



South Gosforth First School

'Roots to grow and wings to fly'

South Gosforth First School – Our Philosophy & Approach to Assessment

At South Gosforth First School, we see assessment as an important part of the teaching and learning process.

Assessment as we see it is definitely not putting our pupils through endless testing or assessment papers to gain a 'snapshot' of their learning at one particular time. Whilst there is limited use for such data, this is not what our ethos of assessment is about.

Assessment is what we do in school each and every day. Assessment is how we know what to teach tomorrow and to ensure that all children make progress. It is not to 'hold staff to account' or to generate arbitrary numbers which give us a predetermined view of what our children can achieve. We follow a 'Mastery Curriculum' where we seek to deepen our pupils' understanding of concepts. We believe strongly in delivering an 'aspirational curriculum' for all, providing tailored support for our pupils who need it so that no-one is left behind on our learning journey. We work in mixed ability or 'fluid' groupings in the classroom and have high expectations of every one of our children - we never place a 'glass ceiling' on anyone's potential achievement.

In a class of thirty children and two adults there should be thirty-two assessors who should all be engaged in this ongoing process every day.

Our primary rationale for assessment is to use it to inform subsequent teaching and learning, to underpin our curriculum and most importantly to impact upon pupil progress – We believe that the assessment systems which we use in school enable us to do this in a robust and systematic way which keeps our children's learning at the centre of the process. We do not deliver 'assessment for assessment's sake' but seek to create a culture of challenge and ambition which encourages all of our pupils to work hard and do their best, but also be proactive in seeking support if they need it. We believe that this intrinsic motivation runs deeper than giving our children lists of 'empty targets' which do not mean anything to them. Children should be active participants in their own assessment; they should be reflective and know that they are being listened to by staff so that everyone knows where to take the learning next.

Our 'Feedback Policy' is largely centred around giving our pupils meaningful verbal feedback in lessons in addition to 'Live Marking', the use of 'Group Conferencing', 'Peer and Self-Assessment', as well as 'Quality Marking' on specific pieces of work where this would enable the child to 'move their learning on'. This, in addition to various other methods of assessment which we use, gives us a large evidence base which we can use to inform the learning process for our pupils.

Recording our Assessment

Our teachers record both formative and summative assessments frequently, but gather all of this information together on a robust tracking system once per term (or once per half term in certain areas). This system enables us to identify gaps in learning quickly and easily and cross references pupil achievements against national curriculum objectives.

Assessment in Different Subjects

In addition to ongoing assessment for learning which takes place in our lessons every day, we use the following methods of assessment in school to inform our teaching and practice:

Subject	How do we assess this?
Reading	<p>Guided & Whole Class Reading – Our pupils in Reception and Year 1 take part in three ‘Little Wandle’ Reading Group sessions per week focussing on decoding, prosody and comprehension. Pupils’ responses to particular questions or activities are recorded on a proforma which is used as an ongoing record of reading assessment.</p> <p>From Year 2 onwards children take part in daily ‘Whole Class Reading’ sessions using texts from our Whole School Reading Spine. The children complete a range of activities which cover National Curriculum reading objectives and these may be recorded in Whole Class Reading books. This provides an ongoing record of assessment in reading and enables teachers to clearly identify areas of future focus.</p> <p>Staff in school also regularly listen to lowest 20% children read individually and this is then recorded in pupils’ reading records. Once per term, teachers will then collate all this information together on to an assessment tracker which then clearly identifies strengths and areas of development for each child and class, based upon National Curriculum objectives.</p> <p>Reading Comprehension Activity – From an appropriate point in Year 1 right up to Year 4, our pupils complete an NFER Reading Comprehension assessment. The exception to this is Year 2 who complete the KS1 SAT Reading Comprehension assessment in summer term. These all provide additional validation for our ongoing teacher assessments from group and whole class reading sessions and contribute to our overall assessment in reading.</p>
Phonics	<p>Phonics Tracker – Pupils who are still learning to read and write using phonics are regularly assessed in daily phonics lessons through their work and on a one-to-one basis every half term through the use of ‘Little Wandle’ assessments. These assessments inform which reading book the child is allocated to ensure that it is at the appropriate phonics level and also whether they need any additional ‘Keep Up’ support. Teaching assistants will pick up on any children who appear to be falling behind within the teaching session through ‘Keep Up’ sessions during the week.</p> <p>In the summer term of Year 1, our children complete the national Phonics Screening Check. Any children who do not meet the required pass threshold will be given additional support in preparation to re-take the assessment in Year 2.</p>

