



ST NINIAN'S HIGH SCHOOL

School Policy No 8

ASSESSMENT TO SUPPORT LEARNING POLICY

St Ninian's High School believes that the major purposes of assessment are to:

- support learning that develops the knowledge and understanding, skills, attributes and capabilities which contribute to the four capacities;
- focus on knowledge, breadth, challenge and application;
- give information to pupils, parents, staff and others that young people are progressing in their learning and developing in line with expectations;
- provide a summary of what learners have achieved; and
- contribute to planning the next stages of learning and help learners progress to further education, higher education or employment.

Research in assessment suggests that learners learn best, and attainment improves, when learners:-

- understand clearly what they are trying to learn, and what is expected of them;
- are given timely feedback about the quality of their work, and what they can do to make it better;
- are given advice about how to go about making improvements;
- are fully involved in deciding what needs to be done next, and who can give them help if they need it.

To this end the school is actively engaged in building on the principles and practices in Building the Curriculum 5.

AIM

To ensure that assessment is an integral part of effective teaching and learning..

OBJECTIVES

1. To engage with the principles and practices of Building the Curriculum 5 to ensure that assessment supports learning.
2. To use a variety of assessment methods which reinforces the curriculum and supports learning.
3. To record details of pupil progress in order to provide information for pupils, parents and colleagues.
4. To use assessment information as the basis of reports to parents, colleagues and external agencies.
5. To track and monitor pupil progress to support learning.
6. To provide a Supporting Learners period.
7. To use assessment information to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning and to plan future courses.



METHODS OF ACHIEVING OBJECTIVES

Learning and teaching is well planned and by using a mixture of formative assessment, reflective self-assessment and summative assessment techniques as part of the learning and teaching strategy, teachers can help pupils achieve course aims.

Assessment FOR Learning (Formative Assessment)

Issues here include:

- clarity and purposefulness of teacher questioning;
- use of questions to stimulate thinking and learning;
- effective use of pupil responses to identify what they understand;
- clearly stated and sharing of learning intention and success criteria with pupils and parents;
- positive, encouraging and timely feedback;
- pupils being clear on what they need to do to improve;
- pupils participating in dialogue about learning and identifying next steps; and
- pupils plan their next steps in learning.

Assessment AS Learning

This is about understanding learning and issues here include:

- pupils and staff identifying and reflecting on their own evidence of learning;
- pupils and staff helping to set their own realistic learning targets;
- pupils and staff practising self and peer assessment through e.g. traffic lighting, “two stars and a wish”, comment only marking etc.

Assessment OF Learning (Summative Assessment)

This is about gathering and interpreting evidence. Issues here include:

- staff using a range of traditional summative assessments, which can provide a snapshot of progress at any particular time e.g. end of unit tasks;
- staff ensure assessment promotes progression, breadth and depth in learning;
- staff become familiar with and contribute to the National Assessment Resource;
- staff reviewing and evaluating assessment practices, in terms of their impact on learning and teaching;
- staff working collaboratively to develop a shared understanding of standards and expectations through moderation activities which involve coherent planning, checking, sampling, reviewing and providing feedback for improvement; and
- staff being aware of assessment strategies in other establishments by engaging in collegiate working by participating in local and national networking activities.

Parents are aware that monitoring and tracking of learners' progress is in place so that assessment information is used to support learning and involve learners in target setting;

Reporting to parents and colleagues will take a number of forms, both formal and informal, for example:-

- written comments on pupils' work;
- asking parents to sign marked assessments;
- asking parents to regularly check and sign homework diaries;
- communicating early warnings to parents;
- full formal reports issued annually (interim and update progress reports issued as per school reporting calendar);
- reports to colleagues on request; and
- reports to external agencies.

All reports will be of practical use to parents, other teachers and the pupils themselves, provide specific advice to aid future progress, convey clear personal knowledge of the pupil and lead to effective co-operation between home and school.



STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- Authority provided in-service, often subject based e.g. Science, on formative assessment strategies;
- in-house, in-service on use of ICT to engage in formative assessment strategies e.g. use of interactive whiteboards;
- the spread of in-house formative assessment based intervention strategies to a broad range of subjects;
- each department completed the LTS AifL Toolkit section on Assessment is FOR Learning;
- through participation in moderation and CPD staff has the opportunity to discuss, share and develop an understanding of standards and expectations in assessment ;
- staff become familiar with the National Assessment Resource and contribute to it; and
- materials produced for Supporting Learners period.

Staff has on-line access to assessment practices in other establishments through Education Scotland and the Journey to Excellence (HME).

Supporting Learners Period

Each pupil has a dedicated teacher with whom they meet once a week in a small Supporting Learners' Group. This establishes a meaningful partnership which will allow pupils to evaluate their learning, be given support and plan their next steps in learning.

TARGETS

DHT with responsibility for reporting will produce a reporting calendar and a calendar for tracking pupil progress.

Targets are set at the start of the year for S3-S6 using Click and Go.

Monitoring of progress and mentoring are conducted by SMT, Pupil Support Staff and Supporting Learners' Staff.

EVALUATION

It is important that all policies are evaluated to establish the extent to which the objectives are being met and to clarify problems as and when the need arises. This evaluation will be an on-going process. A formal evaluation will be carried out towards the end of each session.

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Assessment is for Learning

The following list provides a variety of strategies currently in use at St Ninian's High School across a range of subjects. The list is constantly evolving and developing as different subjects adapt strategies to meet their own learning intentions and outcomes.

Brainstorming - Also called brain showering, a means of solving a problem, developing a strategy, or generating ideas by asking individuals or a group to get together and produce as many thoughts on a topic as they can in a short space of time. It works best with larger groups of people in a relaxed environment. A member of the group is usually nominated to summarise or focus ideas on a chalkboard, whiteboard or flipchart.

Carousel - This strategy is a method for stimulating thought in a fast-paced group dynamic. Groups are given different tasks. The focal point for each group is an A3 sheet upon which they will brainstorm on an allocated subject. After the given time slot, groups will Carousel to the next sheet of paper where they will continue Brainstorming on the new subject that is the focus of this sheet. Groups should be careful to add only new details / ideas. To identify how much a group is contributing, groups can be given different coloured pens which will Carousel with them. The element of competition is thereby subtly incorporated into the exercise with (hopefully) positive results.

Creative Connectives! - This exercise is a most useful strategy to make pupils aware of how to improve their imaginative, reflective and discursive writing through effective use of connectives. Place pupils in pairs and ask them to decide on a particular genre of story: horror or romantic. In front of them, pupils have an array of cards with connectives placed face down. The first in the pair turns over a 'Creative Connective!' card and writes the first sentence of the story using the specified 'Connective'. The sentence is then passed to the second pupil who turns over the next 'Creative Connective!' card and writes the second sentence using it. Continue until time up.

Critical friend - Someone who asks questions about practice or developments in supportive yet challenging ways. This could be characterised as a kind of partnership in investigation of practice that supports the reflective process through dialogue following, for example, observation of lessons or reading feedback comments to pupils.



Envoying - Envoying is a useful strategy for collecting information without the need for lengthy class feedback. Pupils are divided into groups. One member of each group is designated the Envoy. Collectively the groups are given a task, eg to build a word bank for the setting of an imaginative essay in the horror genre. At the end of the allocated time, the envoys will move to the next group where they will collect any words / phrases not in their own list. Envoys will have the opportunity to move around every group before returning to their own to share the collected booty!

Evidence Gathering - A grid is used to give focus to gathering evidence for Discursive / Informative / Reflective essay assignments. Students can use the grid to record observations from peers (from triading perhaps) or to record factual evidence from books / library resources. The grid can also be used to make suggestions as to how the evidence could be used appropriately in essays.

Exemplification - The means of providing models demonstrating the achievement of or failure to achieve the criteria or standard for success. In local moderation, once a group has agreed a judgement, annotated examples of work may be used as exemplification for other staff to demonstrate what does/does not constitute a specific Level.

