



Overdale Junior School**Assessment for Learning Policy**
To be used in conjunction with the Teaching & Learning Policy**August 2016**

1. Introduction

This policy is intended to reflect best practice based on current research and developments in teaching and learning. It will be reviewed annually and amended accordingly to ensure that children's learning remains at the forefront of improving their life chances. It has been agreed by key stakeholders.

Why do we need a policy for assessment?

We believe that effective assessment provides the platform to ensure that learning continues to move forward.

'Assessment for Learning is the most crucial aspect of the bridge between teaching and learning. It constantly checks on the progress toward the learning intention on a minute by minute basis and teaching is adjusted accordingly to best guide learners to the desired goal.'

We give our children regular feedback and make them reflect on their learning ensuring they evaluate their own learning. This enables our young learners to know where and why their learning is successful. They know what the next stages in their learning are so they know what to improve and more importantly how to improve. It is our view that children need to own their learning and subsequently learn *how* to learn so they can truly become independent lifelong learners. (See behaviour policy) If we are successful we will see learners who are able to:

- talk about their learning;
- question others, including adults (and themselves) about learning;
- reason; and
- challenge ideas and concepts.

We understand that the key drivers for this include:

1. Sharing Learning Goals and establishing Success Criteria
2. Effective Questioning
3. Self and Peer Evaluation
4. Effective Feedback

In addition to this we know that summative assessment and reporting information also form part of the process of learning. All of these combined help to secure a partnership which is focused on learning by all the key stakeholders involved.

2. Key Drivers

- **Sharing Learning Goals**
- **Involving Learners in the Learning Journey**

We want our learners to take ownership of their learning and take responsibility for it. Children are involved in discussions about the coverage of a unit of learning helping to understand what the unit is, what they already know, what they would like to know/improve at and what they will need to do in order to move their learning forward. In Maths and English we use working walls to build a learning journey and support this process.

In other areas of learning the work is developmental and we intend to use the following to record it:

- Floor books (Where applicable)
- Class/corridor displays
- Class posters
- Forming web diagrams on the IWB to print off and also keep digital copy to refer back to, update and annotate.
- Creating class books/publishing
- Using software such as Pic Collage to collect, share and display

These will be referred to throughout the coverage of the unit and updated and evaluated as learning progresses.

3. Clarity of Learning Objectives

We ensure that every lesson is based on clear learning objective. The more we learn about learning, the more we realise that clarity is the starting point. Learning objectives are separated from their context so that children are able to make the link between the learning and a range of contexts. It empowers learners to apply their learning to different situations. The current context is made explicit, as is the link to other contexts and the big picture. We ensure that children understand what they are learning and how it can be applied to their lives and where the learning is going.

We understand that there are two main types of learning objectives:

- (i) Concept/knowledge based learning objectives
- (ii) Skill based learning objectives

(i) Concept/knowledge based learning objectives

These are usually part of the longer learning journey, or series of lessons and need to be broken down in to smaller more manageable steps. They usually involve the use of skills or processes to help secure understanding of the knowledge/concept. This helps enormously in teaching and learning terms as it ensures that we are able to clarify what will help to ensure success in the learning.

e.g.

- To know that the Earth orbits the Sun.
- To understand the importance of healthy diet.
- To know and understand the differences between settlement and invasion.

These are all long term intentions/goals. To achieve them we might break them into smaller Learning Intentions

For example

To understand the importance of a healthy diet we might start by looking at the impact of vitamins or exercise. That is we break the objective into smaller parts. Then to achieve this we might use different techniques, e.g. research, interpretation of evidence from experiments etc. These rely on skills, e.g. identification of key words, use of index/contents pages, skimming,

scanning, highlighting key information or, in the case of an experiment, recording observations, comparing observations, listing similarities and differences, connecting similarities and differences to reasons for their occurrence.

Hence as a learner it is clear that to begin to understand the importance of a healthy diet the learner will need to learn about the effect of exercise and when they are learning this they might be guided to focus on interpretation of evidence from an experiment. As a learner they now have a clear idea of what they are learning at this moment in the context of a bigger picture and what they need to focus on now to do this.

(ii) Skill based learning objectives

We understand that skill based learning objectives fall largely into two groups:

- a) Closed skill
- b) Open skill

a) Closed Skill

These are either right or wrong.

e.g. To be able to use direct speech you can either put the speech marks in the right place or you can't. It is a skill but once acquired and fully learnt you can't improve on it; you can either do it or not.

These are often the easiest to ensure clarity with success criteria as they form a list of processes that one must remember to do.

