The Willows School

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ASSESSMENT, FEEDBACK, MARKING, RECORDING AND REPORTING POLICY

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Next review: June 2026

Reviewed by: Rebecca Warhurst, Headteacher

John Bolton, Governance Chair

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

Assessment is a central part of the teaching and learning process. It is an important feature of the school's planning arrangements and the monitoring of the progression of individual pupils.

We believe that the purpose of assessment, feedback and marking is to encourage and support good pupil progress. Observing and providing feedback on any element of pupil engagement is an important part of assessing and accelerating pupil progress. It is at its most effective when it is constructive, at the point of learning and directly informs next steps for learning.

1.1   AIMS

This policy is intended to provide clear guidelines on our school's approach to assessment, feedback and marking, as well as setting out how we will record and report on information to those requiring it.

Our approach will:

- be coherent and consistent across all subject areas/ the whole school,
- provide a system that is clear to everyone: pupils, staff and other stakeholders,
- ensure that all pupils are challenged in a supportive way, and their achievements celebrated,
- provide encouragement through feedback and marking to improve and extend pupil knowledge, understanding and skills,
- ensure that feedback is appropriate to the needs and ages of pupils across all Key Stages,
- ensure that marking and feedback is clear, relevant and useful to pupils,
- be accessible to pupils, e.g. written feedback who can read and understand the information.

1.2   Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, we use the following definitions:

Assessment is a process conducted in a number of ways, which provides information on the individual pupil's experience and achievement.   Assessment identifies what the child knows, understands and is able to do, and provides information to guide future planning for learning and development.

Feedback is information given verbally to a pupil about their performance of a task, which includes suggestions for any improvement.

Marking is a process of providing written feedback on a pupil's work, typically in the form of comments, corrections and suggestions for further improvement.

Both feedback and marking should be meaningful, manageable, and motivating.

- Meaningful: marking will vary by age, ability, subject, and what will work best for the pupils and teaching staff, in relation to any piece of work. Staff are encouraged to adjust their approach as necessary and are trusted to incorporate the outcomes into follow on planning and teaching.
- Manageable: marking practice is realistic, in terms of being proportionate, balancing frequency and complexity of written feedback alongside time-effectiveness of marking and the overall workload of teaching staff.
- Motivating: marking should help to motivate pupils to continue to engage well and make good progress. This does not mean that comments should be lengthy: sometimes short, challenging comments or timely, verbal feedback are more effective.

Recording is the system by which we store relevant data or information about a pupil's progress and achievement. This provides a database of information about what a pupil knows, understands and is able to do at any given time.

Reporting is the method we use to communicate information to parents/ carers and local authorities, about a pupil's engagement, attainment, and overall achievements in school.

1.3   Context

The nature and makeup of the pupil cohort can vary significantly from one year to the next.   Pupils' needs, abilities and progress make it difficult to measure progress within a group of pupils, across a year or Key Stage. The small number of pupils in each Key Stage makes whole school analysis challenging. Senior leaders consider the following factors:

- pupils come on roll at any point throughout the academic year,
- needs and difficulties vary and can be quite complex,
- many pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge due to disengagement, persistent absence and/ or multiple suspensions or exclusion.

Staff have developed systems of assessing and providing feedback/ marking which will be supportive and relevant to the individual pupil, whilst providing the school with the information needed to judge overall progress and inform planning.

2.0   WHY WE ASSESS AND GIVE FEEDBACK

Teaching staff observe pupils throughout each day; sometimes deliberately and formally, for the most part, as part of day-to-day interactions and supervision in lessons and breaktimes.   Staff are well placed, trained and effective in 'catching pupils being good and doing well'.

Our staff can identify when a pupil has made progress, whether socially, emotionally, behaviourally and/ or academically.   Staff can recognise even the tiniest steps of learning and progress because they know pupils well. We encourage staff to assess pupil progress in all areas. We encourage staff to give feedback when pupils are 'caught doing well' and it should be given in such a way that the individual pupil will respond well to. For some pupils, that might be an encouraging quiet word, for others it will be recognition in front of peers.