Faux Amis - The objective of this exercise is for pupils to identify French words which appear similar to English words but which have a completely different meaning. These are commonly referred to as False Friends, or Faux Amis. Teacher introduces fifteen French words and asks pupils what they think they mean. Teacher then reveals correct English meaning and asks pupils to memorise as many as possible in one minute. In pairs, pupils play a game which involves matching French words with their English equivalent. On completion of the exercise pupils should have learned fifteen “false” friends.

Highlighting - This exercise is a most useful strategy used in conjunction with Modelling. It allows pupils to identify and highlight words and phrases common to a particular genre of writing. For example, if a teacher were to model a Discursive essay, the pupils might be expected to identify and highlight phrases such as On the one hand ... ; In support of this theory ... ; Furthermore ... ; As a result ... On completion of this exercise, students should have a sound understanding of how to use these words and phrases in their correct context and to deploy them in their own essay.



Hotseating - A process where a pupil sits on a particular chair or seat to answer questions, and his or her responses become the basis for assessment by the teacher and/or other pupils. This can be a means of revealing pupils' knowledge and understanding, before, during or after a series of lessons on a given subject.

Jigsawing - A co-operative learning strategy that structures positive interdependence among pupils in a class. Different groups or individual pupils work on different aspects of a learning task or research project, perhaps using different resources. They are expected to know their part of the work well enough to teach it to others. The pooled learning then constitutes a totality to which the different groups or individual pupils have contributed separate elements.

Mind-Mapping – (English) - Mind-mapping is a powerful visual technique which has a universal appeal for pupils. The subject of attention is crystallised in a central image (for example 'Themes', 'Character', 'Setting', 'Tone' ...). The main concerns of the subject radiate from the central image on branches. Each branch can then have sub-branches which expand upon on its linked subject. One connected line might look as follows: Theme » Love » quotation » analysis » ... A Mind-Map can be as simple as a central image ('Character') surrounded by relevant quotations. It has been found to be a most useful memory and brainstorming tool.

Mind Mapping - (Science) - This is one of many techniques that are usually used at the end of a unit of work to probe if pupils have fully appreciated the connection between the different terms or ideas in that topic. At the start you are presented with an A4 page of terms that are used in the unit. You then have to connect some of them with a directional arrow and to state what the relationship is. There is then a class discussion about the connections between the words. It must always be borne in mind that there may be different ways to connect these terms.

Modelling - A useful strategy used in conjunction with Highlighting. It encourages pupils to identify and take note of words / phrases / features common to a particular genre (type) of writing. For example, if a teacher models a news report, students would be expected to recognise features of layout, headlines, subheadings, journalistic language / style. On completion of this exercise, students should have a sound understanding of how to use these features and how to deploy them in their own report writing.



No hands up - A questioning strategy where pupils are not allowed to raise their hands if they know the answer. By establishing a rule of 'no hands up' in a question-and-answer session, distractions are reduced and pupils have more time to think. Because of this, everyone is expected to be able to offer an answer.

No marks homework - Work carried out outside class and assessed without awarding grades or marks. Pupils may self-assess by using traffic lighting, which involves assigning red, amber or green traffic lights to indicate levels of confidence; or teachers may advise in the form of comments, as a method of bridging the gap between present performance and desired goal.

Peer Assessment - Where pupils or colleagues provide feedback on another's work. This works best if the criteria have been shared and fully understood; if the teacher has modelled the process; and if quality is monitored as it is undertaken. Peer assessment can provide the bridge between teacher assessment and self-assessment. That is, it can be a stage in the process of helping pupils become confident and skilled in self-assessment, as opposed to relying always on the teacher.

Peer Correction - Pupils working on an essay (Critical Evaluation or Creative / Discursive / Informative Writing) will be given the opportunity to exchange essays with their partner and to use the Correction Code together with Two Stars and a Wish in order to make improvements to their partner's writing. The corrections should feature two positive comments about an essay (the Two Stars) and one area for improvement (the Wish). An essay could be passed to more than one peer to allow for more extensive correction. Pupils should then redraft their essay based on these corrections / comments.

