

Effective assessment practice has the following characteristics:

- Assessment is built into school/subject/departmental planning and is integral to on-going learning and teaching
- The school's policy and practice achieves a balance between and an integration of assessment for learning and assessment of learning (see centre pages)
- Information from on-going teaching and learning is drawn together to make periodic summative judgements
- Teachers use a range of approaches to assessment, matching them to the pupil and the nature of the learning
- Information from assessment informs differentiation and is used to adjust/fine-tune planning to meet the needs of each pupil, supporting personalised learning
- Pupils know the learning objectives and success criteria; they use them to monitor their own achievement and therefore have ownership of their own learning; pupils are involved in the development of success criteria
- Pupils use learning objectives and success criteria to assess themselves and each other (self and peer assessment)
- Feedback from teachers/peers focuses on the learning objectives and success criteria
- Feedback to pupils focuses on improvement on previous best (i.e. ipsative assessment) through comments relating to success criteria
- Feedback to pupils focuses on achievement and identifies next steps in learning in ways that pupils can understand and act upon
- Target setting is informed by a range of evidence from learning and teaching, as well as school performance data, and in turn, targets inform curriculum planning
- Targets are set for each pupil; end of key stage targets inform the setting of annual targets for individual pupils, against which progress can be tracked
- Tracking systems are manageable, containing essential pupil information (e.g. end of key stage and annual targets plus annual teacher assessments and test results); tracking systems are sensitive to the variations in rates of learning over time, with longer-term pupil targets being reviewed annually
- Records are fit for purpose and are designed to suit the nature of the learning. They take account of the needs of the various audiences – teachers, next school, parents/carers
- Reports to parents/carers are evaluative, provide information about the child's progress since the last report and identify next steps
- Parents/carers and pupils have an opportunity to contribute and respond to the reporting process; information gained from each parent/carer contributes to the picture of their child
- Policy and practice for transition/transfer enables pupils to move smoothly from one class/phase/school to another, maintaining progress
- Staff have a clear view of their roles and responsibilities in relation to assessment
- Performance data is used for evaluation of learning and teaching and to inform target setting; all staff within school/department/key stage have appropriate understanding of the school's data and are involved in using it to evaluate learning and teaching and for target setting

Assessment practice is not effective when it has the following characteristics:

- Assessment practice is implemented without reference to planning, learning and teaching: it is a bolt-on extra
- Assessment is not an on-going process that is part of learning and teaching but is characterised by assessment that serves only a summative purpose (assessment of learning)
- Summative judgements are made from limited information, predominantly from tests
- Assessment is characterised by frequent use of tests (a series of mini-summative assessments)
- Assessment is used just for the periodic completion of records and is not used on an on-going basis to adjust the curriculum and planning in the light of pupils' learning and progress
- Learning objectives and success criteria are not shared with pupils; pupils have to guess the purposes of lessons and what constitutes success
- Pupils are not involved in their own assessment
- Feedback does not relate to success criteria but focuses on criteria other than those shared/developed with pupils, is not specific or is negative
- Feedback does not support improvement on previous best and next steps, but encourages comparisons between pupils
- Feedback is in terms of marks/grades/levels that do not relate to learning objectives/success criteria and do not identify next steps in learning
- Target setting is not informed by evidence or is informed only by reference to overall school/subject performance; the targets set do not inform subsequent curriculum planning
- Target setting conforms to statutory requirements but is not used to support curriculum planning or planning for each pupil
- Tracking systems are not in place or contain too much information and are unmanageable; tracking systems are based upon the expectation that pupil progress will be uniform over time and annual targets are not reviewed and adjusted in the light of pupils' progress over time
- Records are all formatted in a standard way and are not tailored to suit different types of learning, different subject content and different users
- Reports to parents/carers are merely descriptive
- Reports to parents/carers do not support dialogue
- Transition/transfer practice is not developed and does not support pupils in maintaining progress
- Roles and responsibilities of all staff in relation to assessment are not agreed and stated
- Performance data is analysed and used only by senior staff; all staff are not involved in interpreting data and do not contribute to evaluation and target setting

Web links

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| Assessment Reform Group | http://www.assessment-reform-group.org |
| The Association for Achievement and Improvement through Assessment (AAIA) | http://www.aaia.org.uk |
| QCA Qualifications and Curriculum Authority | http://www.qca.org.uk/ |
| Assessment is for learning | http://www.Itscotland.org.uk/assess/ |
| OFSTED Good Assessment in Secondary Schools | http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/docs/3205.pdf |
| Birmingham Assessment Unit | http://www.bgfl.org/services/assess |
| Birmingham Performance Data | http://www.bgfl.org/perform/ |
| DfES Schools Web Assessment | http://www.schoolsweb.gov.uk/locate/curriculum/assessment |
| PAT/Autumn Package | http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/performance/ap/ |



Effective Assessment Principles and Practice

Effective assessment makes a fundamental contribution to the five outcomes of Every Child Matters, particularly 'enjoy and achieve' and 'make a positive contribution'.

