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1) PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT

Carnoustie High School’s learning and teaching policy firmly places assessment as an integral part of pupils’ classroom learning experiences, whose principal purpose is to support learners and the learning process.

‘The overall purpose of assessment to support learning is to provide all partners with sufficiently dependable information and feedback to inform judgements, choices and decisions about learning, and to inform planning for improvement’

Scottish Executive Education Department, Circular No. 02 June 2005

The purpose of this policy is to provide an effective framework to support assessment practice as an integral part of delivering high quality learning and teaching within Carnoustie High School. It is intended that the policy will assist staff in their ongoing efforts to ensure that pupils experience a curriculum of the highest quality which will enable them to become confident and successful lifelong learners.

This policy aims to:

- Articulate the principles underpinning the place of assessment in the learning and teaching process.
- Outline the professional responsibilities of all staff with respect to assessment practice aimed at supporting learners and learning.

2) ANGUS COUNCIL ‘ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES’ AND NATIONAL POLICIES / INITIATIVES

The ensuing policy has been heavily influenced by the following:

Angus Council
Assessment Guidelines (February, 2007)
Effective Learning and Teaching in Angus Council (May, 2006)

Scottish Executive
A Curriculum for Excellence (October 2004)
What is an AifL School? (2004)
Circular No. 02 June 2005 Assessment and Reporting 3-14 (June 2005)
3) ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES – OVERVIEW

Assessment Defined

‘... the term assessment refers to all those activities undertaken by teachers, and by their students in assessing themselves, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged.’

‘Inside the Black Box’, Paul Black and Dylan Williams 1998

Formative and Summative Assessment

‘Formative assessment contributes much more to pupils’ learning (and consequently to achievement) than summative assessment.’

Assessment Guidelines – Angus Council Education Department, February 2007

Formative assessment is assessment for learning. Formative assessment is executed throughout the learning process. It is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and teachers to decide, where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there. The immediacy of feedback to learners is central to the formative assessment process.

Summative assessment is assessment of learning. Summative assessment checks out what has been learned by pupils at the end of a period of learning. Information is usually gathered as scores or levels and used for specific purposes such as reporting to parents or certification.

Assessment should be planned and focused. Teachers should not attempt to assess all aspects of every piece of work but rather decide when and how pupils are assessed within a limited set of planned outcomes.
4) UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES

All teachers within Carnoustie High School should have a firm grasp of the principles underpinning the place of assessment in the learning and teaching process. These principles can be summarised as follows:

• **Assessment for learning is central to effective learning and teaching.**

  Much of what teachers and learners do in classrooms can be described as assessment. Learning experiences, tasks and questions prompt learners to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills. What learners say and do is then observed, interpreted and judgements made about how learning can be improved. These assessment processes are part of every day classroom practice and should involve teachers and learners in reflection, dialogue and decision making.

• **Assessment should promote pupil commitment to learning goals and a shared understanding, between teachers and pupils, of assessment criteria.**

  For effective learning to take place learners need to understand what it is they are trying to achieve and want to achieve it. Understanding and commitment towards goals is more likely to occur by involving learners in deciding goals and identifying success criteria.

• **Assessment should help to promote learners’ self esteem and motivate them to attain their agreed goals.**

  Assessment that promotes achievement, progress, and a ‘can do’ attitude rather than failure is more likely to enhance learners’ motivation. Comparison with other, more successful, learners is less likely to motivate learners and may lead to them withdrawing from the learning process.

• **There should be continuing focus on how students learn, and how effective feedback can support learning.**

  Learners and teachers should be as aware of the ‘how’ of learning as they are of the ‘what’.

• **All learners should receive constructive guidance about how to improve and how best to achieve agreed learning goals.**

  All teachers should provide learners with information and guidance towards planning the next steps in their learning. Learner’s strengths, development needs and strategies for improvement should be clearly articulated and shared with learners.
• Effective feedback to learners will be sensitive with recognition given to the potential emotional impact on the learner.

*Teachers should be aware of the impact that comments, marks and grades can have on learners’ confidence and enthusiasm and should be as constructive as possible in the timing, amount and content of feedback that they give.*

• Learners’ capacity for self-assessment should be developed so that they can become more reflective and more independent.

*Independent learners have the ability to seek out and develop new skills, knowledge and understandings. They are able to engage in self reflection and to identify the next steps in their learning. All teachers should equip learners with the desire and the capacity to take charge of their learning through developing the skills of self-assessment.*

• Assessment arrangements should ensure that the full range of learners’ achievements can be recognised.

