



Clifford Primary School Assessment for Learning

The school's overarching aim is to encourage and nourish pupils' intellectual, creative, spiritual and physical achievements in order that every child reaches their full potential.

What is assessment for learning?

Assessment for learning has been defined as: 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 Reform Group (2002). *Assessment for Learning: 10 Principles*.

Principles and key characteristics of assessment for learning

Principles

Assessment for learning is founded on the following 10 principles.

Assessment for learning:

- ❖ is part of effective planning of teaching and learning
- ❖ focuses on how students learn
- ❖ is central to classroom practice
- ❖ is a key professional skill for teachers
- ❖ is sensitive and constructive
- ❖ fosters learner motivation
- ❖ promotes understanding of learning goals and the criteria by which they are assessed
- ❖ helps learners know how to improve
- ❖ develops learners' capacity for self assessment [and peer assessment]
- ❖ recognises all educational achievement

Key characteristics

The Assessment Reform Group identified seven key characteristics of assessment for learning. (Assessment Reform Group (1999). *Assessment for Learning – Beyond the Black Box*).

- ❖ It is embedded in a view of teaching and learning of which it is an essential part.
- ❖ It involves sharing learning goals with pupils.
- ❖ It aims to help pupils to know and to recognise the standards they are aiming for.
- ❖ It involves pupils in self-assessment [and peer assessment].
- ❖ It provides feedback which leads to pupils recognising their next steps and how to take them.
- ❖ It is underpinned by the confidence that every student can improve.
- ❖ It involves both teacher and pupils reviewing and reflecting on assessment data

Assessment as part of classroom or work-related activities is a fundamental process required to promote learning and ultimately achievement. Research has shown that assessment for learning can have a significant effect on learners' achievement, behaviour, motivation, engagement and their ability to work independently.

Learners need to know and understand the following before learning can take place:

- ❖ What is the aim of the learning?
- ❖ Why do they need to learn it?
- ❖ Where are they in terms of achieving the aim?
- ❖ How can they achieve the aim?

When learners know and understand these principles, the quality of learning will improve. Sharing this information with learners will promote ownership of the learning aims and a sense of shared responsibility between the teacher and learner to achieve those aims. Improving learners' confidence and self-esteem reflects positively in learners' work and their motivation is improved.

To promote effective assessment, practitioners need to:

- ❖ share the learning aims with learners and check their understanding before progressing
- ❖ make learners aware of the standards they are required to achieve and help them to recognise when they have achieved that standard
- ❖ give effective feedback on assessment decisions, so that learners know how to improve
- ❖ demonstrate high expectations and promote learners' confidence that they can improve on their past performance
- ❖ provide regular opportunities for themselves and learners to reflect on the last performance and review learners' progress
- ❖ develop learners' peer and self-assessment skills, so that learners can recognise and reflect on what aspects of their own work need to improve.

Assessment for learning is all about informing learners of their progress to empower them to take the necessary action to improve their performance. Practitioners need to create learning opportunities where learners can progress at their own pace and undertake consolidation activities where necessary. The individuality of feedback, by its very nature, has the facility to support weaker learners and challenge more able learners.

How to support the development of assessment for learning

At the end of each session, teachers need to ask themselves: What do learners know now that they did not know before they attended the session?

How to plan for learning

Teachers need to carefully plan and create opportunities within each session for both the learner and the teacher to engage in dialogue about a learner's progress towards the learning objectives. It is crucial that the learning objectives are shared with the learner, and of equal importance is that the teacher checks to ensure that the learner not only understands the learning objectives, but also appreciates the success criteria which will be used to assess the learning and the work.

Teachers need to:

- ❖ decide what is going to be learnt in a particular session
- ❖ define the learning goals
- ❖ share the learning goals with the learners
- ❖ compile questions and design tasks to check learners' understanding of the learning goals
- ❖ share with the learners the criteria which will be used to assess their learning and their work
- ❖ discuss how feedback is going to be provided
- ❖ discuss and agree how learners will take an active part in the assessment process
- ❖ plan opportunities for learners to reflect on and use the feedback on the assessment to further learning and progress.

How to establish the learning objectives

It is important that teachers identify the learning objectives for each session to ensure that chunks of time are devoted to specific learning goals and the sessions are not wasted 'carrying on from the last session' without anything specific being achieved. It is therefore important that schemes of work identify the learning objectives for each session and define how learning will be determined.

How to share the learning objective

The learning outcomes, in terms of the work that learners have to produce, have to be clearly communicated to learners and involve them in the learning process. Learning cannot be done to individuals, it has to be done with them and by them. It is evident, therefore, that effective two way communication is the key to unlocking learners' full potential to learn and ultimately achieve. Encourage learners to observe how others are responding to a task, so that they will begin to apply the success criteria to their own work and recognise gaps in their learning to enable them to identify further learning needs.