For example

LO: To be able to use direct speech.

- SC:
- I can use speech marks (inverted commas) before and after the first and last spoken words.
 - I start a new line for each new speaker.
 - Start speech with a capital letter each time
 - I am beginning to vary the position of my reporting clause.

We aim to keep these success criteria as permanent examples for children to refer to throughout the school year and provide a consistent progressive approach throughout the year groups. They will link with our non-negotiable standards with the core skills (e.g. punctuation, handwriting, presentation).

b) Open skill

These are neither right nor wrong but can be constantly improved upon. Hence the importance of critical reflection, evaluation, feedback and improvement prompts and examples to help learners know what 'good' looks like with these objectives.

For example

LO: To select adjectives for effect.

S.C: Success Criteria for this are more about breaking down the thinking steps a learner will have to go through, a 'remember to think about' process e.g.

- I can use my senses to describe.
- I can use a thesaurus to generate ideas and find ambitious synonyms.
- I can include figurative language (alliteration, similes, metaphors, personification etc)
- I can orally rehearse and think about effect my description has on the audience.

It is important to know that critical reflection with opportunity to improve and work from good models must form part of the learning in these lessons. Learners could do all of the above success criteria but have a range of quality to the learning objective. We provide opportunities for this type of learning with open skill based learning objectives.

Differentiation

We understand that the learning objective is appropriate for all pupils but it is the context that helps to support the learner in terms of differentiation. We also follow a policy of not putting limits on children's learning. This means that children are encouraged to have access to different levels of challenge and are not limited by being grouped and only having access to that groups level of challenge.

E.g. LO: To be able to multiply.

The context is the strategy used and the numbers used. The difficulty of the numbers provides very simple access to differentiation. Alternatively some calculations could be partly completed as a method of support or tools to help, e.g. multiplication grids available for some children, TA support. For challenging pupils they could have the calculation provided with missing digits in places so they have to think more. In all the above cases the LO matches and is not altered because of different abilities.

E.g. LO: To write a non-chronological report.

The differentiation could be provided by giving lower ability children writing frames or a partially completed report so they still have to focus on the quality but have less quantity to produce. Again the learning objective has not been altered, neither have the expectations been lowered. The support to enable achievement has been altered, i.e. the context in which the learning is taking place.

4. Success Criteria

We understand success criteria are the stepping stones to achieving the learning objective. They break the learning down into a sequence of smaller steps that help the learner to reflect on their progress towards achieving the overall goal. The style of the success criteria depend on the type of learning objective (open/closed skill or concept/knowledge based).

Success criteria are displayed in all lessons as a visual prompt and referred to throughout the lesson (through mini-plenaries, peer evaluation and final assessment towards the end of a lesson) as a method of constantly checking against progress and a vehicle to help ensure good quality focused feedback. We ensure that children are given opportunity to develop and improve their attempts as a result of reflection and evaluation against the success criteria throughout the lesson. With open skill success criteria we try to focus on one or two of these as a focus for feedback and improvement time to avoid over complicating the learning.

Research has shown (Shirley Clarke, *Formative Assessment in Action*, Black et al) that it is essential for children to be involved in generating success criteria.

This helps to redress the balance of pupil/teacher interaction. We are developing this so that the interaction is weighted more heavily towards the children with less teacher talk – aiming for an 80:20 ratio. Strategies we use to include children in the development of Success Criteria include:

- Modelling the activity using a puppet, pupil, teacher, teaching assistant and others unpicking the important 'remember to'.
- Similarly, playing 'devil's advocate' by modelling deliberate mistakes. The TA or teacher could take this role and children and remaining adult unpick the Success Criteria as a result.
- Using a TA to record the 'remember to' that children spot as the task is being modelled.
- Children working in learning partners having a go first then unpicking what they need to remember in order to be successful.
- Using previous examples of work (could be anonymous), e.g. a piece of writing – what has been included in this report to make it persuasive?
- Use learning partners to identify successful features and then generate remember to statements to help them produce good examples of these. Equally they might identify things to avoid that can also be used as remember to.
- For those skills that are closed skills - e.g. use of speech marks;, multiplication using the grid method; etc. - the success criteria could be generated by children initially and then form a permanent record for future reference as a poster or laminated card etc. With new classes these could be reused by getting children to evaluate them and improve on them.

