



Cookstown High School

Assessment and Homework Policy

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Introduction

Rationale

This document establishes expectations and recommendations for assessment at Cookstown High School. This document must be used by all teachers in the effective use and design of assessment procedures. Departments are expected to have assessment practices in place that are designed in line with the whole-school policy. These departmental assessment practices should be reflective of the guidelines contained in this document.

Assessment in Cookstown High School supports each pupil in reaching his or her own potential, fostering personal responsibility and self-motivation. Reflective practice is encouraged by teachers to engender self-evaluation with involvement from pupils, parents and all staff. Effective assessment is foundational to ensuring high quality teaching and learning.

Ethos

This policy should be interpreted and implemented in a manner consistent with the school ethos. The school ethos values the uniqueness of each individual, promotes mutual respect and personal responsibility. The ethos seeks to encourage the development of young people who are independent learners. Assessment for Learning is now fully embedded across the curriculum, emphasising the importance of developing pupils as effective learners at all levels.

Northern Ireland Curriculum

The Northern Ireland Curriculum places emphasis on a variety of assessment procedures, integrated with classroom practice. This practice of Assessment for Learning is overt at **Key Stage 3** and involves the following key actions:

- Sharing Learning Intentions
- Sharing and negotiating success criteria
- Giving feedback to pupils
- Effective questioning
- Self and peer assessment

Developing this practice develops transferable learning, encourages learner responsibility and increases transparency, as assessment shapes the learning experiences for each individual pupil.

At **Key Stages 4 and 5**, assessment is often focused on summative assessment, tests and examinations.

The following five principles are useful when devising assessment events at Key Stages 4 & 5:

- It should be complementary to and supportive of learning;
- It should be valid and reliable;
- It should be fit for purpose and manageable;
- It should support teachers' professional judgement; and
- It should support accountability

Assessment is a key professional competency, requiring teachers to use a range of assessment strategies and assessment information to make teaching more effective. Assessment is embedded into all aspects of the curriculum and is an essential component of effective classroom practice.

Purposes of Assessment

The four main purposes of assessment at all levels are:

- **Diagnostic:** this takes place at the start of a learning programme and identifies strengths and learning needs. Results from diagnostic assessment can be used to design intervention strategies towards improvement;
- **Formative:** this is part of everyday teaching and learning and occurs through observing, listening, questioning, discussing and reviewing. Formative assessment generates evidence to help identify underachievement at an early stage, can identify progress and gaps in learning, is useful for setting learning goals and success criteria and is a means of communicating quality feedback to pupils;
- **Summative:** This provides information to pupils, parents and teachers about individual overall performance at a specific point. This usually takes place after a unit of work, at a specific time of examination or testing and the information indicates progress and achievement. Summative assessment needs to assist pupils in the improvement of their learning;
- **Evaluative:** evaluative assessment ensures accountability across all levels of the school. It is useful for curriculum planning and monitoring. The

Department of Education requires information on outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4 for target setting and benchmarking. This also informs areas for school development and improvement. This information may also be used at departmental or individual teacher level for evaluation and development planning.

Aims and objectives

Assessment in Cookstown High School seeks to develop the learning potential of all pupils. Through a variety of learning experiences, pupils will develop important skills of self-evaluation, reflection and setting personal goals. At all times, assessment should complement the teaching and learning of the curriculum.

The objectives of assessment are:

- To use methods appropriate to the learning experience with expectations which are clearly explained and understood
- To ensure that all pupils experience challenge and success
- To recognise the whole range of pupils' experiences and achievements
- To develop transferable skills needed to become effective learners
- To provide quality feedback, informing pupils on strengths, weakness and strategies for improvement

Development and Implementation

Methods of Assessment

A range of assessment types is used across the school, including formal and informal.

These include:

Summative assessment (Assessment of Learning)

- End of unit/topic tests
- Pupil tracking events
- External examinations

Formative assessment (Assessment for Learning)

- Pupil/peer assessment
- Teacher observation
- Formative feedback
- Coursework and homework

It is the responsibility of each Curriculum Leader to devise a Departmental Assessment Policy, outlining any subject specific requirement or methods of assessment.

These methods of assessment are outlined briefly in the next section. For further detail consult the Assessment Handbook.

Summative Assessment

At Cookstown High School, pupils in Years 8-11 will be formally assessed in December and May/June through internal examinations. Years 12-14 will take internal examinations in December as mock exams in advance of the external GCSE, AS and A2 examinations in May/June.