...assessment should provide the basis of informed teaching, helping pupils to overcome their difficulties and ensuring that teaching builds on what has been learned. It is also the means by which pupils understand what they have achieved and what they need to work on.

Inspecting Schools – Handbook for Inspecting Secondary Schools OFSTED 2003

Promoting children's learning is a principal aim of schools. Assessment lies at the heart of this process. It can provide a framework in which educational objectives may be set, and pupils' progress charted and expressed. It can yield a basis for planning the next educational steps in response to children's needs. By facilitating dialogue between teachers, it can enhance professional skills and help the school as a whole to strengthen learning across the curriculum and throughout its age range...it should be an integral part of the educational process...it incorporated systematically into teaching strategies and practices at all levels.

Report of the Task Group on Assessment and Testing 1988

Everyday assessment is the one thing that has been proven to raise educational standards the world over.

Dylan William in Assessment: Making a Difference BASS Primary Video 1999

- All pupils have an entitlement to be assessed, and the approaches used should be chosen to meet the needs of each pupil and the nature of the learning
- **Assessment should take account of the whole child and not focus only on academic achievement**
- Assessment should support the development of pupils as independent learners who have ownership of their learning
- **Assessment should be a positive experience for pupils, motivating them and contributing to their self-esteem**
- Pupils and parents/carers should be actively involved in the assessment process
- **The procedures for assessment should be manageable, informative and useful, i.e. support learning and teaching**
- Assessment should support rather than drive the curriculum
- **Assessment judgements should be based on as wide a range of evidence/information as possible in order that they are both valid and reliable**
- The information from assessment should primarily be for the purpose of supporting day-to-day learning, but over time should also generate information that supports the evaluation and planning of learning and teaching and the setting of targets for individual pupils and the whole school
- **All staff have a responsibility for assessment and should be involved in the development of practice across the school and the interpretation and use of the information generated by assessment**

From our review of international research literature, we are convinced that enhanced formative assessment would produce gains in pupil achievement, even when measured in such narrow terms as national curriculum tests and examinations.

Working inside the black box Paul Black et al 2002

Assessment for Learning 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.

Assessment for Learning – 10 principles Assessment Reform Group 2002

...the purpose of assessment is to improve standards, not merely to measure them.

Review of Secondary Education in England 1993–1997 OFSTED 1998



Purposes of assessment

Assessment serves a number of purposes. Formative assessment (assessment *for* learning) supports on-going learning while summative assessment (assessment *of* learning) is concerned with summarising assessments at particular points in time and supports a range of further purposes, including tracking pupil progress, reporting, evaluation, planning and target setting. Different types of assessment (written feedback, dialogue with pupils and questioning, observation of on-going activities and testing) can each contribute to both formative and summative assessment in different ways and over different time scales. The distinction between formative and summative assessment is therefore not clear-cut.

Learning objectives and success criteria

Learning objectives should be expressed in ways that pupils can understand and success criteria should define for pupils the ways in which they can successfully achieve the learning objectives. As pupils become familiar with working in this way, success criteria can be developed with the pupils. Learning objectives and success criteria relating to particular lessons or a series of lessons are the tools for recognising progress in the short term.

The achievement of learning objectives takes pupils towards the achievement of particular curriculum targets and levels over time. Levels are best used with pupils when looking at progress in the medium and longer term within the context of sharing the big picture, longer-term target setting and review, rather than from lesson to lesson or in relation to specific pieces of work.

Feedback – comments and marks

Evidence indicates that comment-only feedback (oral and written) is more effective than grades, levels and marks and more effective than marks and comments given together. In order for feedback to be formative, it must be expressed in a way that pupils can understand and pupils must have opportunities to act on the feedback they are given.

Using performance data – evaluation, planning and target setting

Performance data from both statutory assessments and examinations/qualifications, used in conjunction with evidence from on-going learning and teaching, should play a vital role in school self-evaluation, planning and target setting. Numerical school targets should be set with reference to individual pupil targets and with reference to trends, comparisons and predictions identified from the analysis of whole school data.

Staff with responsibility for managing performance data should share this with all staff (whole school, key stages, departments) at appropriate times, with opportunities for all staff to be engaged through discussion. For example, they can be involved in the analysis of most recent results or in identifying trends and patterns in pupil performance from value-added graphs for recent years, in order to identify and discuss issues and priorities for planning, learning and teaching.

Achieving a Balance

Integrating Assessment *for* Learning and Assessment *of* Learning

This diagram illustrates how the different types and purposes of assessment can be integrated over time in order to achieve a balance that:

- supports learning and teaching
- develops motivated and independent learners
- maximises the potential for raising standards

What does assessment look like in the short term?

Assessment *for* learning (formative assessment)

On-going learning in the classroom is supported by assessment that provides pupils with the information that they need in order to progress and teachers with the information that they need to support this learning. Assessment has a **formative purpose** and has the following characteristics:

Pupils should have an understanding of where they are going in their learning. This involves: effective use of learning objectives and success criteria in learning and teaching – developing success criteria with pupils – relating short-term learning objectives to the ‘big picture’ of the unit of work and/or longer-term targets.

