Assessment for Learning Policy

Please note; this Policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies involving teaching and learning.

1. Introduction

At Dafen Primary School we want all children to make good or better progress and develop positive attitudes to their learning. **'Assessment for Learning'** is central to children recognising and achieving their potential.

Assessment for Learning is concerned with both the learner and the teacher being aware of where learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how to get there.

The following policy outlines the key issues that ensure the teachers and the children at Dafen Primary School achieve high standards and have ownership over the learning and teaching that takes place within the school.

2. Aims

The intention is for Assessment for Learning (AfL) to occur in everyday lessons. AfL improves learning and raises standards. The way teachers mark and give feedback to pupils is central to the process.

The Welsh Assembly Government's definition of Assessment for Learning (AfL), contained in the document 'Why develop thinking and assessment for learning in the classroom?' (2009), is summarised as follows:

Assessment for learning (or formative assessment) is finding out where a learner is within a learning continuum (A), knowing and making explicit where the learner needs to get to (B) and most importantly showing the learner (or ensuring the learner knows) how to get there (C).

ABC

It is essential that the learner takes action in order to reach B for formative assessment to have taken place.

In implementing AfL at Dafen Primary School, we ensure that the learning is child-centred. The role of the teacher is to facilitate the learning rather than being the presenter of information – 'the guide at the side not the sage on the stage.' We encourage the learners to take ownership of their own learning and we provide opportunities for all learners to actively participate in lessons. In order to achieve this, we create a safe, positive learning environment in the

classroom which promotes a 'growth mind-set,' that is, intelligence is expandable and everyone has the ability to improve.

3. Assessment for Learning Principles in the Classroom

We ensure that the following AfL principles are implemented in the classroom:

- 3.1 Effective questioning and talk;

- 3.2 Learners generating success criteria;

- 3.3 Giving learners formative feedback;

- 3.4 Self and peer assessment.

3.1 Effective questioning and talk

To ensure meaningful classroom dialogue, 'The dialogue between pupils and a teacher should be thoughtful, reflective, focused to evoke and explore understanding, and conducted so that all pupils have an opportunity to think and to express their ideas.' (Black, P.J. & Wiliam, D. (1998) Inside the Black Box: Raising standards through classroom assessment. King's College, London)

To implement this principle:

- We prepare rich, open questions to ask the learners. We define such a question as :

Ø   One which makes the learner think

Ø   One which stimulates discussion

Ø   One to which everyone can offer an answer, (i.e. it is accessible)

Ø   One which has a purpose (i.e. its focus is on the learning objective). Such questions reveal learners' understanding and move their learning on rather than simply requiring them to recall knowledge they already have. They may be subject specific questions or questions which encourage learners to reflect on the learning process, e.g. metacognition questions.

- We allow enough time for learners to think before answering open questions. This ensures that all learners can participate and not only those who can internalise the question and formulate an answer quickly. The resulting answers are longer, less superficial and more thoughtful. Strategies we use to ensure that the increased thinking time is used

effectively include 'Think, pair, share', 'mini whiteboards' and 'choice of answers'.

• We use 'no hands up' to ensure that all learners have to engage and mentally articulate a response as they may be called upon to answer.

• We ensure that there are opportunities for all learners to discuss their ideas with others in order for them to show, extend and test their understanding – e.g. through using random talk partners.

• We create a safe learning environment where the learners know that mistakes and misunderstandings are an essential part of learning. In creating an atmosphere where wrong answers are genuinely valued and explored, learners feel confident to offer ideas, speculate, engage in any task and therefore extend their learning.

• We encourage learners to ask questions and to develop an enquiring mind, e.g. using strategies such as 'Hot seating.'

3.2 Learners generate success criteria

To move their learning on, learners need to fully understand the next steps to take. They need to know where they are going (the learning intentions) and how best to get there (success criteria). They will understand and internalise the success criteria best if they play an active part in generating them. This also helps them to take responsibility for their own learning. We appreciate that learners will not know instinctively how to do this and so we coach them by modelling the processes and thinking involved. To implement this principle:

• We share the learning intentions/objectives with the learners, ensuring that they are accessible and unambiguous. Where appropriate, we separate the learning intention from its context as this helps the learners to understand that they are learning skills which can be transferred to a range of contexts (bridging),

• We set the learning objective and the task into the wider picture so that the learners understand why they are doing it.

• Learners work collaboratively to identify appropriate success criteria. We use a range of strategies to enable them to do so, such as:

> Ø   We show or model good quality work and ask learners to identify what makes it 'good.'

Ø   We show a good and a bad example. Learners see exemplars of differing qualities and have to work out which one of them is better and why. These better qualities form the basis of the success criteria.

Ø   We give learners incorrect work based on poor quality success criteria and let them work out what has gone wrong.

Ø   We encourage learners to evaluate and refine their success criteria in the light of their experience. By doing this, it does not matter if learners' original success criteria are not accurate as they will learn through their errors.

Ø   Learners revisit, and revise if necessary, existing success criteria which they previously generated for the same skill in a different context, e.g. writing instructions: previous context: making a cup of tea; present context: keeping safe on bonfire night.

• We display the learning objectives and success criteria so that the learners can refer to them regularly throughout the task to keep their learning on track.

