Assessment at Mersey Park Primary School

Introduction

At Mersey Park Primary School, we believe that effective assessment provides information to improve teaching and learning. To do this in our school, we undertake two different but complementary types of assessment: assessment for learning and assessment of learning.

Assessment for learning (formative assessment) involves the use of assessment in the classroom to raise pupil 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 this aim (i.e. to close the gap in their knowledge). Put simply, it should tell us what they can do and what progress they have made.

Assessment of learning (summative assessment) involves judging pupils' performance against national standards. Teachers may make these judgements at the end of a unit of work, half term or a term, of a year, or of a key stage. It can provide reliable information over time and is comparable.

We give our children regular feedback on their learning so that they understand what it is that they need to do better. Research has shown that their involvement in the review process raises standards, and that it empowers pupils to take action towards improving their performance.

Our Principles of Assessment

Principle 1 – Staff development should include assessment.

- All those involved in the assessment of pupils must be competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities.

Principle 2 – Assessment is at the heart of teaching and learning.

- Assessment provides evidence to guide teaching and learning.

- Assessment provides the opportunity for pupils to demonstrate and review their progress.

Principle 3 – Assessment is fair.

- Assessment is inclusive of all abilities.

- Assessment is free from bias towards factors that are not relevant to what the assessment intends to address.

Principle 4 – Assessment is honest.

- Assessment outcomes are used in ways that minimise undesirable effects.

- Assessment outcomes are conveyed in open, honest and transparent ways to assist pupils with their learning.

- Assessment judgements are moderated by experienced professionals to ensure their accuracy.

Principle 5 – Assessment is ambitious.

- Assessment places achievement in context against nationally standardised criteria and expected standards.

- Assessment embodies, through objective criteria, a pathway of progress and development for every child.

- Assessment objectives set high expectations for learners.

Principle 6 – Assessment is appropriate.

- The purpose of any assessment process should be clearly stated.

- Conclusions regarding pupil achievement are valid when the assessment method is appropriate (to age, to the task and to the desired feedback information).

- Assessment should draw on a wide range of evidence to provide a complete picture of pupil achievement.

- Assessment should demand no more procedures of records than that which are practically required to allow pupils, their parents and teachers to plan future learning.

Principle 7- Assessment is consistent.

- Judgements are formed according to common principles.

- The results are readily understandable by third parties.

- A school's results are capable of comparison with other schools, both local and nationally.

Principle 8 – Assessment outcomes provide meaningful and understandable information for:

- Pupils in developing their learning.

- Parents in supporting children with their learning.

- Teachers in planning teaching and learning.

- Assessment must provide information that justifies the time spent.

- School leaders and governors in planning and allocating resources.

- Government and agents of government.

Principle 9 – Timely feedback that promotes learning and facilitates improvement should be an integral part of the assessment process.

- Pupils are entitled to feedback on submitted formative assessment tasks, and on summative tasks, where appropriate. The nature, extent and timing of feedback for each assessment task should be made clear to students in advance.

Target-setting

We set targets in Mathematics and English for all our children, during each academic year based on prior learning outcomes. We communicate these to parents at home/school discussion meetings and in end of year reports. We regularly review the progress of each child, each half term and track progress towards targets. Pupils have target sheets in core subject books and understand what they are working towards in lessons. Targets are taken from National Curriculum statements and broken down into measurable steps.

In school we receive many forms of summative assessment data: Sonar; Edsential school and local assessment data, Inspection Data Summary Report (IDSR) and Fischer Family Trust (FFT) data. We analyse all this information and translate it into plans and actions to affect the teaching and learning in the classroom

Assessments in School

The teachers in school are continuously assessing children's knowledge and understanding. They use this information to plan appropriate work for the children. They adapt their teaching to meet their needs.

At the end of units of work, teachers assess the children with tests. Some of these are commercially produced tests and some are assessments we have created to match our curriculum.

In literacy, we use Little Wandle phonics checks in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

In reading, the children are assessed using NTS assessments at the end of each term in Years 3, 4 and 5. In Year 1 they are assessed through small group guided reading. The NTS assessment results are analysed to find areas that need further teaching. In Year 2 and 6 the children use past SAT papers, which are also analysed.

In maths, the children complete number facts assessments as a baseline and then at the end of each term. They also complete a times tables assessment in Year 2 to Year 6. Pre and Post assessments are completed by all pupils prior to and at the end of each new maths topic. The children also complete end of term NTS maths assessments in Year 1,3,4 and 5.

