



## **Assessment at Moss Hey Primary School: The what, why and how of effective assessment**

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## **Assessment at Moss Hey Primary School: The what, why and how of effective assessment**

### **Why do we need a new assessment system?**

Following the introduction of a new National Curriculum framework from September 2014, the government decided to remove level descriptors, which were described as being an artificially imposed measure of pupil progress.

The Department for Education has said that levels did not help parents to understand how far their child was improving. It is believed that levels were too simplistic; a child could have serious gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills and yet still be claimed to broadly fit a level descriptor. This encouraged children to move on to new curriculum content without secure grasp of key areas of a subject.

To ensure secure understanding of key ideas and essential knowledge, teachers need to engage with the detail of learning. To know that a child has understood what a metaphor is, or understands the equals sign, is the real stuff of education, not whether a child is 'Level 3a'. Levels are highly general. Parents need more detail of the strengths and weaknesses of each child in order to better support the child at home.

With levels removed and the focus now on raising the achievement of every pupil, "it will be for schools to decide how they assess pupils' progress"

The old and new curriculum has different content. Many of the objectives in the old curriculum have shifted to lower year groups in the new, more rigorous curriculum. There is a focus on 'fewer things in greater depth'. This means it is not possible to have an exact correlation between a level that was the outcome of the old National Curriculum assessment and the requirements new National Curriculum. We need a shift in thinking, and in the way we assess our children's outcomes.

We are now assessing children against the new framework, one for which they may have not been taught the previous years' objectives and content, so we are in a time of transition between old and new sets of data. In order to be 'secondary ready' children need to meet the required end of Key Stage 2 expectations; this is broken down into key outcomes for each curriculum year. We use the National Curriculum objectives to assess outcomes for children at the end of each curriculum year

### **What are the markers of an effective assessment system?**

- It will give reliable information to parents about how their child, and their child's school, is performing
- It will allow meaningful tracking of pupils towards end of key stage expectations in the new curriculum, including regular feedback to parents.
- It will provide information which is transferable and easily understood and covers both qualitative and quantitative assessment.
- It will differentiate attainment between pupils of different abilities, giving early recognition of pupils who are falling behind and those who are excelling.
- It will be reliable and free from bias.
- It will make sure the school is keeping up with external best practice and innovation

### **What are the markers for effective teaching and assessing within the classroom?**

Teachers should make their expectations of what is to be learned in lessons very clear and be explicit about how these small steps contributes to the journey towards the end of year standard.

When they do this successfully they focus on key aspects of the specific tasks set and share with learners the knowledge of pre-determined standards within which this learning sits.

When children know how to be successful and are provided with models and exemplars that clearly illustrate processes that support the task, they are more likely to respond in ways that make their progress visible, and facilitates reliable assessment.

Regular, planned learning conversations between teacher and learner or learner and learner provide a rich source of evidence of learning that cannot be gathered in any other way more effectively. Teachers and learners should have opportunities planned by and for them that enable them to use questioning effectively, with real purpose, and to seek and give appropriate feedback to each other so that together they can identify the next steps in their learning journeys.

The quality of the questioning, together with the nature and relevance of the independent tasks in which pupils are asked to engage, should be characterised by a culture of collaborative enquiry in which the communication of ideas is central to success.

Teachers will be:

- planning very focused learning opportunities that give pupils many opportunities to clearly demonstrate their understanding of steps in their learning, and to use it in a range of contexts
- managing questioning in ways that engage all learners in responses that indicate the level of their understanding and provide information

- about next steps
- seeking negative and positive impact of the learning opportunities they provide
- giving feedback orally and in written form that demands thought and action of the learner
- praising and encouraging effort rather than ability, relating feedback specific to work or behaviour
- intervening in a timely and appropriate manner that does not interrupt the independent learning but is finely judged in order to take learning forward at key points.

And learners will be:

- focused on the processes involved in learning
- able to articulate their successes and their difficulties in fully understanding the intended learning
- evaluating their own and others' work against known criteria
- clearly demonstrating the degree of mastery with reference to known standards
- making improvements in response to suggestions given
- helping each other and helping adults know how best to help them

### **How can pupils' attainment and progress be assessed without levels?**

In the short-term, assessment serves its primary, formative purpose, supporting learning as it happens moment by moment, lesson by lesson.

