

## Lower School Assessment Policy and Procedure March 2019

**Reviewed by:** Sarah Fox, Stef Faloon

**Reviewed on:** March 2019 [this policy has been identified for further review]

**Next review:** August 2019

**Related documents:** Year Plan Template; Main Lesson Block Plan and Evaluation Template; Termly Subject Lesson Plan and Evaluation; Individual Holistic Assessment Template; Daily Main Lesson Plan and Evaluation; Curriculum Policy; Lower School Core Curriculum Outline; Lower School Subject Lesson Outlines; Solving the Riddle of the Child; The Educational Tasks and Content of the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum.

### Endorsement

Full endorsement is given to this policy by:

**Name:** Joel Chalfen

**Position:** Cambridge Steiner School Trustee

**Signed:**



**Date:** March 2019

### Lower School Assessment Policy

#### General Principles

In keeping with the ethos of the school, all teachers should strive to recognise the unique individuality of each pupil; learning to appreciate the strengths and weaknesses, approaches to learning, attitudes and behaviour of each child, and in so doing, ensuring that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress.

We recognise that good assessment is an essential part of quality education. Its value is in giving the teachers feedback on the pupils' learning so that this can inform their teaching. It also gives the pupils information on how they are doing and what they might do better. It enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught.

*"Good practice occurs when the self-reflective teacher assesses his or her own teaching and its outcome with individual children and shares this with colleagues on a regular basis. This insight should feed directly back into the classroom. The Steiner Waldorf approach sees assessment as a means of gaining knowledge of, insight into and understanding for the child. The more accurate and comprehensive the observations, the richer the understanding. Increased understanding can lead to positive development in the child. In ideal circumstances, the outcome of an assessment of a child is that meaningful help is offered and new developmental opportunities are created. Assessment can lead to transformation in teaching and learning."*

Teachers will attempt to deepen their understanding of the children by:

- carefully observing the pupils and their responses to what they are taught
- reflecting on their classroom experience
- sharing observations with colleagues
- sharing observations with parents
- undertaking regular study of Steiner Waldorf Pedagogy and Child Development
- engaging with colleagues in a detailed study of a particular child
- engaging with colleagues in a study of a particular class
- seeking the help of outside expertise where necessary.

### **Quantitative Assessment**

We believe that an over emphasis on quantitative assessment can be detrimental both to children's education and to their general wellbeing. Studies have shown if a child receives a grade and a comment they ignore the comment and only read the grade. If it is a high mark it bolsters their ego. As a lot of self esteem goes into academic achievement, it can also lead to great anxiety and fear of failure. For those who do not get good grades, it can result in a sense of failure and a loss of confidence. The crucial element of giving the pupil constructive feedback to facilitate their learning is lost via the grade/rank.

### **Formative Assessment**

Formative assessment forms a key part of our approach to assessment. It is process orientated. It includes the monitoring of the ongoing learning of pupils and is used to make adjustments to the learning process and to offer reflections to students:

- Criteria for success are clarified.
- Pupils actively participate in assessing how these criteria have been met and can become an instructional resource for one another.
- We believe that alongside making learning explicit to teachers and pupils, a central aim of formative assessment is the promotion of learning autonomy whereby pupils take agency over their own learning.

### **Assessment for learning**

Through assessment for learning, we seek to interpret evidence for the use of the learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are, where they need to go and how best to get there. Teachers regularly review the child's work with them; discuss what has been done well and what might be improved. Where appropriate, pupils are encouraged to set their own learning targets.

### **Marking and Feedback**

Marking is a review of a child's work, which includes feedback to the child. It is essential that there is regular acknowledgement and recognition of the children's work. Whilst teachers will take note of the level that the child has reached, feedback to the pupil will be of a qualitative nature where possible and not include a grade.

Marking pupils' work is not simply a means of assessing the knowledge and skills of the pupils. It is also an opportunity to evaluate teaching and should inform the preparation of lessons taking account of the need for different approaches and/or extra support. Marking can give quantifiable information and helps to monitor some aspects of pupils' development. It should be a regular experience for pupils to be present when their work is marked. At such times, the teacher can discuss the work, commenting on presentation, accuracy and time taken etc. The teacher should be

positive, encouraging, challenging and supportive. Thoughtful feedback can help children towards productive criticism and evaluation in an age/stage appropriate way.

