# Progress, Assessment and Feedback at Whitmore High School

## A research-based rationale for assessment and feedback

An evidence-based approach has been used to create the school's vision for progress, assessment and feedback *(see references).* At the heart of the school's rationale are the guiding principles for assessment within the new Curriculum for Wales: *"The overarching purpose of assessment is to support every learner to make progress. When planning and delivering learning experiences, schools and practitioners should be clear about the specific role of each assessment being undertaken and what the understanding gained from assessment will be used for and why." (1)* Furthermore, *"Assessment arrangements should give priority to their formative role in teaching and learning" (2)* in order to ensure that assessment has a direct impact on learners' progress. We are also conscious that, *"Some forms of marking, including acknowledgement marking, are unlikely to enhance pupil progress," (3)* and that our teachers, *"should mark less in terms of the number of pieces of work marked, but mark better." (3)* Indeed, *"Marking was identified as the single biggest contributor to unsustainable workload in the Department for Education's 2014 Workload Challenge" (3)* and so we aim to ensure that all assessment and feedback activities have a high impact, leading to measurable progress for learners and do not create unnecessary workload for teachers.

## Assessment and data capture

At Whitmore High School, the innovations being implemented in assessment are based on three key principles:

1. Robust assessment and tracking data should be reliable, accurate and valid.
2. Tracking and assessment should be purposefully and meaningfully used to monitor progress of all learners and drive improvements in standards.
3. Fewer tracking points will allow for more purposeful assessment and feedback, leading to an increase in quality and effectiveness of assessments and decreased teacher workload.

These principles align with the assessment goals detailed in the Successful Futures report, whilst ensuring our pupils have the best possible opportunity to achieve the outcomes which they are capable of. In our use of tracking and assessment data, we wanted to ensure that: *"Assessment should also enable practitioners and leaders within the school to understand whether different groups of learners are making expected progress" (1).*

We have therefore implemented from September 2021 the Whitmore High School assessment cycle. Initially, CAT4 and progress testing is completed and this is used to produce expected grades/levels for each learner which are agreed by class teachers and middle level leaders as well as to identify pupils in need of additional support or challenge. Whole school tracking is completed three times per year when teachers are expected to record the results of formal assessments as well as current working grades/levels for learners based on these and previous assessment results, as well as recording whether pupils are working at, above or below the expected level of effort**.**

Departmental assessment plans have been created and agreed, with a minimum of one formalised assessment being completed in each tracking cycle, with full and detailed written feedback on formal assessments in the form of individual and/or whole class feedback. Where appropriate, these assessments may take the form of mock exams and be completed in exam halls**.** Formalised assessments help to build resilience in our learners and, in preparing for these, they learn the skills and revision strategies necessary to become *"ambitious, capable learners… ready to learn throughout their lives"* and *"are building their mental and emotional well-being by developing confidence [and] resilience" (4)* Directed improvement and reflection time (DIRT) must follow each formal assessment to allow learners to act on the feedback given**.** There is no expectation for books to be marked, although teachers are expected to be looking at these regularly to monitor progress, understanding, effort and standards. Online and independent learning can be marked automatically or whole class feedback given where appropriate.

After each assessment cycle, data analysis documents are created to enable the leadership team, middle level leaders and individual teachers to analyse assessment and tracking data for individuals, specific groups and whole cohorts of learners**.** Post-tracking action plans are then produced and included in departmental development plans to further drive standards, identify pupils of concern and ensure specific action is taken to address any underperformance both within the classroom and, where appropriate, in the form of contact home and/or additional interventions or revision sessions**.**

## Live feedback and assessment

In implementing the Whitmore High School teaching and learning model, we wanted it to be explicit for teachers and learners that: *"Assessment is an ongoing process which is indistinguishable from learning and teaching."* *(1)* Feedback works both ways: formative assessment (e.g. through questioning, mini-whiteboards or observation of pupils' practical or written work) provides feedback from pupils to teachers, enabling them to identify misconceptions, assess progress and understanding and adapt their teaching accordingly; feedback from teachers to pupils (e.g. through live marking, pitstops and action points) can remove misconceptions and provides opportunities for pupils to receive regular, precise guidance on how to improve their work, *"giving effective and timely feedback and support to students that focuses on improving learning" (5),* thereby coaching them to success. Teachers should also make use of, *"purposeful opportunities for pupils to assess their own and their peers' learning where appropriate" (6).* According to extensive research by the Education Endowment Foundation, effective feedback can result in up to 6 months of additional progress *(7).* We have therefore based our Whitmore High School assessment and feedback strategy on three key tenets:

1. High quality feedback is the cornerstone of using assessment to drive progress, but, for feedback to be effective, teachers need time to give it and pupils need time to act on it.
2. Feedback can be verbal, digital, written or recorded; it can be instant or delayed; it can be given to individuals, groups or whole classes.
3. Feedback needs to be precise, concise and specific, focused on the task, subject and self-regulation strategies and delivered in a way that pupils can understand, accept and act upon.

As we only expect detailed written feedback on formal assessments and the expectation to mark books has been removed, we expect detailed and precise live feedback within lessons*.* Live feedback can: be given to individuals, groups or the whole class; be verbal and/or written; should result in pupils making immediate progress.

## Quality assurance and improvement processes

INSET training has focused on the principles of effective feedback *(8)***.** Performance management observations and targets as well as the CPD coaching programme include a focus on questioning, assessment and feedback within lessons**.** Regular calendared quality assurance activities (learning walks, learner voice and work scrutiny) should *"consider how well verbal and written feedback helps pupils to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve" (6)* and feed into the departmental and whole school improvement plans. Line management meetings with senior leadership team should include focus on data analysis as well as quality assurance activities**.**

## References

(1) Curriculum for Wales guidance - assessment: https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/designing-your-curriculum/developing-a-vision-for-curriculum-design/#assessment
(2) Successful Futures: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/successful-futures.pdf
(3) EEF: A Marked Improvement? (2016): https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/documents/guidance/EEF_Marking_Review_April_2016.pdf
(4) Curriculum for Wales guidance – the four purposes: https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/designing-your-curriculum/developing-a-vision-for-curriculum-design/#curriculum-design-and-the-four-purposes
(5) CAMAU Project: Progression Frameworks and Progression Steps Background Paper: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3806608
(6) Estyn Guidance for Inspectors: What We Inspect: https://www.estyn.gov.wales/system/files/2021-12/What%20we%20inspect_0.pdf
(7) Education Endowment Foundation Teaching & Learning Toolkit: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/feedback
(8) Teacher Feedback to Improve Pupil Learning guidance report: https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/eef-guidance-reports/feedback/Teacher_Feedback_to_Improve_Pupil_Learning.pdf