- We find that all learners benefit from these strategies, but that the most significant gains are for learners with low basic skills. This may be partly because, in the past, they may not have known explicitly what constitutes 'good' work. The developing thinking section of the skills framework contains two principles to do with learners generating success criteria, namely 'determining success criteria' and 'reviewing outcomes and success criteria.' We use these two principles to monitor learners' development in these

3.3 Formative Feedback – oral and written

The purpose of AfL is to provide feedback in such a way that learning will improve as a result. Teachers need to identify the next steps to learning as well as responding appropriately to the mistakes that they make. Teacher's feedback will provide pupils with the information they need to achieve the next step and make better progress. Feedback will always be constructive and sensitive because any assessment has an emotional impact. Feedback that comments on the work rather than the child are more constructive for both learning and motivation.

<u>3.4 To implement this principle:</u>

- We use comment only marking. Research has shown that feedback as grades or marks has a negative effect on learning as it takes learners' attention away from the constructive comments provided.
- We use 'closing the gap' comments which identify specific strengths or achievements in the work and specific actions to take – e.g. 'two stars and a wish'
- We provide feedback as soon as possible and give the learners time to think about the comments and act on them then and there, e.g. with written feedback we set aside a few minutes at the beginning of the lesson for the learners to read our comments and make improvements to their work.
- We base our comments on the learning objectives and success criteria.
- We ensure that learners have feedback frequently during the lesson in order to give them opportunities to make on-going improvements. Dylan William states feedback should be a 'minute-to-minute' process rather than end-loaded (at the end of a task) and that one improvement per learner per lesson would imply very slow progress.

    <u>Strategies we use include:</u>
    Ø   Learners checking their work against the success criteria.
    Ø   Learners comparing their own work with good quality exemplars.
    Ø   Class discussion of one learner's on-going work displayed on the whiteboard using a visualiser.
    Ø   The teacher questioning/probing an individual/small group about on-going work.
    Ø   The teacher raising an observed common problem with the whole class.
    Ø   Peer and self-assessment (see below).

<u>Peer and self-assessment</u>
If it is only the teacher who gives feedback, then the balance is wrong and the learners do not actively participate in their own learning. Peer and self-assessment are crucial to the learning process and they benefit the learner in a number of ways, e.g.
- They allow learners to assess their own understanding and identify success and areas to develop. This has a positive influence on the learners' self esteem, motivation and progress.

It helps them to see themselves as the beneficiaries rather than the victims of

assessment and enables them to take ownership of their own learning.

- • Teachers are freed up to observe and reflect on what is happening and to make helpful interventions where necessary.

- • Learners may accept from one another criticisms of their work which they may not take from a teacher

- • We recognise that self and peer assessment are not something that learners can do instinctively and they will not happen overnight. Therefore, we coach learners to self and peer assess by modelling processes and strategies e.g. the kinds of questions and thinking which are helpful. We also train learners to work effectively in pairs and groups as this is an essential prerequisite to peer assessment Usually learners need to be effective peer assessors before they become effective at self- assessment.

  - To peer and self-assess, the learners must fully understand the learning objectives and the success criteria – the success criteria will be understood and used most effectively if the learners have been involved in constructing them, as noted above. Otherwise, they have no frame of reference against which to assess and feedback will be low level and superficial. With this in place, learners can peer and self assess against the success criteria regularly throughout the lesson and make improvements to their work accordingly (see examples of strategies under formative feedback above).

- We use information from self assessment (as with other types of assessment) to inform future teaching and to know where and when additional support or intervention is needed during lessons. We use strategies such as 'traffic lights' and 'thumbs up / thumbs down' to get learners to reflect on their current understanding. Such strategies are very effective once the learners have learnt to accurately and honestly self-assess. At the end of each school year, children in Years 1 and 2 will complete a self- assessment/evaluation of their current year and set targets for the coming year (see pages 15 and 16). In Upper KS2 children will use learning logs to record their thoughts and feelings about their work after each Cornerstones unit/module every half term. These logs will include their self- assessments of the progress they've made, including any comments/evidence relating to their targets. These logs will be passed up to their new teachers at the end of each year.

4. List of AfL Strategies used at Dafen Primary School

- Brainstorming
- Think, pair, share
- Hot Seating
- Choice of answers
- Mind mapping
- Increasing thinking time
- Traffic lighting
- KWL grids
- No hands up
- Talk partners
- Whiteboards
- Open / closed questions
- Finding questions that learners get wrong
- Thumbs up / down
- Two stars and a wish

5. Marking

We aim to ensure that all children have their work marked in such a way that it will lead to improved learning, develop self-confidence, raise self-esteem and provide opportunities for assessment – including self-assessment. Marking will encourage learners to be aware of how and what they are learning. The emphasis in marking will be on a child's achievement and what the next steps need to be in order for the child to further improve. These improvements will link to targets set for individuals, groups or the whole class. Marking will encourage the learners to be equally aware of 'how' and 'what' they are learning. (See Marking Policy)

Signed by Chair of Governors on behalf of the Governing Body:

Mr G Edwards

Signed by Headteacher

Mr J C Morris

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Next Review : November 2018