Over time, as pupils learn, assessment evidence accumulates that provides a wealth of information that can be used in the medium term to show both attainment and progress referenced to the learning outcomes in teacher planning.

Assessment begins to have a summative purpose, where the cumulative evidence from on-going learning provides information that indicates the extent to which pupils are attaining against planned learning outcomes and making the expected progress embedded in teacher planning.

This evidence can be quantified in terms of the proportions of pupils achieving, exceeding or working towards planned outcomes.

This evidence can also serve a formative purpose, for example when work is reviewed with individual pupils, so that they have an understanding of how they are progressing over time, i.e. against the 'big picture'.

In the longer term, cumulative evidence is used for a summative purpose to judge attainment and progress in relation to key indicators/aspects of the curriculum, at the end of year or the end of a key stage. Once again it can be quantified in terms of the proportions of pupils achieving, exceeding or working towards key aspects of the curriculum.

## **What does progress mean in relation to the new National Curriculum and Programmes of Study?**

What does progress look like when assessing under the new Programmes of Study? As there are no longer levels and point scores, the progress that pupils have made at any point in time has to be related to their learning outcomes expressed in curriculum terms at previous points in time.

As assessment information accumulates, it will show for individual pupils, classes, groups and year groups their current attainment in relation to attainment at previous points in the year, at the end of previous years and at the end of previous key stages.

The extent to which this represents expected progress, greater than expected progress or less than expected progress will depend upon the pitch of expectations in your planning year on year and the teaching and learning that comes from this. This can be related directly to the evidence of pupils' learning in their work, teachers' notes and annotated planning, and teachers' knowledge of the pupils, making the "very direct and clear relationship between 'that which is to be taught and learned' and assessment" as proposed by the Expert Panel for the National Curriculum Review.

## **How can attainment and progress be recorded and tracked?**

Assessment is the knowing and understanding of learning, a continual process involving both learners and teachers. As part of this process, teachers need to analyse and record key pieces of assessment information and utilise these to make informed decisions about how to support on-going learning and development. The base for collection of assessment evidence should be as wide as possible to provide the best foundation for judgements.

Recording, with its documentation, is a by-product of the process reflecting the assessments made, but is not an assessment in itself. Its purpose is to provide a clear understanding of the knowledge and understanding of the pupil as a learner; it supports the knowledge but does not replace it; it assists in recalling and remembering information, but is not a substitute for it. Any recording and documentation should never be at the expense of interaction.

How and when evidence of learning is recorded should be a whole school decision. There are no set formulae. Scribbled notes, post its, photographs and longer narrative all have their place but this recording is not the assessment itself but merely a means to help the adults recall or remember what they know. Assessment is the "accurate and usable knowing and understanding of children, not the quantity or form of recorded information." (Dubiel 2014)

## **A successful recording system should:**

- be simple and easily understood by other people than the class teacher
- relate to key indicators about attainment and progress

- use language that is sensitive to those whose attainment is currently below the age related expectation.

**Tracking** generally refers to a system of recording what pupils have learnt at key points in time, for example a record of key skills acquired by pupils.

### **Why track?**

Tracking can serve a number of purposes. Primarily it should serve the learner by ensuring that appropriate intervention can take place, and other purposes should not work against these.

Purposes can include:

- enabling teachers to see the journey of a child's learning
- helping teachers to plan appropriate learning experiences that will meet their children's needs
- identifying pupils who are making slow progress, so that action may be taken
- providing the school leadership team with information about the progress pupils are making across the school
- providing the school leadership team with information about whether pupils are meeting age-related expectations and are 'on track' to meet expected end of key stage outcomes used for accountability
- providing the school leadership team with information about whether pupils are on track to meet outcomes based on high expectations.

### **The key factors in deciding which tracking system to use are:**

- whether the tracking system will adequately serve all the purposes required
- whether the tracking system supports or in any way contradicts or undermines the learning and assessment ethos or curriculum design of the school.

