Our Commitment to Assessment for Learning:

1. To use effective questioning strategies
2. To share Learning Intentions and agree Success Criteria at the start of each lesson.
3. To encourage pupils to record 'WALT and WILF' in their books at the start of each new topic.
4. To mark work effectively – outlining strategies to help pupils improve.
5. To facilitate peer and self-assessment.

Policy Agreed: September 2022.

Policy to be Reviewed: September 2024

Signed: _____

Chair of Governors

Date: _____