5. Effective Questioning

'More effort has to be spent in framing questions that are worth asking: that is questions which explore issues that are critical to the development of children's understanding.' (Black et al. 2003)

Effective dialogic teaching can be categorised as a situation where teacher pupil interaction (whole class or group work) in which:

- questions are structured so as to provoke thoughtful answers;
- answers provoke further questions and are seen as the building blocks of dialogue rather than its terminal point (doesn't just stop here approach – I've got the answer I was looking for);
- individual teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil exchanges are chained into coherent lines of enquiry rather than left stranded and disconnected;
- there is an appropriate balance between the social and the cognitive purposes of talk, or between encouraging participation and extending understanding;
- pupils, not just teachers, ask questions and provide explanations, and they are encouraged to do so;
- turns are managed by shared routines rather than through high-stakes competitive (or reluctant) bidding (referring to a no hands up approach);
- those who are not speaking at a given time participate no less actively by listening, looking, reflecting and evaluating, and the classroom is arranged so as to encourage this;
- all parties speak clearly, audibly and expressively;
- children understand that different school subjects and social circumstances demand different registers, and they learn how to use them;
- children have the confidence to make mistakes, they understand the power of 'yet' and understand that mistakes are viewed as something to learn from rather than be ashamed of.

Pupil – Pupil interaction in which:

- children listen carefully to each other
- they encourage each other to participate and share ideas
- they build on their own and each other's contributions

- they strive to reach common understanding and agreed conclusions, yet they respect minority viewpoints.

Teacher – Pupil one to one monitoring which:

- lasts for long enough to make a difference
- is instructional rather than merely supervisory
- provides diagnostic feedback on which children can build

Questioning which:

- is anchored in the context and content of the lesson;
- builds on previous knowledge;
- elicits evidence of a child's understanding;
- appropriately combines invitations for open/discursive/speculative responses ('What is?' and 'What might be?' type questions);
- combines the routine and also includes the probing;
- prompts and challenges thinking and reasoning;
- balances open-endedness with guidance and structure in order to reduce the possibility of error or confusion;
- achieves consistency between form and intent (e.g. where questions are questions rather than instructions, and open questions are genuinely open, rather than invitations to guess the one 'right' answer);
- gives children time to think.

Responses to questioning which:

- address the question in the depth it invites rather than worry about spotting the 'correct' answer;
- move beyond the yes/no or simple recall to extended answers involving reasoning, hypothesising and 'thinking aloud';
- are, where appropriate, considered and discursive rather than brief and prematurely curtailed.

Feedback on responses which:

- replaces the simple positive, negative or non-committal judgement, or mere repetition of the respondent's answer, by informative diagnostic feedback on which pupils can build;
- uses praise discriminatingly and appropriately, and filters out the habitual 'good boy/girl', 'very good', 'excellent', 'fantastic', etc.;
- keeps lines of enquiry open rather than closes them down;
- encourages children to articulate their ideas openly and confidently, without fear of embarrassment or retribution if they are wrong.

Pupil talk through which children:

- narrate;
- explain;
- instruct;
- ask different kinds of questions;
- receive, act and build upon answers;
- analyse and solve problems;
- speculate and imagine;
- explore and evaluate ideas;
- discuss;
- argue, reason and justify;
- negotiate.

6. *Towards Dialogic Teaching – Rethinking Classroom Talk*, Robin Alexander

This has been a focus for school improvement and continues to be. Asking questions which are rich and don't just rely on recall are challenging for all practitioners yet the outcomes for learning make it a worthwhile pursuit. We are developing our questioning techniques by:

- asking 'fat'/'grande' questions as opposed to 'skinny'/'petit' questions.
Fat = possibly more than one answer, not necessarily any single correct answer, requires further investigation, depend on the situation or other factors as whether an answer is feasible.
Skinny = quick single response, closed question, doesn't lead to further thinking or provoke discussion.
- developing a shared vocabulary for questioning (*Questioning*, INSET Spring 08);
- using 'Blooms' taxonomy and referring to it as part of our lesson preparation to develop rich questions and promote higher level thinking skills;
- re-phrasing the learning objective to frame it as thought provoking question (e.g. science: use of concept cartoons etc.);
- providing high quality thinking time.
- using learning partners/talking partners to engage in discussion about the learning (helps to ensure all pupils are engaged);
- using whiteboards to record responses to questions (helps to ensure all pupils are engaged);
- avoiding using hands up approach;
- understanding that no answer is a silly answer just an opportunity to clarify thinking and learning;
- using traffic light fans instead of hands up approach, which allows children to give feedback about their understanding as they are learning;
- use of thumbs up/sideways/down (link with French – *comme ce/comme ca*) instead of hands up approach which allows children to give feedback about their understanding as they are learning;
- snowballing – talking partners form fours and develop ideas from each other and report back on each other's learning;
- think/pair/share – like snowballing but the groups keep joining and getting larger and larger and ideas are refined and developed to form a consensus;
- envoying – small groups discuss question and then one from each group move around to the next group and develop responses further;
- using varying methods of children being able to respond to questions
e.g. recording on a whiteboard, post it notes, flip charts and large posters where children can add their response anonymously, answers on a post card (answers recorded on cards and posted in a box – again anonymous but powerful);
- use of puppets to model responding to questions;
- providing parts of the solution to subgroups. Give half of one group the part of the information needed and the other half the other part of the information. This way they need to ask questions, listen, challenge, etc. to gain the full picture;
- use of barrier games to illicit information from another through questioning;
- asking leading questions to redirect learning;
- framing questions by:
 - giving a range of answers;
 - turning the question into a statement for children to dis/agree with;
 - finding opposites;
 - giving answer and engaging children in how did we get to it;
 - asking a question from an opposing standpoint.