We assess pupils to:

- give pupils the criteria to meet the next step in their learning, at whatever level this may be,
- ensure that pupils are made aware of their steps to success, at an appropriate level,
- assess whether learning outcomes have been met,
- celebrate success,
- develop self-esteem,
- encourage self-reflection and to develop self-awareness of how we can all learn, sometimes by having confidence to make 'mistakes',
- develop resilience by being able to accept positively to constructive criticism.

3.0   HOW WE ASSESS AND GIVE FEEDBACK

As described above, staff will use every opportunity to 'assess' pupils. This will not always require pupils to sit and complete a formal test or examination. Often, pupils will not be aware that progress has been noted and assessed, until the point that feedback is given.

Assessment within our school is carried out by:

- observation of activities,
- talking and listening to pupils,
- class discussions to review objectives,
- marking written work,
- helping pupils to set short-term targets and review their progress against these,
- specific assessment tasks or tests.

3.1   Timely and Appropriate Feedback

Feedback is most effective when it is given at the time of an action, or as close to the action as possible. Feedback needs to be immediate and should relate directly to the task or action, including any learning objective of a lesson.

Feedback will be given at an appropriate level for students to understand. For our students, immediate verbal feedback related to the learning objective is essential to promote an understanding of their own achievements and their next steps to success.

3.2   Verbal Feedback and Marking

For pupils, producing written work in English, Maths and other subject areas, marking will be primarily delivered verbally and discussed in connection with the learning objective of the lesson.

When written feedback is required, teaching staff, through assessment should indicate the pupil's understanding by marking the work with **up to three ticks** to show a level of understanding and **a small circle** to highlight that the objective was not met. Feedback in books should allow opportunities for pupils to independently recognise errors and improve their ability to self-correct. See appendix 1.

Teaching staff should ensure ample time is given to allow pupils to re-visit their work and respond to any further learning required. It is crucial that we encourage pupils to be independent in identifying problems with their own work, actions, or performance, particularly in areas of the curriculum where they need additional support.

3.3   How Feedback Works in Practice

Type of feedback	What might this look like in a classroom/ elsewhere?	Evidence (for observers)
Immediate	• takes place in lessons with individual pupils or groups, • given using the pupil's preferred method of communication so that pupils can act, • includes staff gathering feedback from teaching e.g. whiteboards, work in books, • will involve adults supporting in teaching and learning activities, • may redirect the focus of the task or teaching, • providing of stickers/ tangible reward.	• Lesson observations or learning walks, • Evidence in books linked to marking annotations, • Photographs/ video/ observations.
Summary	• takes place at the end of a lesson or activity, • often involves the whole group or class, • provides an opportunity for evaluation of learning in the lesson, • may include some self or peer evaluation, • may include sharing of work completed.	• Lesson observations/ learning walks, • Photographs/ video/ observations, • Certificates etc.
Review	• takes place away from the point of teaching/ activity, • provides teachers with opportunities for assessment of understanding, • leads to adaptations of future lessons through planning, grouping or adaptation of tasks, • multiagency liaison as appropriate.	• Written comments/ annotations, • Photographs/ video/ observations, • Adaptations to planning / teaching and learning.

3.3   Types of Assessment We Use:

We place great emphasis on 'knowing' our pupils well. To support this, information is gathered in a number of ways, starting before a pupil joins our school:

Liaison with previous school settings to gain as much information as possible about prior engagement, likes, dislikes, strengths, skills, aspirations, learning, attainment and overall achievement,

Pre-admission meetings with pupil, parents/ carers and school staff will also be held to help build a better understanding of the pupil and their individual needs.

1.Baseline Assessment

During the first 12 weeks of a young person joining us at Silver Birch School, the staff and young people will begin creating positive working relationships to enable the best possible learning environment for the young people. In addition, they will take a variety of baseline assessments to determine their individual strengths and areas that require support.

GL Assessments

To establish a baseline for our young people, we will primarily utilise GL Assessments. As a trusted provider with over 30 years of expertise in educational assessment, GL Assessment offers tests that evaluate verbal, non-verbal, quantitative, and spatial reasoning. These assessments help identify individual strengths and areas requiring improvement.