Pupil tracking events will take place on four occasions through the school year. The results of the December and May/June examinations will serve as trackings two and four. The four tracking events are scheduled as below:

	Tracking 1	Tracking 2	Tracking 3	Tracking 4
Year 8	Mid-point of Term 1	December exams	Mid-point of Term 2	May/June exams
Year 9	Mid-point of Term 1	December exams	Mid-point of Term 2	May/June exams
Year 10	Mid-point of Term 1	December exams	Mid-point of Term 2	May/June exams
Year 11	Mid-point of Term 1	December exams	Mid-point of Term 2	May/June exams (includes GCSE modules)
Year 12	Mid-point of Term 1	December exams	Mid-point of Term 2	Start of Term 3
Year 13	Mid-point of Term 1	December exams	Mid-point of Term 2	Start of Term 3
Year 14	Mid-point of Term 1	December exams	Mid-point of Term 2	Start of Term 3

Trackings 1 and 3 are informal, in that these assessments are not during a timetabled period of examination. However, these tests must be robust and rigorous. These may be an end of topic or unit test, an extensive homework or a practical task, if appropriate.

Pupils will be given opportunities to reflect on their tracking performance, setting personal targets and evaluating their progress.

Pupil Tracking and Target-setting

There are four tracking events through the school year.

- Tracking 1 follows class assessment in each subject using rigorous and robust testing, taking place at the mid-point of Term 1;
- Tracking 2 follows a series of formal examinations in December;
- Tracking 3 follows class assessment in each subject using rigorous and robust testing, taking place at the mid-point of Term 2;
- Tracking 4 follows a series of formal examinations in May/June.

The purpose of pupil tracking is to monitor pupil progress across all subjects throughout the year. Following assessments, pupils have opportunities to set targets for development. Targets should be guided by the subject teacher and must be focused on specific areas for improvement. A tracking logbook has been prepared for each pupil to use to collate their assessment outcomes and to set their own individual targets. Tracking Intervention Mornings will take place twice a year

(following Tracking 1 and Tracking 3) to allow pupils to complete target-setting and to discuss areas for improvement with the Form Tutor for that class. Form Tutors may add a comment in the logbook. Parents are invited to comment and sign the logbook.

The process of tracking is set out below:

Tracking Process	
<u>Part of the process</u>	<u>Who</u>
Tracking assessments take place either informally during classes (Trackings 1 and 3) or during formal examinations (Trackings 2 and 4)	Curriculum Leaders Subject teachers
Assessment outcomes are returned to pupils with feedback on how to improve	Subject teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets are set for future improvement. • Targets should be meaningful, specific and tailored to the individual pupil. • Departments may support target-setting with a list of targets for pupils from which they may select the most appropriate for their needs. • Subject teachers should devote time to this aspect of tracking within classroom teaching, and ensure that logbooks have been completed satisfactorily. 	Curriculum Leaders Subject teachers Pupils
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Tracking Intervention Morning will take place for Form Classes to review targets with Form Tutors. • Form Tutors should discuss the targets set by the pupils • They may also add a comment into the logbook. 	Form Tutors Pupils
Parents are invited to read through the targets set in the logbook and to sign under the Form Tutor comment	Form Tutors Pupils Parents

Tracking outcomes provide data that inform teachers about

- Pupils who are underachieving and may need intervention
- Pupils who are overachieving and are suitable for class movement (see Class Movement Procedure)

- Appropriateness of the assessment task
- The quality of learning and teaching within departments

It is an important aspect of the use of data that departmental action is taken where it is required to support pupils' development and progress in their learning.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is used to improve learning through the whole learning process. It is useful for teachers to gain information on how learning is taking place and also for pupils who can reflect through the process on their own learning.

Assessment for learning at Key Stage 3 focuses on the following activities:

- Sharing learning intentions: this helps to focus pupils on the objectives of the lesson/unit and helps the emphasis to remain on the learning expectations rather than just the activity.
- Sharing and negotiating success criteria: this provides signposts to success. Pupils may be involved in deciding what these should be, thereby demonstrating knowledge of the characteristics of a successful outcome.
- Giving feedback to pupils: this can happen in a variety of ways, verbally, written or a combination of the two. Informative feedback must provide strategies for improvement.
- Effective questioning: this involves asking questions in a way that elicits maximum feedback from pupils, which can then be used to evaluate, plan and extend learning. Ask 'open' questions, or reframe questions to invite more responses. Also, ask questions and then allow thinking time.
- Self and peer assessment: this promotes pupil reflection about their own work and that of their peers. This strategy can promote independence and a sense of support in the classroom.