Framing questions

This is taken from the work of Shirley Clarke and at Overdale we try to include these techniques within the questioning used in classrooms.

Giving a range of answers

This is useful strategy in developing debate with recall questions. A range of answers is provided and children have to decide on which answer fits with which category.

The teacher needs to develop answers that are:

- Definitely correct
- Clearly wrong
- It depends.

For example, which of these activities improve the efficiency of the heart - cycling, walking, golf, swimming, skydiving, and darts?

- Definitely correct – cycling, swimming
- Definitely wrong – skydiving, darts
- Depends – walking, golf

This type of questioning immediately provokes further thought and debate. Children need to be guided in justifying their points to develop the learning further.

Turning a question into a statement

This involves taking a recall question and turning it into a statement for children to discuss in their talking partners. Children need to justify/support/illustrate their answers which thus develops higher order thinking skills.

Recall questions re-phrased:

Which forms of exercise improve the efficiency of the heart?
All forms of exercise improve the efficiency of the heart. What do you think and why?

Which metals are magnetic – which are not?
All metals are magnetic – do you dis/agree – why?

Why did Goldilocks go into the Three Bears cottage?
Goldilocks was a burglar – do you dis/agree – why?

Which drugs are bad for you?
All drugs are bad for you – do you dis/agree – why?

Why do we need prisons?
We don't need prisons – do you dis/agree – why?

Finding opposites or one that works and one that doesn't

This involves taking a recall question and thinking of an example which is right and one which is wrong. Children then decide which is right, which is wrong and why. This is easy to use with maths examples, punctuation and grammar but can be used in all circumstances.

Recall questions re-phrased:

What makes a healthy meal?

Why is this a healthy meal and this an unhealthy meal (show examples)?

What do plants need to grow?

Why is this plant healthy and this plant dying?

What do we need to make a circuit work?

Why does this circuit work and this one not?

What makes a ball bounce?

Why does this ball bounce and this one doesn't?

How do you do this sum?

Why is this sum right and this sum wrong?

Who can put this sentence right?

Why is this sentence wrong and this one is not?

Giving the answer and asking how it was arrived at.

Another way of transforming recall questions is to go straight to the answer and ask children to explain it.

Recall questions re-phrased:

Can you name some connectives?

Why do we use the word 'connectives' for words like, 'but' and 'so'?

What do we need for an effective description?

Why is this an effective description?

What are the properties of plastic?

Why is plastic a good material for modern toys?

Can you give me an example of a complex sentence?

This is a complex sentence – why?

What are the properties of paper, card and wood?

Paper is a good material for tissues –why?

$7 + 3 + 2 = ?$

$7 + 3 + 2 = 12$. What strategies did you use to come up with the answer?

Asking a question from an opposing standpoint

These are very good for dealing with controversial issues but need to be handled with care and sensitivity. The questions force children to think of issues from an unconventional standpoint.

Original question re-phrased:

Why is it wrong to steal?

What would a mother whose children were starving think about shoplifting?

What are the hazards of smoking?
Should smoking be a matter of choice?

Why is it good to recycle?
Why would a plastics manufacturer promote recycling?

How did Goldilocks feel when she saw the three bears' cottage?
How did the three bears feel upon discovering Goldilocks in their house?

Why was it cruel to employ Victorian children to clean chimneys?
How would Victorian industrialists justify their employment of children?

7. Formative Assessment in Action, Shirley Clarke

In addition to this we aim to help children develop the skill of asking rich questions. It is imperative that we provide time for questioning. It is not about asking lots of questions but about asking rich questions and this takes time to develop for adults, let alone children. As practitioners we model developing rich questions, we make explicit reference to good quality questions and ensure children understand why they are rich questions.