Intent

These assessments will provide insight into each young person's academic standing, highlighting their strengths and areas for improvement. This enables us to design a tailored curriculum that meets the unique needs of each pupil, ensuring a truly bespoke educational experience.

Implementation

Our core offer will include:

PTE - The Progress Test in English is an attainment test. It assesses key aspects of English appropriate to the age of the students: phonic knowledge and skills; spelling, punctuation and grammar; and reading comprehension.

PTM – The Progress Test in Mathematics measures students' mathematical skills and knowledge in areas such as number, shape, data handling and algebra, as well as their mathematical reasoning and problem solving.

PTS - The Progress Test in Science provides practical, reliable and independent snapshots in science attainment, which can be used to baseline and then to measure in year or year-on-year progress

CAT4 UK - The Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT4) reveals hidden potential by assessing the main types of reasoning ability known to make a difference to learning and achievement, providing you with a rounded profile of the whole child

NGRT - The NGRT allows teachers to compare decoding skills and sentence completion against passage comprehension, helping to identify, for example, competent decoders with weak comprehension skills. It is well standardised and re-verified every year. Children receive a standard age score (SAS).

NGST - A summary of the age-standardised scores for the chosen group of students, presented in rank order and compared to the national population (national percentile rank).

Our referral offer will include:

Dyslexia Screener - Identifies dyslexic tendencies and recommends intervention strategies, helping students achieve their potential.

Dyscalculia Screener - An initial screener for teachers concerned about a pupil's numeracy progress and skills application

Impact

These tests will enable each pupil to access and engage with a curriculum tailored to their individual needs and strengths, fostering a genuine love of learning.

RWI Phonics and Freshstart

We will establish a phonics and/or reading baseline for our young people using the 'Read Write Inc Entry Assessment' for phonics and Freshstart. This will outline a starting point for our young people. It is designed so we can group children into broad Speeds Sounds groups; also, it enables all our young people to read at 'their challenge point (not too easy, not too difficult)'. For young people to make the best possible progress, it is important they read Storybooks closely matched to their reading level.

iASEND Curriculum

At Silver Birch School, we will be using iASEND, which is a tracking system used mainly for formative assessment for children with special educational needs and allows schools to assess the small steps of progress relevant to their own assessment level. Following the report from the baseline assessments, each pupil will be set a tailored curriculum for each individual subject. Each curriculum will be measured against national curriculum objectives that have been broken down into smaller steps for those children with additional needs or making slow progress. The iASEND curriculum involves five different pupil curriculums named A, S, E, N and D. This follows the iASEND philosophy of the children ascending through the curriculum. The following is the key which explains how the curriculum operates:

A = The Engagement Model (Similar attainment level as historical P1 - P4)

S = Pre Key Stage 1 level (Similar attainment level as historical P5 - P8)

E = KS1 curriculum broken down into smaller steps

N = KS2 curriculum broken down into smaller steps

D = KS3 curriculum broken down into smaller steps

Baseline data will be recorded using GL Assessment reports. When entering this data, children will be assessed against small steps derived from national curriculum statements. Staff will track progress by documenting the depth of learning for each statement, categorised as: *Not Met* (not yet observed), *Shallow* (observed in one lesson), *Emerging* (observed in two lessons), *Developing* (observed in most lessons), *Deepening* (observed in a range of contexts), and *Functional* (observed in all contexts).

Securing key baseline information about any pupil's starting points, establishing gaps in prior learning, knowledge and skills is essential if we are to plan appropriate learning.

All baseline assessment is undertaken sensitively and with an acute awareness that many pupils will not 'sit formal assessment' willingly, therefore staff are creative in getting the information we need.

The **induction process** supports teaching staff, and also Tutors who will support pupils to settle in, socialise appropriately and make friends with peers. Information and observations during induction help staff to draft support plans for every pupil in the school. **Targets** are discussed and agreed with due reference to the pupil's **Education, Health and Care Plan** (EHCP) and/ or **Personal Education Plans** (PEPs).

2. Diagnostic Assessment

Diagnostic assessment helps to identify a learner's strengths and areas for development. We use outcomes to plan future work and to identify any additional support needed. This process also helps us with our target setting and to reflect on the quality and appropriateness of the teaching and learning strategies which we use.