Teachers need to explain:

- ❖ the learning objectives and why learners have to achieve them (and check learners' understanding)
- ❖ the assessment criteria and how to use them
- ❖ what learners have done well and what they need to do to improve.

How to communicate the success criteria

Teachers need to make sure learners understand the difference between what they are going to **do** in a session and what they are going to **learn**.

Teachers need to:

- ❖ use appropriate language and terminology which learners have developed, share the learning goals and success criteria, and check learners' understanding
- ❖ demonstrate or model how the success criteria can be met by the use of examples
- ❖ encourage peer assessment through effective use of the success criteria
- ❖ promote self-assessment through effective use of the success criteria.

How to create effective learning plans

Teachers need to make sure that every session learning plan includes:

- ❖ details of the learning intentions/outcomes
- ❖ how the learning intentions/outcomes are going to be shared with learners and methods of checking their understanding
- ❖ information on the success criteria and marking
- ❖ assessment opportunities
- ❖ methods of feedback to be provided
- ❖ details of the differentiated range of learners making up the group
- ❖ information on teaching and learning styles incorporated into the session
- ❖ how review times are to be used.
- ❖ the specifications of the differentiated teaching and learning materials to be used to meet individual learner needs and create effective learning opportunities
- ❖ an evaluation section for the practitioner to complete to say what did or did not work well and why.

How to communicate the pupils' individual learning targets

The teaching staff must:

- ❖ involve pupils in deciding their targets in English, mathematics and science
- ❖ help and support pupils to understand what they need to do to achieve their targets
- ❖ regularly provide written and oral feedback to pupils on their progress towards achieving their targets
- ❖ ensure pupils recognise when they have achieved their targets
- ❖ mark and date in pupils' books when they have achieved their targets
- ❖ help and support pupils to identify the next step in their learning
- ❖ when achieved on three separate occasions record on APP grids or appropriate assessment sheets
- ❖ provide written (termly reports) and oral feedback to parents on their child's progress towards and achievement of the agreed individual targets.

How to create a learning ethos within a learning environment

The teaching staff must:

- ❖ demonstrate that learning is valued and celebrated
- ❖ foster trust in all professional relationships
- ❖ develop learners to ask for help and to access support accordingly
- ❖ use learning to promote self-esteem
- ❖ genuinely believe that **all** learners can learn and improve against their own previous performance, not that of others
- ❖ demonstrate the use of value-added data
- ❖ provide teachers with appropriate training and support in assessment for learning
- ❖ encourage team involvement in defining any strategies designed to promote change whether it be imposed by external agencies or within an institution
- ❖ encourage review and self-evaluation at individual, subject and organisation level
- ❖ engage with learners' parents, carers or other meaningful adults in their lives, in reviewing and supporting learner progress.

Assessing learning: the effective use of questioning

No matter how well a teaching and learning session is planned, or how well a teacher may feel at the conclusion to the session, **it is not how well the teacher has performed, but the reaction of the learners that matters.**

It is therefore crucial that:

- ❖ the learning aims and objectives are clearly defined and shared with the learner
- ❖ methods of testing learning are appropriately identified.

Practitioners need to be aware that:

- ❖ questioning is a skill which needs to be developed
- ❖ communication is a two-way process
- ❖ questioning is a good way to develop an interactional style of communication
- ❖ they need confidence to develop questioning skills
- ❖ when they pose a question, they have no idea as to what the learner is going to say, despite their hopes
- ❖ they need to have the courage and confidence to deal with any answer, no matter how bizarre
- ❖ when they ask learners questions, they have to be prepared for the learner asking them a wide range of searching questions in response
- ❖ they have to be confident in their subject matter and be well prepared
- ❖ one of the first stages of questioning is getting the learner to talk
- ❖ what they are really trying to do is get the learners to think out aloud, check their learning and share knowledge with their peers
- ❖ some teachers tend to talk far too much without checking that learners understand what they are saying.

Planning

Like everything else, careful planning is required to support the development of the questioning technique and to check learning thoroughly.

- ❖ Teachers need to plan questioning rather than hope that a question pops into their head at an appropriate moment. It might be useful to list appropriate questions on the reverse side of the lesson plan and use them to check learning at appropriate times. Remember, the order in which teachers ask these questions is also important.
- ❖ Although teachers may prepare the questions before the session, they may have to change the questions, or use a series of unrehearsed questions, to respond to answers they receive. In other words, teachers need to plan a questioning strategy but be prepared to develop tactics on the spot.
- ❖ It may be useful to pose open questions at the end of one teaching session which stimulate curiosity about the next.