Some further questions for school leaders to consider regarding tracking pupil progress, regardless of the system used:

- How frequently do we want to assess pupils' learning for the purpose of tracking?
- Do we want to use teacher assessment, based on a broad range of evidence drawn from rich classroom experiences, or tests/structured tasks, or a mixture of both? If the latter, it must be remembered that variations in results may arise from how the pupil relates to the specific task. The broader the range of assessment evidence, the more valid the judgements will be.
- Are we taking a 'best fit' view of the pupil's learning across the whole subject domain, or looking more specifically at the curriculum areas covered since the last key assessment point?

### **Tracking progress over time**

We will use the following language:

- Emerging
- Developing
- Secure, reflecting that age-related objectives have been achieved
- Exceeding, showing that age-related objectives have been achieved and the child is able to apply these skills and this knowledge independently, consistently and across subjects.

### **More able children**

For children who have securely met the end of year objectives they will be assessed as exceeding objectives for their age group. Rather than moving onto the next year's curriculum these children will work on developing their knowledge through the application of skills in different contexts – they will be deepening their learning.

### **How will we report to parents in a way that is clear and accessible?**

Ofsted states that: *“Inspectors will consider whether reports help parents to understand how well their children are doing in relation to any standards expected and how they can improve.”*

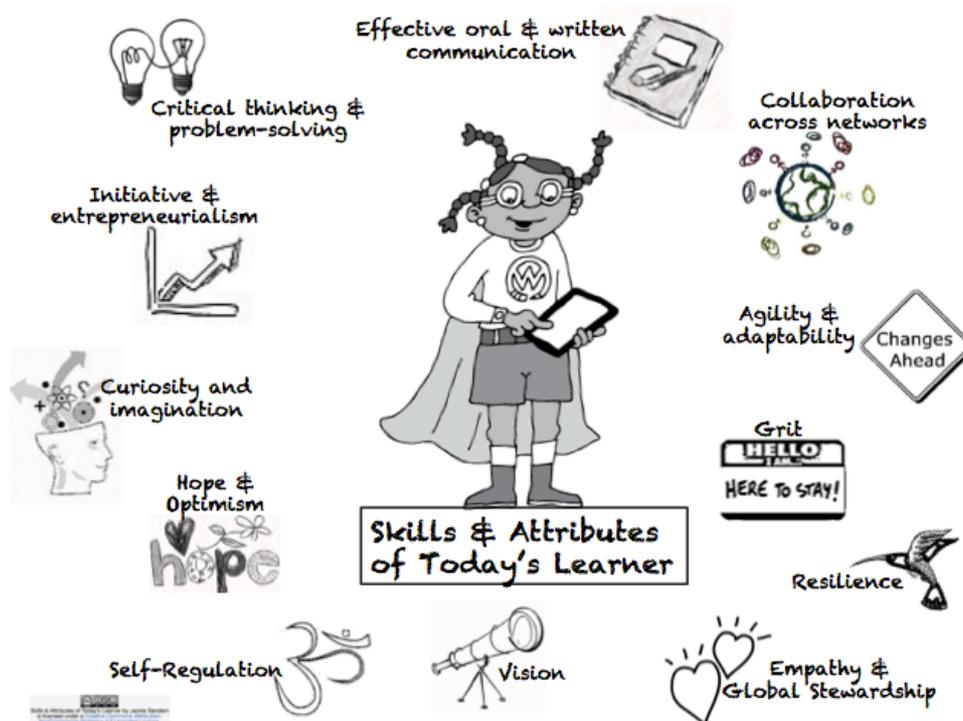
A key criterion for school information systems is that they should provide useful information for reporting to parents and carers.

Reports to parents and carers should provide a rich, qualitative profile of what has been achieved to date and indicate next steps. They should:

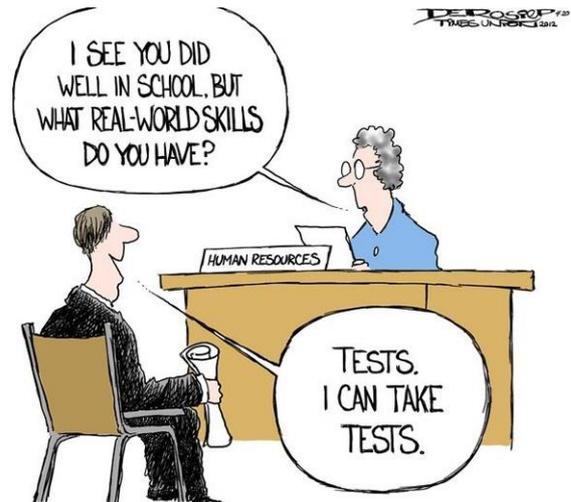
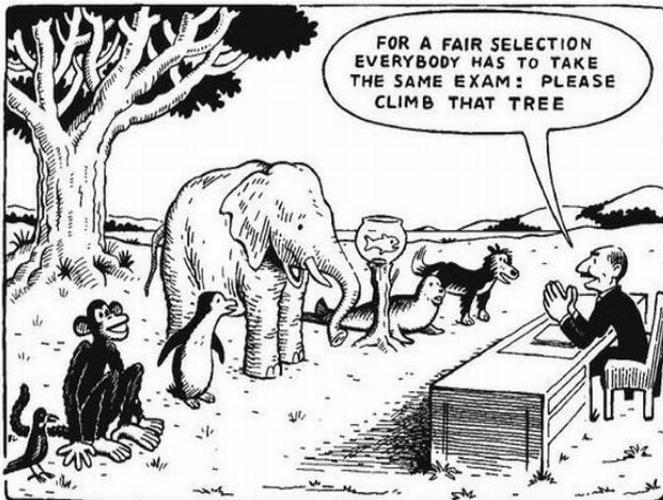
- use clear, jargon free language to provide information about attainment compared with national expectations
- indicate whether the pupil is working well within/slightly below the expected range for his/her chronological age, or that he/she has a strong understanding of the concepts taught in the year and has been working on extension activities to deepen his/her knowledge in preparation for the next phase.
- provide examples of particular areas of success, current foci and indications of next steps.
- include realistic, achievable learning targets which parents/carers can both understand and support; these targets are monitored and reviewed regularly;
- promote engagement in their child's learning with an opportunity for dialogue that involves themselves, staff and the pupil
- initiate discussion as to the nature of their support throughout the year so that achievement is celebrated and action taken appropriately where learning is less secure.

## What are our overarching assessment principles here at Moss Hey?

- The primary objective of our assessment system is to improve student's learning.
- It will recognise and celebrate learning as a journey, not a race over hurdles to the finishing line
- It will be underpinned by the belief that all learners have the potential to achieve and that effort, resilience and practice are essential for success. Teachers at Moss Hey have the mindset, 'What do I need to do next to enable a child in my class to achieve?'
- That our system needs to be rigorous and fully accountable.
- At Moss Hey we believe that to fully understand where a child is, and what their next steps are, we need a rounded view of them as pupils, as learners, as active participants in all aspects of school life.



- At Moss Hey, we understand that there absolutely is a time and a place for formal tests and formal assessments; but that these must be part of a rich and varied approach to ensure that every teacher creates a detailed picture of their pupils, tracking from September to July their progress and achievement.
- That it will generate feedback for both learners and teachers that inspires improvement and indicates how this can be realized
- That it will result in consistent, accurate information that is meaningful and useful for pupils, parents, teachers, school leaders and governors



**We know that we need to be very good at assessing children's learning:**

- So that we can identify next steps
- So that we have a very clear picture of what children have learned
- So that we can report to parents the progress and attainment of pupils, helping parents to understand how well their children are doing in relation to standards expected.
- So that teachers receiving a class in September have a very clear and trusted picture of what their class can (and cannot) do
- So that we ensure that pupils are ready for, and perform well in, the National tests at Years 2 and 6.

**We know that these assessments need to be simple, accessible, and meaningful:**

- So that we can respond quickly to the information within these assessments; pinpointing gaps in learning and to show that we have done something about it
- So that the journey towards meeting Year Group expectations is clear over time

**We know that this range of assessments needs to provide honest and rigorous information:**

- So when we have half termly Pupil Progress Meetings the conversations can be immediately focussed on the progress and achievement of individuals
- So that there is a sense of accountability, and that every teacher knows the essential part they play within the primary journey
- So that there is a high level of trust between the leadership and staff, and staff themselves
- So that when external scrutiny takes place, everyone is confident that the information provided is absolutely secure with judgements that are based on facts