Peer Feedback - Pupils or colleagues provide advice on others' work, based on peer assessment, making clear the strengths and an area for improvement. In some schools 'two stars and a wish' has established a culture where everyone expects constructive advice.

Pictures into Words - (Art) - Pupils examine two works of art from different periods or movements – for example an abstract portrait of a woman by Picasso versus a neo-classical portrait by Ingres. A set of words which describes each work of art is jumbled on the table. In pairs, pupils decide which art historical terms refer to the abstract work and which to the neo-classical. By the end of the time allocated they should have two separate lists for each work of art. The teacher or table host will then model a paragraph in which the words from the lists are used appropriately.



Post box - A non-threatening strategy to discover potential areas of misunderstanding, involving the use of a 'post box', where pupils can post questions anonymously. A box is set up as the 'post box' into which pupils 'post' questions. The teacher collects the 'post', reads the questions at random and addresses any misunderstandings in session with the whole class.

Post It! - Pupils work in groups of maximum four to identify 'difficult' or unfamiliar vocabulary. If one member of the group does understand the meaning of a particular word, they have the responsibility to explain that word to the rest of the group. Words that are unfamiliar to the whole group are then recorded on a Post It! and placed on the board. Only one word per Post It! If different groups identify the same word, then their Post Its! should be placed on top of the existing Post Its! Teachers can then easily identify which words are causing most difficulty.

Practice Paper - (Computing) - Practice Paper is an electronic question paper. Pupils work in pairs using the interactive whiteboard and wireless keyboard. A question is displayed on the screen and, following discussion, pupils then type their answer using the keyboard. Once pairs have completed their answer, they submit it and the correct answer will then be displayed. Pairs then compare the correct solution with the submitted answer, and discussion can take place on which answers would be accepted and which would be rejected. This is particularly useful strategy for students preparing for the SQA exams.

Rhythm for Recall - TOPIC SENTENCE, STATEMENT, QUOTATION, ANALYSIS, EVALUATION, and REFER TO THE QUESTION - Rhythm is often used to help remember key facts and information. It is made more powerful with the addition of gestures as a number of different learning styles are addressed. The rhythm above is accompanied by gesture and is used to remind students of the formation of a paragraph in critical response essays. Students can look at their own essay or peer correct another essay and use the rhythm to make improvements.

Solve It! - (Mathematics) - This strategy tests and develops pattern identification skills. Working in groups of four, pupils will work on two related puzzles: Tantrix and Spider. Tantrix has ten levels of difficulty. Initially using basic patterns to complete a shape or design, the more advanced levels require an appreciation of colour, tiling and shape properties. Spider further develops pattern identification using shape and colour. Spider puzzle will be timed and a prize awarded to the group completing the activity in the fastest time. The group achieving the highest level in the Tantrix puzzle will be awarded a prize.



Snowballing - A useful method for sharing information. Pupils should be placed in pairs initially to work, for example, on annotating a poem. After a designated time, each pair should join up with another to share their annotations. This will allow the opportunity to add annotations that have been missed. Once this group of four pupils has completed their revised annotations, they will join with another group of four pupils. And so the process goes on ... Every pupil, whatever their ability, will feel they are contributing to the task in hand. If the teacher chooses to invite whole class feedback, each pupil should feel empowered to contribute!

Spelling Envelopes – This strategy gives pupils responsibility for improving spelling skills. Each pupil is given two envelopes, one labelled Friends, the other Enemies. Any misspelled words in a piece of work should be recorded, properly spelt, on a card and placed in the Enemy envelope - one word per card. Words that appear as enemies should be learnt at home. Once a week, the teacher can ask pairs to test one another on their enemy words. If successfully spelt, the enemy cards can be transferred to the friend's envelope. Occasionally, tests can be done on the words in the friend's envelope to ensure that they have not been forgotten!

Spelling Strategies! - Pupils become familiar with a range of strategies to help improve their spelling. Once introduced to them, pupils should be encouraged to identify one or two strategies which best suit their learning style. Strategies include: *Look, Say, Cover, Write, Check; Friends and Enemies; Rainbow Writing; Break It Up; Say It Silly!* Once familiar with the different strategies, pupils are given an envelope with ten words. They should use any of the above strategies to help them to learn the correct spelling. After a time prescribed by the teacher, pupils can be placed in pairs to test each other's improved spelling skills!