All of these assessments are analysed in order to inform future teaching.

In science and foundation subjects we have created assessments to match the key knowledge taught. They are closely matched to our knowledge organisers. Once completed, these assessments are analysed by subject leaders and any necessary actions are shared with all teachers.

Key questions are written on our 'Knowledge Box' cards for each classroom to keep knowledge up to date.

Sometimes, more specific tests are used for diagnostic purposes with individuals or small groups e.g. YARC and NGRT.

Statutory Assessments

Reception Baseline Assessment

When children start Foundation 2, they complete a national reception baseline assessment within the first 6 weeks. The purpose of the assessment is to provide the starting point for a progress measure that will help parents understand how school supports their pupils to progress between Reception and Year 6. The RBA is a short, interactive and practical assessment of the child's early literacy, communication, language and mathematics skills when they begin school, using materials that most children of Reception age will be familiar with.

Phonics Screening Check

At the end of Year 1 the pupils complete a phonics check.

The phonics screening check is a check of the children's phonics knowledge. It helps school confirm whether each child is making the progress expected in the National Curriculum.

The phonics screening check contains 40 words divided into two sections of 20 words. Both sections contain a mixture of real words and pseudo-words. Pseudo-words are words that are phonically decodable but are not actual words with an associated meaning. They are included in the check specifically to assess whether the child can decode a word using their phonics skills. All pseudo-words in the check are accompanied by a picture of an imaginary creature. Children are taught that when a word has a creature next to it, it is a pseudo-word. This ensures that they are not trying to match the pseudo-word to a word in their vocabulary. The check is designed to give teachers information on how each child is progressing in phonics. It will help to identify whether a child needs additional support at this stage so that they do not fall behind in this vital early reading skill.

Year 4 Multiplication Tables Check

At the end of Year 4 the pupils complete a multiplication tables check.

The purpose of the check is to determine whether the child can fluently recall their times tables up to 12, which is essential for future success in mathematics. It will also help school to identify if they may need additional support. It is an on-screen check consisting of 25 times table questions. Children will be able to answer 3 practice questions before taking the actual check. They will then have 6 seconds to answer each question.

End of Key Stage 2 SATs

In Year 6, at the end of Key Stage 2 (KS2) children will take National Curriculum assessments in:

English grammar, punctuation and spelling

English reading

Mathematics

The tests help measure the attainment of pupils in relation to the standards set out in the National Curriculum, and help teachers and parents identify where pupils may need additional support in a certain subject area. The tests are also used to assess school's performance, and school-level results data is used to produce national and regional performance statistics.

Children are also assessed in school by their teachers in Writing to see if they have reached the expected standard or are working below or above this standard.

Recording

We take the objectives for weekly or blocks of lessons from the broad learning objectives within the school's curriculum plan and from pupil targets that are in their workbooks and are updated regularly. These in turn reflect the demands of the National Curriculum. Teachers make a judgement about the work of each child in relation to the National Curriculum stage of attainment. End of unit assessment marks are recorded on an excel document and analysed by subject leaders in order to readdress misconceptions.

Summative assessments are recorded on Sonar.

Reporting to parents

We have a range of strategies that keep parents fully informed of their child's progress in school. We encourage parents to contact the school if they have concerns about any aspect of their child's work.

Each term, we offer parents the opportunity to meet their child's teacher. At the first meeting of the school year, we review the targets that we have identified for their child. At the second meeting of the year (which we hold at the end of February), we evaluate their child's progress as measured against the targets. Parents are offered a third meeting at which we review their child's written report and the parents have an opportunity to look at their child's work.

During the summer term, we give all parents a written report of their child's progress and achievements during the year. In this report, we also identify target areas for the next school year. We write individual comments on all core subjects of the National Curriculum. In this written report, we reserve a space for children to give their own evaluation of their performance during the year. We also include a space for parental feedback.

As well as information from the school's data management system, parents also have access to information on national testing. Children receive a scaled score for national tests with 100 being the national standard. Scores above or below this indicate how their child is performing.

Feedback to pupils

We believe that feedback to pupils is very important, as it tells them how well they have done, and what they need to do next in order to improve their work. We have a simple agreed code for marking, as this ensures that we all mark in the same way, and the children learn to understand it.

We give children verbal feedback on their work whenever possible. We usually do this when the children are working during the lesson, although we sometimes give feedback on a particular lesson at the beginning of the next one. When lesson time does not allow for verbal feedback, we write comments on the children's work during marking. We give written comments to children as age appropriate. Marking is meaningful and motivating for the children in order to help them progress.