**We know that at Moss Hey, the Leadership Team must ensure:**

- That there is a suitably broad and balanced curriculum and the system of assessment sets out what pupils are expected to know, understand and do, and by when
- The assessment system is linked to the school's curriculum
- Information about what is taught in the curriculum is shared with parents and carers, including by meeting the legal requirement to make curriculum information available on the school's website
- The school uses detailed formative and summative assessment to ensure that pupils, teachers and parents know if pupils are achieving the expected standard or if they need to catch up
- Assessment information, including test results, are used by leaders and governors to improve teaching and the curriculum for all pupils.
- The accuracy of assessment and how this is used to modify teaching so that pupils achieve the expected standards by the end of year or key stage
- Assessment draws on a range of evidence of what pupils know, understand and can do in the different aspects of subjects in the curriculum, for example, through regular testing
- Teachers make consistent judgements and share them with each other
- Leaders ensure the accuracy of assessment through internal and external standardisation and moderation
- Governors assure themselves of the rigour of the assessment process
- Schools adopt the best practice of working together to moderate assessment for year groups and the end of key stages, and to develop common understanding of attainment and share records at points of transfer (within the context of the revised common transfer file).

**We know the range of assessment evidence we draw upon to form valid and true judgements needs to be wide and varied.**

*“Research evidence indicates that when formative assessment practices are integrated into the minute by minute, day-by-day classroom activities of teachers, substantial increases in pupil achievement are possible, even when the outcomes are measured with externally mandated standardised tests”*

[Embedded Formative Assessment Dylan Wiliam: 2011]

**However, we also understand that there is no need to assess everything within the curriculum, just key concepts.**

- Teachers are experts at assessment - assessment will be effectively used to ensure the correct scaffolding is built into lessons to ensure all

children achieve.

- We need to ask probing questions of pupils, helping to gain an understanding of how far a child has progressed in understanding essential ideas, building core knowledge and key abilities.
- Pupils need to produce things – write things down, make statements and so on – which give teachers insights into how their thinking is building. When a child writes something down, it becomes an external representation of the way they think – then, they can think about their own thinking and a teacher can better see the way in which pupils are thinking.
- There needs to be more assessment, not less, but all directed and focussed towards enhanced learning.

**The Foundation Stage Assessment Practices that you will clearly see are:**

- Group tick lists clearly linked to lesson plans
- Maths cohort grids
- Assessment booklets
- Objective led planning sheets with notes and comments
- Verbal feedback from all adults
- Verbal feedback from children
- Spot assessments, created by the teacher
- Communication cohort grids
- Independent writing books
- Maths books
- Phonics books
- Phonics record sheets
- Writing, maths, reading groups changing regularly in a dynamic way to reflect the progress of children
- High frequency word record sheets
- Guided reading record sheets
- Individual reading record sheets
- Intervention record book
- Quality and quantity of work in books
- Marking and feedback, and responses (mainly verbal) during 'fixit' time
- Planning – medium term to ensure coverage, short term that is flexible, adaptable and reactive.
- Clear evidence that curriculum expectations are very well known to teacher and additional adults – integral part of the planning, very visible within the classroom

**The Year 1 Assessment Practices that you will clearly see are:**

- Quality and quantity of work in books
- Marking and feedback, and responses during 'fixit' time
- Planning – medium term to ensure coverage, short term planning that is flexible, adaptable and reactive
- Daily maths assessment sheet for 4 differentiated maths groups for Number and measurement
- Daily phonics assessment for 2 groups
- Reading-Whole class band record, guided reading band record, guided reading sheets per band, reading individual sheet with objectives on top for TA hand over
- Spelling test scores sheet
- Maths sheet with objectives that need more practise
- Omitting apostrophe class sheet
- Handwriting class sheet
- Cohort sheet with phonics sounds, HF words reading and writing, writing days of the week etc.
- Writing assessment sheet e.g. finger spaces, reading work back etc.
- Science coverage

**The Year 2 Assessment Practices that you will clearly see are:**

- Quality and quantity of work in books
- Marking and feedback, and responses during 'fixit' time
- Planning – medium term to ensure coverage, short term planning that is flexible, adaptable and reactive
- Maths weekly plan assessment chart coloured Green/blue/E for exceeding
- Maths end of week coverage sheet and assessment (coloured as above)
- Maths coverage tick sheet (monkey format)
- Optional SAT level 2 and 3 with analysis grid of scores
- Abacus test scores and question grid for Autumn
- Times tables test scores
- Clock face test sheet
- Spellings of numbers 1-100
- Reading AF grids
- Individual book band sheet