*Assessment for learning should be used to enhance all learners’ opportunities to learn in all areas of the curriculum. It should enable all learners to achieve their best and have their efforts recognised.*

*Adapted from - ‘Assessment Reform Group’. 2002*
5) ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

‘Assessment for learning is defined as all those activities undertaken by teachers an/or by their pupils, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged.’

‘In short, formative assessment comprises many of the features of good learning and teaching.’

Assessment Guidelines – Angus Council Education Department, February 2007

The Big Ideas  Learners learn best when:

• They understand clearly what they are trying to learn and what is expected of them to be successful in their learning

• They are given feedback about the quality of their work, and what they can do to make it better

• They are given advice about how to go about making improvements

• They are fully involved in deciding what needs to be done next.

The Big Ideas  All staff should:

• Frequently speak with pupils about their learning. Such high quality dialogue should involve a range of thoughtful questions, careful listening and reflective responses.

• Ensure that all pupils clearly understand the purpose and intended outcomes of all learning activities prior to, and during their completion.

• Share/negotiate the success criteria and expectations of all learning activities with pupils. Such criteria should be frequently reinforced with pupils throughout the learning and teaching process.

  Offer pupils timely, specific and encouraging feedback about the quality of their work (including strengths/development needs) and helpful/sensitive advice on how to make it better.

• Fully involve pupils in deciding the next steps in their learning and in identifying who/what can give them help if they need it.

• Maintain, in accordance with school/Curriculum Group policy, accurate records of what pupils have learned and how they learned best.

• Share, as appropriate, details of such learning records with other staff, parents and pupils e.g. at all times of transition or reporting to parents
6) ASSESSMENT AS LEARNING

Assessment as learning is about reflecting on evidence of learning. This is part of the cycle of assessment where pupils and staff set learning targets, share learning intentions and success criteria, and evaluate their learning through dialogue and self and peer assessment. Through this, pupils become more aware of:

- what they learn
- how they learn
- what helps them learn.

Pupils are able to build knowledge of themselves as learners, become more aware of how they learn (metacognition) and take more responsibility for their learning. The following key features are central to effective ‘assessment as learning’:

Self and peer assessment

Pupils are involved in self-assessment when they look at their own work in a reflective way and identify aspects that are good and others which need to be improved. Peer assessment is where pupils provide feedback on another’s work. Like self assessment, peer-assessment works best if teachers explain and demonstrate it and ensure pupils have a clear understanding of learning objectives and criteria of success.

‘Pupils can only assess themselves when they have a sufficiently clear picture of the targets that their learning is meant to attain’

‘Inside the Black Box’, Paul Black and Dylan Williams 1998

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. Pupils should be encouraged to look for positives as a first step in assessing a peer’s work. This will help build trust, confidence and supportive relationships.
Reflecting on Learning

Pupils and staff identify and reflect on their own evidence of learning. When pupils are involved in reflecting on their learning, it helps them to understand their learning better. Pupils must develop an awareness of how they learn and what in particular helps them, as individuals, to learn (metacognition). They need to develop both self-regulation of their learning and also their role in monitoring their progress. They need to become aware of their cognitive strengths and weaknesses and, how to view and use their difficulties as opportunities for learning.

Goal Setting / Personal Learning Planning (PLP)

‘Personal Learning Planning is the process of deciding the next steps in learning as part of effective formative assessment.’

Assessment Guidelines – Angus Council Education Department, February 2007

Personal learning planning is a conversation about learning. It is a process that involves pupils and staff in: identifying and reflecting on evidence of learning; deciding on individual learning goals/targets; practising self/peer assessment; high quality interaction based on thoughtful questions, careful listening and reflective responses. It is the process of personal learning planning that is important rather than any PLP document.
All staff should:

- Ensure that pupils benefit from regular, planned and varied opportunities for self and peer assessment in relation to their progress towards success criteria/learning targets. Indicative strategies may include the use of learning logs, diaries, rubrics, traffic lights, shoulder/face to face partners, and two stars and a wish.

- Systematically gather evidence of learning to support effective self and peer assessment.

- Provide regular opportunities for pupils to reflect on and think about their own learning.

- Fully involve pupils in the joint process/conversation of Personal Learning Planning i.e. the setting and monitoring of agreed, realistic targets/learning goals.

- Give serious consideration to the use of comment only marking when providing feedback to pupils on details of the task undertaken. Comments should advise pupils on how to bridge the gap between their present performance and desired goals.

- Provide meaningful and constructive verbal/written feedback to pupils about their work. Where possible, feedback should be immediate or as soon as is practical/possible. Such practice is likely to include comments by teachers/pupils in jotters, on individual pieces of work in journals/diaries, in pupils’ folios, on recording/reporting software (PPMS) and in written reports from school to home.