3. Summative Assessment

Provides a snapshot of attainment at the end of a unit, term, Year group, Key Stage or when a pupil is leaving the school. It makes judgments about performance in relation to national standards.

4. Formative Assessment

Assessment for Learning is the day-to-day ongoing assessment to enable teaching staff to identify the next steps in a pupil's learning and to enable them to have greater involvement and responsibility for their own learning. Key strategies used to ensure good formative assessment takes place include observation, discussion, questioning, paired response work and providing quality feedback and marking.

3.4   Assessment for Learning

Strategy	How and when?	Purpose
Learning Objectives	Learning objectives can be tracked to objectives in medium-term plans and are shared with pupils at the beginning of lessons and clearly separated from the explanation of the activity	Clarify the Learning Objective. Give learning a clear focus
Success Criteria	Learning Outcomes are shared, discussed and agreed with pupils.	Clarify the learning outcome. Set expected standards
Live feedback*	Work discussed with learner in the lesson, improvements made as they are pointed out, modelling of skill by staff	Immediate impact on standards, better understanding from pupils
Feedback and Marking (Codes to be in books and displayed in classrooms)*	Oral and written feedback, linked to learning objective is focused on the shared learning objectives of the lesson.	Providing verbal and written comments on how pupils can improve their work and make progress towards their personal targets.
Observation/ recording learner voice	Ongoing observations watching, listening and talking, recording of learner voice during lessons	To inform APP, AFL, creating bespoke curriculum to take account of interests of pupils, to record thoughts/ opinions/ideas
Questioning	Teachers encourage, trigger and sustain verbal dialogue, targeted - questions used to engage reluctant pupils	To enable pupils to become independent pupils.
Self-Assessment and/ or Peer Assessment	During lessons, pupils are expected to reflect on what they have learned and what they need to do to improve. Pupils are encouraged to assess each other's work and to provide fair and helpful feedback (when appropriate)	To be reflective and able to self-assess, to have a voice in their own learning, to share ideas with peers
Talking Partners	The educational environment gives pupils the confidence to verbalise partially formed thinking and constructively challenge each other's ideas	Development of AFL skills, develop ability to verbalise successes and areas for improvement, to become a more reflective learner
Target Setting	Teachers use an appropriate range of data to baseline learner performance, set targets and judge processes. Targets are shared with pupils	To ensure progression towards curricular targets. To ensure pupils are aware of their targets and how to meet them

3.5 Ongoing Assessment, Monitoring and Reporting

Assessment is used regularly by staff and outcomes are recorded and monitored. This helps us to track pupil progress across a range of areas, including how they are making progress socially, emotionally and academically.

Monitoring involves tracking outcomes as systematically as possible to build a good picture of the progress that each pupil or group of pupils makes along their expected learning path. Information is used by all members of staff to inform not only teaching and learning but also a range of interventions and support to help pupils engage and achieve well.

Assessment and progress information is provided to parents and carers to inform them about their child's progress. As a minimum, we provide an annual Education Report, providing progress updates across all subjects. Each term we will provide an interim report, which will give a snapshot of pupil engagement and progress, including attendance, punctuality and effort grades.

As a new school, we are already busy establishing a framework that is woven throughout all Key Stages to create and strengthen pathways for continuous progression. Ultimately, our focus will be for assessment and monitoring to be useful and informative when reviewing or modifying individualised programmes of learning for all pupils.

3.6 Expected Levels of Progress

Our initial focus will always be to identify pupils' starting points, including any gaps in prior learning, knowledge, understanding and/ or skills. We focus on addressing those gaps at an appropriate pace for each individual pupil.

Ultimately, we aspire for pupils to make progress at the same rate as their peers in mainstream schools. After all, our pupils need to be prepared to function in the world beyond school. Ideally, they should be equipped to compete with their peers from mainstream, if they are to have the best possible range of career opportunities and life chances as adults.

Pupils are expected to progress in English, Mathematics, Science and PSHCEE between each Key Stage. Our aim is for pupils to make a grade or programme of study worth of progress during each academic year. However, while we remain ambitious, all pupils are treated as individuals, and we recognise and understand that pupils with differing abilities and experiences of school may not always make the expected levels of progress.