**The Year 3 Assessment Practices that you will clearly see are:**

- Quality and quantity of work in books
- Marking and feedback, and responses during 'fixit' time

- Planning – medium term to ensure coverage, short term planning that is flexible, adaptable and reactive
- Times tables check sheets
- Individual tables score spread sheet
- Mental maths test
- Reading book band check lists
- Guided reading comment sheets- AF
- Year 3 Spelling test check lists
- Sentence types sheet
- End of year expectation sheet highlighted for coverage
- Mini unit scores e.g. Shape
- 'Old' APP Grid for writing for each child

**The Year 4 Assessment Practices that you will clearly see are:**

- Quality and quantity of work in books
- Marking and feedback, and responses during 'fixit' time
- Planning – medium term to ensure coverage, short term planning that is flexible, adaptable and reactive
- Responses to a range of high quality and high challenge questions
- Times tables check sheets
- Speed tables score sheets
- Reading book band check lists
- Guided reading book band check lists
- Guided reading comment sheets
- Spelling test check lists
- Spot assessments, created by the teacher at the end of a unit or mini unit
- Writing targets based on 'old' APP expectations in the form of 'I can' statements.
- Half termly maths assessments with detailed analysis
- SATs papers
- Writing, maths and reading groups adjusted at least termly as a result of teacher knowledge backed up by assessments
- Dimensions tracking grids

**The Year 5 Assessment Practices that you will clearly see are:**

- Quality and quantity of work in books
- Marking and feedback, and responses during 'fixit' time
- Planning – medium term to ensure coverage, short term planning that is flexible, adaptable and reactive
- Responses to a range of high quality and high challenge questions

- Times tables check sheets
- Speed tables score sheets
- Reading book band check lists
- Guided reading book band check lists
- Guided reading comment sheets
- Spelling test check lists
- Spot assessments, created by the teacher at the end of a unit or mini unit
- Writing targets based on 'old' APP expectations in the form of 'I can' statements.
- Half termly maths assessments with detailed analysis
- SATs papers
- Writing, maths and reading groups adjusted at least termly as a result of teacher knowledge backed up by assessments

**The Year 6 Assessment Practices that you will clearly see are:**

- Quality and quantity of work in books
- Marking and feedback, and responses during 'fixit' time
- Planning – medium term to ensure coverage, short term planning that is flexible, adaptable and reactive
- Responses to a range of high quality and high challenge questions
- Planning based on previous lessons and evidence in books from independent activity
- Times tables check sheets
- Speed tables score sheets
- Reading book band check lists
- Guided reading book band check lists
- Guided reading comment sheets
- Spelling test check lists
- Spot assessments, created by the teacher at the end of a unit or mini unit
- Writing targets based on 'old' APP expectations in the form of 'I can' statements.
- Half termly maths assessments with detailed analysis
- SATs papers
- Writing, maths and reading groups adjusted at least termly as a result of teacher knowledge backed up by assessments

## **So what does all this look like in practice?**

- Half termly pupil progress meetings. One half term with a focus on record keeping, books/marking/feedback; a dialogue with teachers about their teaching, about how they are meeting the needs of their pupils, about their practice on a daily basis. Look at the evidence that teachers use to make judgements about where children are at and what their next steps need to be. The next half term looking at numbers of pupils moving from emerging to meeting/meeting to exceeding etc; a focus more on tracking and target setting.
- Simple spreadsheets have been created to show the progress towards meeting year group expectations.
- Autumn and Spring parents evenings, with a focus on a) what has been taught b) what the pupil can do – their successes c) the areas they struggle with – the areas for focus d) their predicted progress towards meeting year group expectations, with evidence to back up this prediction.
- Reports to parents.
- Termly reports to governors

## **And finally:**

***You don't fatten a pig by weighing it, you fatten a pig by feeding it....by teaching high quality lessons, with high levels of challenge, CONSISTENTLY THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE SCHOOL , progress and attainment should take care of itself.***