<p>Writing</p>	<p>Extended Writing Quality Marking – Every half term the teachers will choose a longer piece of writing for the pupils in their class to complete independently. This will tend to be at the end of a teaching unit where the pupils have been taught the appropriate skills and techniques to complete the piece well. The teacher will then ‘quality mark’ this piece of independent writing and cross reference it against a range of writing national curriculum criteria for their particular year group, including spelling, punctuation and grammar. This will clearly identify individual and group ‘gaps in learning’ so that subsequent teaching in writing can address these areas for development.</p>
<p>Maths</p>	<p>Flashback 4 and Prior Learning In each teaching session, children are given the opportunity to regularly revisit previous learning as part of continuous assessment. Through Flashback 4, the children consolidate previous learning with 4 questions based around learning from the previous week, month, term and year. Prior Learning from the current week is also revisited. This form of ongoing assessment enables staff to address any misconceptions and to plan provision based on the identified learning needs.</p> <p>‘White Rose’ End of Block assessments– We use the ‘White Rose’ scheme of learning for Maths which is designed to support the development of reasoning and problem solving alongside fluency to ensure challenge and ambition for all of our pupils. The ‘White Rose’ mastery approach informs our whole provision in Maths and how we deliver our lessons. Before the end of each teaching block, we give all of our pupils from Year 1 upwards the End of Block Assessment task. Any learning needs identified from the assessment will be covered before the end of that teaching block.</p> <p>NFER Termly Assessments From Year 1 upwards, we use NFER assessment booklets in Arithmetic and Problem Solving at the end of each term. The exception of this is summer term in Year 2 where the children complete the SAT papers in Arithmetic, Reasoning and Problem Solving.</p>
<p>Spelling & Vocabulary</p>	<p>‘Warming Up the Words’ – For each curriculum area and teaching unit, we have identified key vocabulary which we would like the children to know and be able to use in context. We display these words on our classroom walls in a ‘Warming up the Words’ display. We split this in to English, Maths, Science and History / Geography. Teachers make specific reference to these words as they use them in their teaching. These words all start off ‘cold’ when the children don’t know them or what they mean. Throughout the topic, as the children begin to understand the meaning of this vocabulary, the children begin to ‘warm up the words’ and they go up the display to ‘warm words’. Once the children fully understand the words and can use them in context verbally and in their writing, they are classed as ‘Hot Words’.</p>

	<p>Weekly Spellings – Children in Year 1 upwards are given weekly spellings to learn. These include spelling patterns and the common exception word list for that year group.</p>
<p>Foundation Subjects</p>	<p>Assessment Tasks - In History, Geography and Science, children from Year 1 upwards complete an assessment task towards the end of the unit of work, but not in the very last lesson of that unit, so that there is time to revisit any concepts which the children are still unsure of before the unit is complete. These assessment tasks will be based around the enquiry question topic titles.</p> <p>‘Mantle of the Expert’ & Enquiry Based Learning – As part of our learning journey at South Gosforth First School, we conclude many of our teaching units using an approach called ‘Mantle of the Expert’. ‘Mantle of the Expert’ is an education approach that uses imaginary contexts to generate purposeful and engaging activities for learning. We believe that using this teaching approach enables our pupils to apply all of the skills, knowledge and high-level vocabulary that they have learned throughout a teaching unit and extend it in to a ‘real life’ and meaningful context. This provides us with valuable assessment information and enables our pupils to follow their own lines of enquiry and clearly demonstrate everything that they have learned in the most purposeful, engaging and creative way which really deepens their understanding.</p> <p>We record our ‘Mantle of the Expert’ units and enquiry-based learning approaches in a range of different ways, including the use of floor books, videos, photographs with annotations, use of the ‘Book Creator’ app, as well as pupil work in books.</p>
<p>Early Years</p>	<p>Ongoing Assessment & ‘Tapestry’ – Pupils in Reception are constantly assessed by staff working alongside them, through their work in taught sessions, like Phonics, Maths and Writing, but also through their self-initiated learning in ‘Busy Play’. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely with all of the children and use verbal and written feedback from the children, as well as ‘going in to the children’s play’ to record observations which are then cross referenced against ‘Development Matters’ and ‘Early Learning Goal’ criteria. These observations (either photographs or videos) are then put on to our secure ‘Tapestry’ online learning journey system complete with annotations, which are also shared with parents and carers.</p> <p>Pupils in Reception also take part in 3 ‘Little Wandle’ Reading Group sessions a week focussing on decoding, prosody and comprehension and pupils’ responses to particular questions or activities are recorded on a proforma which is used as an ongoing record of reading assessment.</p> <p>Staff in Reception also collate assessment information on to assessment trackers at the end of each term in order to judge progress and any group or individual ‘gaps’ in learning which will need to inform subsequent provision or intervention.</p>