

How we assess

A framework for continual improvement



How we assess

As a family of schools, we have a shared ethos of what learning should be like and feel like as a teacher or pupil in a school that is part of Victoria Academies Trust (see *How We Learn; A Learning Framework*). We believe that assessment is at the heart of teaching and learning as it is vital in measuring pupil progress and attainment in all subjects. Moreover, well-designed assessment is a means to engage pupils with their learning, making them active drivers of their own success as learners. Our schools have designed curriculums that promote engaging, purposeful and relevant learning experiences with clear expectations and outcomes, all of which support meaningful assessment by teachers. In every school in the trust, staff frequently discuss progress and attainment with parents/carers and we are committed to making marginal gains through our teaching and believe that continuous improvement is an integral part of all that we do. This allows us to work towards our mission to become the best that we can be.

We endeavour to support all pupils in achieving age-related expectations, making better than expected progress, and raising confidence and self-esteem (Teaching standards 1b, 5c). Assessment sits within our values, as follows:

- **Focus on family:** we ensure assessment is inclusive for students of all abilities, from their unique starting points.
- **Insist on excellence:** we teach and assess the essential knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum, we facilitate independent learning and self-reflection, and develop this to a high standard for ALL pupils.
- **Do good as you go:** we prepare pupils for the next stage in their education using a range of planning and assessment tools.
- **Embrace innovation:** we develop resilience and independence so that pupils are motivated and learning is enriched
- **Seize success:** we provide a pathway for progress by setting high expectations for learners, and by provoking a desire to achieve.

We assess, record and report for four main reasons:

- 1) To ensure all pupils have an opportunity to be involved in showing what they know, understand, and what they need to develop (Teaching standard 1a).
- 2) To internally track pupils for attainment and progress (Teaching standard 6b).
- 3) To ensure teacher planning is amended in order that teaching and learning meet the needs of all children (Teaching standard 5d).
- 4) To support the setting of personal and school targets that are based on the highest expectations in line with Age Related Expectations (Teaching Standard 1b).

Who is involved with assessment?

- Children – to ensure that as active and engaged learners, children know what they do well and what their next steps for learning are.
- Teachers – to inform planning and ensure progress is made.
- Parents/Carers – to ensure there is an understanding of their child's learning and how to help them achieve their next steps.
- School Leaders/Governors – to ensure strategic decisions are made about how progress can best be made.
- External Departments – to ensure accountability for progress and attainment.

How do we assess?

In-School Formative Assessment: Teachers evaluate students' knowledge and understanding on a day-to-day basis using classroom assessments to identify students' prior learning and resulting strengths and gaps in skills and knowledge, and to tailor teaching accordingly. Formative assessment methods are both planned for and organic depending on pupils' learning experiences and can range from probing questions put to pupils as they think something through; quick recap questions at the opening of lessons; quizzes at the end of a learning opportunity, scrutiny of the natural work of pupils, right through to formal tests.

Questioning: Linked to our 'How we learn' approach, and widely recognised as '*an essential element of efficacious teaching*' (e.g. Hannel, 2009) questioning is an integral part of the ongoing assessment process. Teachers need to ask large numbers of really great questions (Rosenshine's principle 3) that are open, dialogic and challenging. Rather than

tell the pupil what to do, great questioning coaches the pupil so that they find the right answer for themselves. Pupils also need to know how to ask great questions of themselves and others to develop their higher order thinking skills. By promoting the use of questioning in our approach to learning, as a Trust, teachers in our school therefore create meaningful assessment opportunities on a daily basis.

Feedback: Continual verbal feedback throughout the lesson from an expert coach (child or adult) is essential. Pupils need to be skilled at self-feedback and feeding back to their peers. Not every piece of work needs marking in depth. Timely gap-task marking needs to be purposeful so that pupils have time to respond through Directed Improvement Review Time (DIRT), remembering that good Feedback Always Improves Learning (FAIL). This will close the gap

Recording assessment of progress and attainment - Programme of Study (POS): Teachers in our school use Programme of Study to record ongoing progress and attainment for pupils in English, Mathematics and Science. Within POS, key, age-related expectations have been identified for each year group. Teachers' update POS on an ongoing basis taking into account continuing formative and summative assessment. This data is formally captured at identified points across each academic year to measure attainment and progress for all pupils and to feed into pupil progress and accountability meetings. This ongoing use of POS assessment informs planning and teaching and allows teachers and Senior Leaders across schools to close gaps for groups and individual pupils.

In-School Summative Assessment: Evaluates and informs improvements on how well pupils have learned over a period of time through the following mechanisms:

- Teacher Assessment informed by POS, work in pupils' books and observations
- Core Subject Assessment through the use of PIRA, PUMA and GaPS tests and targeted writing statements based on KPI's within POS.

Assessment at Early Years Foundation Stage: Ongoing formative EYFS assessment starts in Nursery using child observations. Daily up to date monitoring of all EYFS children takes place to closely track progress. The areas of learning are assessed against in Reception using the EYFS profile along with characteristics of effective learning, which are reported to parents. Each year children are set end of year expectations which are closely monitored by the class teacher and SLT through termly pupil progress meetings. This means that any barriers to learning are quickly identified and addressed.

Standardised Summative Assessment: The following statutory assessments take place annually in line with the relevant assessment and reporting arrangements:

- Early Years Foundation Stage Profile - all children in Reception will be teacher assessed against the EYFS profile which is ongoing throughout the year. EYFS profile assessment data is submitted to Local Authorities in June.
- Year 1 and Year 2 Phonics screening checks (annually in May)
- End of Key Stage 1 SATs: all pupils in Year 2 must sit tests in Reading and Maths during the testing period in May. English writing is teacher assessed on an ongoing basis and reported in June.
- Year 4 Times Table check - June
- End of Key Stage 2 SATs - all pupils at the end of KS2 (Year 6) are assessed in Reading, Writing, Maths and GaPS. The assessment period is one week in May

Representative groups – assessing Foundation subjects: In order to assess how pupils are achieving within foundation subjects, we use a model that allows us to capture representative groups' development whilst maintaining appropriate teacher workload. Part of the design of our NICER Curriculum (see Curriculum Intent) means that a set of key questions are designed as part of the planning process, and these identify knowledge (declarative and procedural) crucial to each foundation subject within the challenge pack. A representative group of approximately 5 to 6 children from the class is identified for the year (considering gender, SEND, PP and LAC). These children act as a sample group for assessing foundation subjects through a triangulated method:

- Pupil voice and feedback in response to their key questions for the subjects within the challenge pack
- Teacher scrutiny of independent work against appropriate learning objectives matched to the key questions
- Ongoing teacher formative assessment based on the pupil's engagement and learning during relevant lessons

From this information, teachers complete a capture document that outlines pupil achievement in line with the questions and therefore the key knowledge for each subject within the National Curriculum. This information goes on to inform further teacher planning within the year or for the next year group and phase.