Story Board - This exercise aids pupils in the visualising of imagery within a text. Taking a poem for example, the text might be broken into sections and a striking image from each section is then drawn on to the 'Storyboard'. A quotation from the text can be used to support the drawing and the Story Board can then aid as a useful mnemonic.

Teacher demonstration - A modelling exercise in which the teacher works through the different stages of an activity, emphasising the stages of the process and the criteria for success.



Team Games Tournament - (Spanish) - Teachers distribute a list of Spanish vocabulary with accompanying translation. Pupils have a few minutes to memorise as many words as possible before being split in to two teams – A and B. Pupils then form pairs, one pupil from each team. Pupils proceed to test one another on the Spanish words they learnt. To test efficiently, pupils are given two bundles of cards, one featuring the Spanish words, the other the corresponding English translation. Pupils should go through the words one by one, testing both Spanish and English. A point is given for each word correctly translated.

Think time - A strategy also referred to as wait time. Time given to learners to reflect critically or creatively on a question or problem, or to pose another question.

Think, pair and share - An activity to encourage higher-order thinking that involves pupils thinking individually, then pairing with a partner, then sharing ideas with the wider group. The sequence generally begins with the teacher posing an open-ended question, to which there may be a range of responses. Think time or wait time is followed by discussion with a partner. The pair then share pooled ideas with the whole class.

Traffic lighting. A means of self-evaluation that displays how well a pupil or student has understood a topic or activity based on the colours of a traffic light. Green means 'I can do this'; amber means 'I'm reasonably confident'; and red means 'I need assistance'. It is particularly effective when pupils are involved in establishing, or at least addressing, the criteria for success.

Triads – (English) - In Triads, each student will have a role to play and therefore an input to the exercise. Students organise themselves in groups of three. Triads can be used for a variety of tasks: to gather evidence based on personal experience; to express and listen to another's viewpoints; to hotseat a character (either created or from text). One takes the role of interviewer, one the interviewee, and the last the reporter. The interviewer asks the questions, the interviewee responds and the reporter records the interviewee's answers.

Triads - (Ethical Enterprise) - This activity focuses on the core skills of Curriculum for Excellence which aspires to making young people confident individuals, successful learners, effective contributors and responsible citizens. The main learning intention of this activity is that young people will gain an understanding of ethical trading. Pupils will work together in groups of three. They will be given a scenario which requires them to think, discuss, negotiate, debate and compromise to ensure a successful outcome.



Two stars and a wish - A type of feedback given to pupils that identifies two strengths in their work and one area for future development. This enables learners to build on prior learning and breaks the process of improvement into manageable steps.

Wait time - A strategy of allowing some time to elapse between asking a question and taking answers. The point is to enable pupils to think, and to link the question to schemata of knowledge they already possess, before having to articulate the answer. Also known as 'think time'.

Walking in my Shoes - Pupils will have the opportunity to think about (empathise with) existing characters as they appear in the texts they are studying (eg William Beech in Goodnight Mr Tom) or to create their own characters for use in Creative Writing. The idea is that the 'shoe' of a character is used to stimulate discussion and thought about their personality – what makes them tick! This strategy helps either to deepen their understanding / appreciation of a literary character or aids in their creation of a convincing character for their own story.

WALT - An acronym for 'we are learning to'. WALT is used to convey a learning intention. It is sometimes characterised as an owl, or an animal.

WILF - An acronym for 'what I'm looking for'. An exemplification of success criteria, WILF is sometimes characterised as an animal or in comic human form.

Words into Pictures - (Biology) - This exercise is best carried out in groups of four pupils maximum. Pupils discuss the information given in the worksheets and use this information to complete the diagram. The exercise encourages pupils to think and analyse information as well as work collaboratively to reach conclusions. In this example pupils should complete the laminated version of the Nitrogen Cycle by placing the cards in the correct positions. On completion of the exercise students should have an understanding of how nitrogen is recycled in nature.