Why do practitioners question learners?

Practitioners question learners to:

- ❖ involve learners in the session and analyse their responses to find out what they know and understand
- ❖ identify misconceptions and provide opportunities to address these
- ❖ provide the practitioner with an insight into the level of learning, understanding and ability to apply the learning.

Questions may be asked at various levels. They may ask 'open' or 'closed' questions. Learners' responses can then be used to plan further learning, adapt approaches and build in stretch. They also provide teachers with opportunities to reflect on their teaching and their learners' learning.

Feedback for learning

Feedback on assessment

Successful assessment for learning strategies hinge on the nature of feedback, its content and the way it is received and used by learners. It should be a commendation for what they have done well, coupled with constructive advice and guidance on how to improve areas of their work that need developing.

What is feedback?

- ❖ Feedback is providing information to an individual which focuses on their performance or behaviour.
- ❖ The feedback provided should be delivered in a positive manner and lead to action to affirm or develop an individual's performance or behaviour.
- ❖ Feedback provided should not be of a personal nature and should focus on hard data, facts or observed examples of evidence.

Effective feedback:

- ❖ is tailored to meet the needs of the individual and is directly linked to observable evidence – either a learner's written or practical work or a performance of a given task
- ❖ focuses on individual action points
- ❖ deals with one point at a time
- ❖ allows learners to compete with the task and with themselves, not in competition or comparison with others.

The benefits to learners of effective feedback

- ❖ They know how well they are progressing.
- ❖ They are informed of their strengths and areas they need to improve.
- ❖ They know what they need to do to improve.
- ❖ They can reflect on their learning and ask questions to clarify or develop their thinking.

When observing a teaching and learning session, observers will ask themselves the following questions:

- ❖ Do learners understand the purpose of their learning and assessment?
- ❖ Are success criteria shared with learners and are they invited to feed back on their work?
- ❖ Do learners receive constructive feedback from practitioners?
- ❖ Is the marking of learners' work or reporting on performance of tasks consistently detailed and evaluative to prove helpful?
- ❖ Does feedback provide learners with clear guidance about their learning and how this can improve their performance?
- ❖ Do assessment procedures meet the requirements of the validating and examining bodies?

At Clifford Primary School the teachers agree that effective feedback:

- ❖ **is written or spoken in plain English**
- ❖ **is written or spoken clearly**
- ❖ **is detailed**
- ❖ **is evaluative**
- ❖ **is constructive**
- ❖ **is positive**
- ❖ **identifies strengths and weaknesses**
- ❖ **provides effective guidance on how a learner can improve**
- ❖ **begins by saying what the learner has done well**
- ❖ **progresses to areas the learner could have done better**
- ❖ **ends on a positive note**
- ❖ **is specifically linked to learning objectives and/or individual learning targets in English, Mathematics and Science**
- ❖ **must be prompt.**

Oral feedback

Oral feedback can be used by teachers for different purposes to enable learners to develop and move on in their thinking and learning. This may include encouraging the learner to identify an error, providing information, reflecting on learning or challenging their thinking, as well as giving praise, encouragement and guidance.

Teachers should be mindful of their non-verbal communication when delivering oral feedback to ensure they are one and the same.

Written feedback

Teachers should never say anything in writing that they would not say to a learner's face. They should focus on feeding back on the quality of work. As with oral feedback, teachers should use only the success or assessment criteria as agreed in the briefing of the task on which to base the assessment.

Peer and self assessment

It is widely recognised that when learners are fully engaged in the learning process, learning increases. A fundamental requirement of assessment for learning is for learners to know **what** they have to learn, **why** it is required (how it fits into the topic of study) and **how** it is to be assessed. When learners are able to understand the success or assessment criteria, learning and progress is often maximised, especially when individuals have opportunities to apply these criteria to work produced by their peers as part of planned classroom activities.

The benefits of organising peer assessment activities include:

- ❖ learners clarifying their own ideas and understanding of the learning intention
- ❖ checking individuals' understanding of the success or assessment criteria and how it is to be applied to learners' work.

Developing the skills to assess their own and others' work against the given criteria for success will be challenging for many learners and will take time, patience and planning by the teacher to provide the opportunities for learners to develop and practise these skills.

From peer assessment to self assessment

Teachers need to:

- ❖ provide opportunities for learners to reflect on their own work
- ❖ ensure they provide individuals with the necessary support so that they are able to acknowledge shortcomings in their own work
- ❖ support learners through the self-assessment process so that strengths in their work are fully recognised and weaknesses are not exaggerated to the point that they damage learners' self-esteem.

Assessment for learning – the process