When we give written feedback to a child, we relate this to the learning objective for the lesson. We make clear whether the objective has been met, and we may produce evidence to support our judgement. If we consider that the objective has not been met, we make it clear why we think so. In either case, we identify what the child needs to do in order to produce (even) better work in the future.

Teachers give pupils feedback which confirms they are on the right track and which encourages them to make an improvement. Teachers give pupils suggestions as guidance and children are given time to respond to this at the start of lessons.

Having children assess their own or each other's work can be very effective because it enables them to clarify their ideas on progressing to the next step, but this must be carefully managed, to avoid unhelpful comparisons. Teachers always mark the work themselves afterwards.

We allow time at the beginning of each lesson for the children to absorb any comments written on their work, to answer any questions written on it by the teacher, and also to ask any questions of their own. There may also be improvements they can work on during this time. We start the lesson in this way in order to ensure that the time our teachers spend on marking really has an impact. We believe that learning is maximised when children enter into a dialogue about their work, either verbally or written in their books. At Mersey Park we have worked hard to develop high quality feedback which focusses on taking the children's learning forward. Responding to feedback should be a regular routine and not a planned event.

Inclusion and assessment for learning

Our school aims to be an inclusive school. We actively seek to remove the barriers to learning and participation that can hinder or exclude individual pupils, or groups of pupils.

We achieve educational inclusion by continually reviewing what we do, by monitoring data, and through asking ourselves questions about the performance of these individuals and groups of pupils. In this way, we make judgements about how successful we are being at promoting racial and gender equality, and including pupils with disabilities or special educational needs.

Moderation of standards

Senior leaders study examples of children's work within each area. Staff moderate together and share pupil's work with each other to ensure that we share expectations of standards.

Moderation by Subject Leaders

Standards are moderated termly in all core subject areas by senior members of staff. This involves whole class book and data reviews with detailed feedback given to staff on moderation findings. Staff will also interview pupils regarding their learning to gain an understanding of what they have learnt in each area. Feedback is provided for individual teachers and across the whole school. If necessary, data judgements are changed on the school's data tracking system. Detailed discussions also take place as part of pupil progress reviews and performance management reviews.

Annually, lead teachers for other subject areas will moderate samples of work with a senior member of staff to ensure accuracy and promote the highest standards of learning and teaching in that subject area. For example, the lead teacher for history may work with the SLT looking at 6 books for every year group. This feedback will be whole school. If any particular issues arise regarding the moderation of standards, that will be addressed with individual members of staff.

Moderation with Local Schools

Staff from local primary schools meet to moderate standards in reading, writing and mathematics. They meet in year groups and as subject leaders and undertake focused moderation of a sample of children's work.

Statutory Moderation

Our school is subject to local authority moderation of standards in Key Stage Two writing (samples of schools are moderated annually). Moderation is undertaken by local authority officers with staff from our school. All feedback is shared with staff and governors. If necessary, data judgements are changed on the school's data tracking system.

Assessment and the Early Years Foundation Stage

Observations, discussion, questioning and feedback are fundamental to Early Years teaching. Through high quality interactions, practitioners are aware of children's progress and understanding within all areas of the foundation stage curriculum.

Children are assessed formally each half term to track progress in phonics but other assessments are carried out informally and recorded on our pupil tracking software. Occasionally notations are made on children's work for the benefit of the practitioners.

Parents will receive information on their child's progress throughout the Foundation Stage via class dojo, parent's meetings, workshops and at the end of the year they receive a report.
Reports detail their attainment against expectations for their age and highlight whether they have met the Early Learning Goals or are working towards them.

Feedback is immediate and personalised with clear direction for improvement. This will usually be led by a learning challenge or question. For example, a child may be asked can they think how they could adapt an idea in role play, improve a design idea, use different materials to construct a shelter etc.
Central to the success of any feedback in Early Years is ensuring that children understand what has been said and have the opportunity to respond to any feedback and make improvements.

Effective questioning, is an integral part of assessment practice throughout the school. It is central to successful assessment in the Early Years. It serves two main purposes:

1. To assist with assessment and to improve understanding. We want a learning climate that promotes sensitive interaction and encourages risk- taking. This will determine how successfully questioning is used and how beneficial it is to children's learning.

2. Modelling how to think aloud and how to frame questions is essential to enable children to develop the appropriate vocabulary for questioning. Adults should engage children in reflective discussion about their learning and make judgements on what children understand and can do.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or earlier if necessary.