Marking should:

- be meaningful to the child and useful to the teacher
- be relevant to the aims and objectives of the task
- change according to age and ability – individuals in a class may be marked differently on a similar piece of work using different criteria (qualitative, child specific)
- help pupils to see how to improve their work.
- require activity on the part of the pupil where possible

## Lower School Assessment Procedure

### Key Learning Goals

For each year group we have a set of core learning outcomes that constitute the key skills that we are teaching to that class. These goals currently pertain to literacy, numeracy and scientific skills and knowledge; however, we are looking to extend this to include the full breadth of the curriculum as well as the social and emotional sphere. The goals are largely in line with, **'The Educational Tasks and Content of the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum'** edited by M. Rawson and T. Richter (Steiner Waldorf Education) although we are developing our own benchmarks most notably in literacy. This framework allows pupils' work to be assessed regularly and thoroughly and for that information to be used to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.

### Half-Termly Progress Monitoring form

This assessment allows us to track pupils' progress with regards to our core skill set and benchmarks for each year group, principally in literacy and numeracy.

The assessment is based on grade descriptors that help the teacher to accurately assess the progress of each child with respect to a particular skill.

### Termly Individual Progress Assessment Record

This is a qualitative and holistic assessment that looks at the child's progress each term in all areas of the curriculum as well as their social skills. It allows the teacher to comment on the specific challenges and achievements of individual children. It also highlights areas that need attention. This then informs the subsequent planning of the teachers. A specific set of questions is used to guide the thinking of the teacher when carrying out this assessment.

### Individual Progress Targets

These targets arise out of teacher's assessment of the pupils learning. They are intended to address specific obstacles that limit the progress of the pupil's learning. They may also be targets to extend and challenge learners. They should be SMART targets (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time scaled). Teachers may choose to record these targets alongside (reviewed half termly) or within their main lesson block planning and assessment. Where appropriate, the teacher may include the pupil in setting the targets and in assessing progress.

### Summative Assessment

Lesson block plans will contain several of that year group's core learning outcomes. Preparation of a new block will include creating end of block assessments for the children based around those new/on-going skills. Teachers should be encouraged to share creative tools for assessing learning objectives. Setting SMART objectives for the core skills enables them to be assessed more readily.

At the end of the block the teacher will assess the pupils in their mastery of the key skills and knowledge taught. From class 4-8 this will often take the form of a written test or through assessing the independent work produced by the pupil in the block. From classes 1-3 teachers will employ appropriate methods of assessment. These may be written, oral or practically based.

The results will be recorded for each child and will feed into the next stage of the teacher's lesson planning.

### Weekly Marking

Class Teachers look at the children's bookwork during daily lesson time, giving feedback in situ - mostly not recorded. Main Lesson and practice books are reviewed weekly, with verbal and/or written (from Class 3 onwards) feedback in pencil. Self-assessment can also be undertaken by the children right from Class 1. For example, they can check that all the i's are dotted and t's crossed; that all their pictures are finished to the best of their ability. Peer assessment may include reading their work back to a partner or swapping work to mark one another's (e.g. Two Stars and a Wish – two things they thought were done well and something they would have liked to have seen). Teachers may make informal written notes/observations of the above assessments to help inform their planning and monitor pupil progress.