Learning should be supported through feedback. This involves: providing oral and written comments relating directly to the success criteria – showing pupils where they need to go next in their learning, e.g. through ‘closing the gap’ prompts – providing feedback in ways that are understood by pupils so that it is formative – allowing time for pupils to respond to feedback.

Pupils should reflect on their own and other’s learning. This involves: pupils using the success criteria to assess themselves and each other, commenting on each other’s learning (self and peer assessment) – being asked to give indications of the extent to which they have progressed in their learning (what they have learnt) (e.g. oral and written comments, thumbs up, traffic lights) – pupils reflecting on what helps them learn (how they learn).

The learning environment has the following characteristics: pupils are supported in becoming independent learners taking responsibility for their own learning – there is a change in the relationship between teacher and learner, with learners and teachers becoming partners in learning – open questioning is used that encourages learners to think about and explore ideas – talk partners, group discussions and thinking time are used rather than hands up and quick response – concept/mind maps are used to help learners explore and develop their understanding – risk taking is encouraged and errors are seen by pupils not as something to be avoided but as a basis for exploring their understanding and developing their learning.

What does assessment look like in the medium term?

Assessment *of* learning (summative assessment) – Pupils’ progress is summarised and reviewed periodically in relation to curriculum targets/objectives, using evidence from on-going learning and teaching, for the purpose of **monitoring progress** against these targets/objectives.

Assessment *of* learning/assessment *for* learning – The evidence from these periodic summaries of progress is used for the purpose of **adjusting planning and teaching**, and serves a **formative purpose** when it feeds back into learning and teaching in the shorter term.

Assessment *for* learning – Periodically, the ‘big picture’ is shared with pupils for the purpose of providing further understanding of progress in their learning.

What does assessment look like in the longer term?

Assessment *of* learning (summative assessment)

In the longer term, pupil progress is summarised to meet a variety of purposes. Most obviously, it serves the purposes of:

- Reporting to parents/carers
- Supporting transition to next teacher/next school
- Certification/accreditation of learning, where summative assessment is through examinations/qualifications

Summative assessment also serves the purposes of **evaluation, planning and target setting**:

End of year/end of key stage assessments provide information to support the setting of targets. Progress can be evaluated against end of year/end of key stage pupil targets set previously, with these targets adjusted where appropriate. This in turn informs medium-term planning for the following year, and learning and teaching in the short term.

Whole school performance data (either generated within the school or externally provided, e.g. PANDA) is used for the purpose of **evaluation** to address the questions:

- How well are we doing?
- How do we compare with similar schools?
- What are the curriculum and learning and teaching issues indicated by the performance data?

The outcomes of this evaluation feed back into target setting, medium-term planning, and into learning and teaching in the short term.

Whole school policy

A school policy for assessment should primarily support the development of effective assessment *for* learning, but also support the development of other key features of assessment practice, including recording, reporting, the management of statutory assessments and examinations, and the use of summative assessment for evaluation, planning and target setting. Underpinning the policy should be the concept that effective assessment is the responsibility of each teacher. At the same time specific roles and responsibilities should be clear. The roles of primary and secondary assessment co-ordinators are explored in the following publications:

http://www.aiaa.org.uk/pdf/role_of_primary_assessment_coordinator.pdf

http://www.aiaa.org.uk/pdf/role_of_secondary_assessment_coordinator.pdf

Impact on the learner

Assessment *for* learning is effective because it gives pupils ownership of their learning, helping them to become independent and motivated and raising self-esteem. In doing this, it makes an important contribution to personalised learning. Pupils are able to understand progress in terms of improvement on previous best rather than as competition with others.

Making judgements

Teachers make daily judgements about pupils’ progress as part of on-going learning and teaching. In the short to medium term, these assessments are part of assessment *for* learning but also provide evidence of whether pupils are achieving learning objectives and curriculum targets. In the longer term these assessments can be summarised to provide evidence for whether pupils have achieved end of year and end of key stage targets. Judgements made from on-going teacher assessments are based upon a rich source of evidence from pupils’ performance over time and over a range of contexts. End of year tests provide additional indicators of performance and can contribute to the summative teacher assessments made in the longer term. Test results are based upon a snapshot of pupils’ performance and can be limited in terms of curriculum coverage. Test results should therefore contribute to and not dictate the teacher assessments that are made.

Recording and monitoring progress

Recording should be manageable and appropriate to the purpose that it is serving. In the short and medium terms, evidence of learning will be the work that pupils are producing or what they are doing, informal jottings, more formal records that teachers keep to document learning, together with the knowledge of pupils’ progress that teachers carry in their heads. In the longer term, key information only should be recorded in a tracking system (e.g. end of year level judgements recorded against end of year targets set in the previous autumn term).

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