To further help children many of the strategies listed previously can be used to help children form rich questions. It is also worth noting that effective questioning can have an effect on the perception of the pace of a lesson. Some might view the pace has slowed in the lesson because there are fewer questions (because of the richness of the questions, time for responding etc. compared to lots of closed questions). Good pace in a lesson is understood as the learning being moved forward, not about the speed of the activities in the lesson. We believe in providing a supportive climate for children to want to take risks in their learning. We avoid 'putting children down' or using vocabulary and body language which devalues children's responses.

Practices we use to encourage a supportive environment

- Agreeing protocol for use of learning/talking partners with children.
- Fostering and taking a 'Growth Mindset' approach to learning throughout school.
- Value children making mistakes and recognise they are an opportunity for us to learn from them.
- Using incorrect answers as a way of developing better understanding, e.g. I'm glad you made that mistake or said this – why do you think Charlie came to that conclusion?
- Echo - 'Twentyfive. Who agrees or disagrees with this?'
- Stalling - "Hold on to that thought (let's park it here - record it on the board) and we'll come back to this before the end of the lesson.'
- No pressure - What might the answer be - any answers count.
- Elaborate - "say a bit more about this - why do you think this - what do you mean - can you give me an example?"
- Suggest - "you could try ..."
- Nuggets - provide a key bit of information to help them rephrase an answer

8. Self and Peer Evaluation

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

Assessment Reform Group, 2002

We build time into each of our lessons to provide children with the opportunity to reflect and evaluate their progress towards the learning objective. We do this by providing time for them within the lesson to look back at their learning, finding evidence against the success criteria to show how closely they have come to meeting the success criteria and in turn, the objective.

We agree within our classrooms what makes an effective learning partner and set up our own protocols to follow. We provide models to act as prompts and reminders and share children's examples with each other so that they can identify what is good, why it is good and what could be improved and how it could be improved. We use mini plenaries/pit stops within lessons to enable this. We also use previous pupils' examples to pick out aspects of progress towards success criteria, to act as models of improvement and for improvement. This is particularly useful with open ended success criteria (those that can continually be developed e.g. effective use of adjectives to describe). We are constantly developing our use of technology to enable us to use current pupil's work within lessons as an evaluative tool for self and peer evaluation (Visualisers and AirPlay).

The use of learning partners is encouraged as way to allow children to share and evaluate with each other and offer opportunities and suggestions for each other to improve on. In most lessons children will have an opportunity to stop and reflect on each other's learning, identify good examples and make comments and suggestions for further improvement. Similarly, we also use completed pieces of children's work to help children evaluate and improve against success criteria as a focused lesson. This is a useful tool to help them improve the skill of peer and self evaluation.

9. Feedback and Marking (See marking policy)

Feedback:

- is not to just praising a child because of some inherited natural ability, e.g. 'Aren't you clever';
- identifies the processes in the learning: this values the process rather than just the outcome.
- does not just link to one's efforts: it has to reflect on why the efforts have led to success or are making progress towards achieving success.
- is on-going throughout the lesson (not a rearview mirror approach but a forward looking approach using current information to guide and nudge learning in the right direction);
- can be led by adults and pupils;
- is clearly linked to the success criteria.

We use feedback as part of a closing the gap approach towards learning. We understand the closing the gap model as using feedback within the lesson so that children get the best opportunity to meet the learning objective, and that it is not dependent on being marked after the lesson and then waiting even longer until they have an opportunity to do something about it.

We use the following strategies:

- pit stops and mini plenaries – checking on progress to success criteria – also following a line of questioning in more depth;
- focus in one part of the success criteria for peer marking and feedback before the end of the lesson;
- giving children a starting task then identify the learning objective and success criteria;
- marking within the lesson;
- using traffic lights within the lesson to identify who has a good grasp who wants further support etc.;
- peer marking identifying success and suggesting and improvement;
- giving time before the end of the lesson to act on feedback;
- giving time at the start of the next lesson to act on feedback;
- using verbal feedback in a voice which can be heard across the room to help give others the choice of acting on it if they need to;

- getting children to sign off their learning partners work to say they have acted on the feedback.

Success and Improvement (See marking policy)

Marking relates to the learning objective and one or more of the success criteria. It highlights aspects for improvement and success to ensure the child knows that they need to keep doing more of these types of things. It also highlights an aspect for improvement and provides an example of how to improve. In addition, it provides a prompt for the child to act on to show that they have understood and had a chance to succeed again at the particular aspect of learning.