Class teachers set clear expectations when setting work for pupils. Expectations for pupils may vary depending on individual needs and aptitudes. When appropriate (generally from class 3 onwards) pupil work should be dated. Class teachers use a simple coding system (appropriate to the age of the class) to identify what type of task the children have been set. Written work generally falls into the following three categories:

Type of Writing	Benefits	Example Code
Copied	Giving children work to copy from the board allows for high expectations of work to be put in place and encourages handwriting and spelling skills	Encircled 'C'; red dot
Dictated	Dictations provide opportunities for ongoing assessment, particularly for spellings	Encircled 'D'
Emergent / independent	This should form the main bulk of pupils' work. Independent work may first be written up in a practice book to be corrected before writing the work up neatly.	Encircled 'M' (mine); blue dot (independent)/ purple dot (with help)

### Moderation

**Bookwork:** Department meetings provide a forum for discussions about the expectations placed on pupils and the quality of work being produced. Half termly 'book looks' – either within department meetings or mentor sessions – contribute towards these discussions and provide a more formal framework for reviewing pupil's work. Each book look takes a different focus (such as marking and feedback, presentation, appropriate challenge, differentiation, links to outcomes and progress) and a sample of pupil's books (for example high achievers, EAL pupils or pupils on the SEND register). Cambridge Steiner School is also collaborating with other Steiner Waldorf schools in the UK to work towards a method of national moderation across schools/ a process of benchmarking pupil work. Although reviewing book work provides significant insight into our child's learning journey, this is

just one means by which to assess pupil progress and cannot ever fully represent the full breadth of learning that takes place.

Half termly pupil progress meetings: During the pupil progress meeting, staff will briefly review the impact of the previous meeting. They will then use the 'Pupil Progress Meeting' pro-forma to support discussions of children and how to best support their progress.

Learning Walks (a focused 'walk' through the school, visiting a range of different classes over a time period of about 40 minutes) take place regularly (at least once every two weeks). Learning walks by the Lower School Coordinator allow accurate monitoring of the Quality of Teaching; giving all staff the opportunity to participate allows for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities. Each learning walk should have a pre-determined focus, which could range from academic to housekeeping, some example questions to consider might include: Is the content of the lesson tailored to children's starting points? Is the level of challenge appropriate for the most able? Is the classroom tidy and inviting? Are children respectful and kind?

Class folders contain a checklist to help keep track of completed paperwork and class folders are checked half termly to help monitor assessment and planning.

Annual Appraisals and Mentoring Sessions/Lesson Observations are scheduled by the Lower School Coordinator.

### **Child Observation/Study**

Child observations are made continually by the teachers and noted on daily planning sheets. Regular child studies are undertaken in Faculty meetings using Dr Grunewald's method of compassionate enquiry.

### **Annual Review**

The final literacy/numeracy block should include a review of progress made in relation to the core learning outcomes for the year for each child, alongside the non-academic progress. The same should be undertaken in the subject lessons. This will feed into the annual progress reports for parents.

An honest review will make for effective and efficient planning for the forthcoming year. Class 2 and Class 4 assessments undertaken by a SEND trained teacher also feed into SEND assessments undertaken in the summer term and recorded for each child.

### **Wide Range Achievement Tests**

As part of our process for monitoring pupil progress the school periodically conducts Wide Range Achievement Tests: a brief achievement test measuring reading recognition, spelling, and arithmetic computation.

### **Record Keeping**

Recording lesson plans, the work done and progress of pupils enables teachers to:

- inform future planning
- produce accurate end of year reports
- give information to a teacher taking over a class or lesson.

### **Reporting to Parents**

We recognise that an important element in the education of children is their experience of the co-operation between parents and teachers.

During the course of the year the Class Teacher will organise at least two meetings with the parents of each child in the class. This meeting will provide an opportunity to:

- discuss their child's progress
- share observations about the child's development

- discuss if there is the need for any extra support
- discuss any issues which the parents or teachers think are relevant to further mutual understanding of the child and to help meet his/her needs. Such meetings may be requested by the teacher or by the parents.

If a child is experiencing difficulty in some aspect of life (academic, social or health) it may be helpful for parents and teachers to have a number of shorter meetings to ensure that a supportive dialogue is established.

A written report for each child will be sent to parents annually and will be completed before the end of the summer term. These reports give parents a detailed and clear qualitative assessment of the performance of their child, in relation to the school's aims, with comments on their progress and attainment in each main subject area.

Pupil records will be kept securely in the Teachers' Office. They will contain:

- any records from previous school
- profiles from kindergarten
- copies of annual reports
- copies of assessments from outside agencies.

*Thank you for taking the time to read this policy/procedure.*