- Inform pupils, where appropriate, of the grade/level of completed work. *Excessive use of summative techniques should, however, be avoided.*

- Maintain, where appropriate, records of pupil’s personal learning plans in formats including: comments in jotters, folios, homework diaries, pupil planners and other pieces of work; forward plans; recording booklets; entries in recording/reporting software (PPMS); written reports from home to school.

- Where possible involve parents in the learning process with respect to homework diaries, pupil planners.
7) ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

Assessment of learning involves staff working with the range of available evidence of pupil’s learning to check on pupils' progress and to use this information in a number of ways. The range of evidence could include teacher comments, notes and observations, pupil self/peer assessments, and examples of pupil's work.

Judgments about pupils’ learning need to be dependable. This means that:

1. they are valid (based on sound criteria)
2. they are reliable (accuracy of assessment and practice)
3. and they are comparable (they stand up when compared to judgments in other departments or schools).

The following key features are central to effective ‘assessment of learning’.

- **Using evidence** - Staff use a range of evidence from day to day activities to check on pupils progress

- **Sharing standards** - Staff talk and work together to share standards in and across Curriculum Groups/subjects

- **Monitoring and planning** - Staff use assessment information to monitor the quality of learning and teaching within Curriculum Groups/Subjects
All staff should:

- Use a range of evidence from day-to-day activities to check on pupils’ progress and attainment. Such sources of evidence could include, written work, drawings, models, observed activities, video/audio sources or dialogue.

- Use a range of national assessment materials, including 5-14 National Assessments, to confirm their professional judgement of pupils' attainments.

- Maintain, where appropriate, an accurate record of pupil’s aptitudes, progress and attainments.

- Engage in a planned and systematic programme of school-based Curriculum Group Moderation. This practice should involve staff in looking at pupils’ work, discussing/reaching a shared understanding of the extent to which expected standards have been reached, evaluating the effectiveness of the learning and teaching that has taken place, and agreeing appropriate feedback on next steps in learning.

- Use the outcomes from school based moderation exercises to support the planning of future learning and assessment.

- Make use of assessment information to evaluate the quality/effectiveness of learning and teaching and to plan for improvement.

- Participate in a range of staff development activities, including Curriculum Group meetings and classroom observations with a focus on learning and teaching and the promotion of a shared understanding of standards of attainment.

- Regularly review and evaluate assessment practices with respect to their impact upon learners, learning and teaching.

- Actively seek the views of pupils and parents/carers on how assessment helps learning and use such findings to improve future learning and teaching.

- Contribute towards the monitoring and review of the school’s assessment policy and practice to inform the process of school self evaluation and planning for improvement. Where appropriate assessment information from other sources including the Scottish Survey of Achievement (SSA) and HMIE school reports should be used to support the improvement planning process.
8) **MONITORING, TRACKING & REPORTING ON PUPIL PROGRESS**

All staff should follow the prescribed whole-school calendar of *Monitoring and Tracking Duties* (issued 12/12/06, See appendix 2) and comply with all deadlines articulated within the school’s Assessment and Reporting calendar.

**Specifically all staff should:**

- use evidence of prior attainment, baseline assessment information/standardised tests (MidYIS) and details of current performance to inform differentiated approaches to learning with all pupils;

- share current levels of attainment and estimate/forecast grades with all learners;

- negotiate short term and long term targets/ predicted grades, and success criteria with all learners;

- engage with learners in close and regular monitoring of their progress;

- regularly provide feedback to all learners regarding their progress in meeting short/long term targets;

- consult with colleagues, including Support for Learning/Pupil Care & Support Staff, regarding the progress and attainment of individual pupils. Such consultations should include those pupils who have difficulty in reaching their targets due to barriers to their learning;

- participate in the establishment, monitoring and review of Individual Education Programmes (IEPs) and Co-ordinated Support Plans (CSP) with selected pupils;

- complete on time all interim and full reports on pupil’s progress to parents/carers;

- complete on time all reports on pupil’s progress requested by pupil support staff (PCS and SFL);

- pass on evidence/details of pupil’s attainments and learning styles to receiving teachers at all points of transition.
REVIEW OF POLICY

This assessment policy will be subject to regular review and may be adjusted as necessary to reflect the evolutionary nature of the curriculum.

Notwithstanding the above a review of this policy will be undertaken by June 2010 or earlier if required.
Appendices

1) A & R Proposed Assessment and Reporting Calendar 2006-2007
2) Monitoring and Tracking 2006-2007
3) The AifL Triangle
4) Observation Schedule For Assessment For Learning / Managing Assessment for Learning
5) AifL Self-assessment Toolkit Audit Sheets
6) Scottish Executive Assessment and Reporting 3-14