Where expected progress is not made, we identify and implement further support and interventions, including deploying a dedicated Teaching Assistant. We know that there is a significant link between mental health and well-being and the impact this has on progress. Many of our pupils might have a range of mental health difficulties and a history of trauma, which they are supported to come to terms with, alongside their studies.

3.7   Target Setting and Review

A range of targets are set for pupils, which might include for attendance, punctuality, positive engagement with peers, or in learning and academic targets. Outcomes of assessment will inform target setting and review on a half-termly basis.

Targets will be informed by objectives in a pupil's EHCP and/ or those agreed as part of a PEP. Parents and carers will be kept informed and as involved as possible, through review meetings and reports.

Tutors will help pupils to know and review their targets each day and week as appropriate. Learning targets will be shared in pupil's books or work folders.

Targets will be reviewed formally as part of the Annual Review of EHCP process. Termly summary reports will be sent to parents and carers, highlighting interim achievements.

3.8   Record Keeping

A variety of assessment evidence is collected to form the basis of assessment records which are in turn used for a range of purposes.

Each class teacher will be provided with an assessment table at the start of each assessment cycle. Teaching staff are responsible for ensuring all pupils have outcomes data and other progress related information for all subjects. Teachers will be responsible for ensuring this data is accurate and provided by the deadline given for reporting.

Data will be inputted into the school tracking system on a half-termly basis. This data will be quality assured by the leadership team, scrutinised through the school governance process, and also externally by an independent School Improvement Partner.

3.9   Reporting

Parents and carers are informed of their child's progress through:

- home-school diaries, monitored by Tutors,
- weekly Tutor calls home,
- termly summary reports providing grades for effort, engagement and overall progress,
- annual reports from all subject areas,
- six-monthly Personal Education Plan review, for children looked after,
- the Annual Review process, including report on progress towards objectives in the EHCP,

Due to the vulnerability of many of our pupils, data collection and reports may be requested as part of multi-disciplinary team meetings, e.g. Looked After Child Review, PEP, or safeguarding and Child Protection Meetings. Staff will be expected to contribute to the writing of such reports as appropriate.

3.10 Monitoring and Review

Monitoring and review processes include:

- work scrutiny, including book trawls across a class or subject,
- planning scrutiny,
- learning walks,
- discussion involving pupils,
- discussion with parents and carers,
- formal lesson observations,
- monitoring the use of progress database,
- monitoring use of data and information, to inform planning,
- progress checks on a half-termly basis,
- monitoring use of targeted interventions and their impact,
- monitoring use of AfL to ensure accelerated progress for all,
- impact on summative assessment results,
- continual professional development on moderation of assessment,
- moderation with peer staff from mainstream/ other similar special schools, especially with Key Stage 4 courses of study towards external accreditation.

3.11 Data Analysis

Data collected is used to highlight where bespoke targeted interventions can be most effective for individual pupils and groups. Data is used by leaders and individual teaching staff to inform planning and review.

Analysis and subsequent reports are shared with a variety of audiences including parents/ carers, the Proprietor and those responsible for governance, Ofsted and commissioning Local Authorities as appropriate. A full data report is produced at the end of each full term and the Headteacher provides an Annual Report for governance at the end of each academic year.

4.0 APPENDICIES

4.1   Appendix 1 – Marking and Feedback Codes

Marking Codes	
✓✓✓ (next to LO)	Pupil has **met** Learning Objective
✓✓ (next to LO)	Pupil has **partially met** Learning Objective
✓ (next to LO)	Pupil has **not met** Learning Objective
WWW	What Went Well – What I thought you did well
EBI	Even Better If – How you can improve your work next time
VF	Verbal Feedback
Green pen	Areas of growth
Sp with green pen	Check spelling
Circled letter with green pen	Check correct use of capital letters
Triangle with green pen	Check correct use of punctuation
Underlined with green pen	Read this again. Does it need changing?
Pink pen	Praise
Underlined with pink pen	I have highlighted this as a positive
Purple pen	Pupil response/editing/corrections