Further detail about these activities can be found in the Assessment Handbook.

Assessment of the Cross-Curricular Skills, and Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities (KS 3)

Reporting on CCS and TS & PC at KS 3 will be shared across teaching subjects and remarks will be included in the end of Year 10 report. The responsibility of subjects for this area of reporting will be reviewed regularly by SLT.

Homework Policy

Homework is an important part of school life, much valued by parents. Homework helps to develop independent learning, self-discipline and good organisational skills. The purpose of homework is to extend learning beyond the classroom and to develop pupils as independent learners.

Homework will vary from subject to subject, but may include the following:

- Continuing or completing work from class
- Reviewing work from class
- Learning new work for a future lesson
- Reading for a specific purpose
- Researching a topic
- Writing answers to questions or an extended piece of writing
- Revision for tests or preparation for exams
- Preparation for practical aspects of courses

Homework is an important part of school-life and it should be an integrated part of learning. It should be set regularly with a clear due date given and noted by pupils in diaries. It should be clearly explained and relevant to the current learning in class. It should be assessed fully with suitable feedback given within a requisite time. Homework should be meaningful, not excessive and should never be given as a punishment.

It should be clear to pupils that failure to produce homework on the due date will incur a sanction.

The length of homework should be as follows:

Key Stage 3	Approximately 20 minutes per subject per day as and when appropriate
Key Stage 4	Approximately 30 minutes per subject per day as and when appropriate
Key Stage 5	Approximately 40 minutes per subject per day

Homework diaries are an important link between school and home. ParentApp is an additional resource to link effectively between school and home. Homework can be noted on ParentApp as a further resource to the homework diary; this information

can be accessed by parents and may be useful for communication of issues around homework, such as lateness or homework not being done.

It is expected that each department will include specific comments about homework in the departmental assessment policy.

Marking Policy

Marking should be consistent throughout departments and each department should use mark schemes and rubrics to ensure this is the case.

It is good practice for Curriculum Leaders to have a clear overview of the marking processes used in the department and this may be done through 'book scoops', round table marking at a departmental meeting, marking for other classes and designing mark schemes and rubrics collectively.

Advice given to pupils on returned work should be informative and progressive, outlining areas of success and areas for improvement with suitable strategies.

Literacy issues should be addressed, as outlined in the literacy policy.

Formative feedback is an important strand of assessment for learning and promotes pupil independence and effective communication between teachers and pupils.

Feedback must:

- Recognise areas of success in the work being marked
- Track progress so far, possibly making reference to previous pieces of work
- Provide guidance for improvement and set out how to go about this
- Be motivational and give encouragement
- Be recorded by teachers so that progress can be seen clearly

Marking should be done efficiently and regularly. Where possible, marking should adhere to agreed success criteria, a mark scheme or rubric, or criteria set by the examination board. Using mark schemes is expected particularly during periods of internal examinations.

It is not essential to always provide a numerical or grade outcome, in fact research suggests that comment only marking can be more effective in motivating and directing pupils through progress. Pupils may be invited to comment on their own work, setting out areas they know they need to improve and suggesting how they can do this.

When using mark schemes for external examinations, it is imperative that pupils become familiar with the language expected and how marks are awarded.

Examinations and Pupil Tracking

During Trackings 2 and 4, the normal school timetable will be suspended and an exam timetable will be prepared by the Internal Examinations Officer.

Pupil tracking events in Terms 1 and 2 will provide data for trackings 1, 2 and 3. For pupils in Years 12-14 an additional tracking event will take place in class time to provide a fourth input. This will take place at the start of Term 3.

Tracking data will be used for various reasons:

- To inform parents of individual pupils' progress
- To ascertain effective teaching and learning
- To estimate possible grade outcomes
- To identify underachievers and provide suitable support

The tests used for the tracking events must be robust and it is essential that departments consider the outcomes of each event at departmental level.

Pupils who are frequently below target will be identified as underachieving and will be given suitable intervention support.

Key Stage 3

At Key Stage 3, pupils in the C and H bands will take a common paper, with a differentiated paper for the S band pupils.

Pupils at Key Stage 3 will be measured against their stanine score which is generated from the CAT testing in Year 8. This stanine is individual, and is based on aptitude for success. Class averages will not be used. This stanine score will be the target grade for each pupil and will determine whether the tracking inputs are green (above target), yellow (on target) or red (below target).

Key Stage 4

Pupils in Key Stage 4 will all take December exams; these will serve as mocks for Year 12. Year 11 pupils will have external modules in English and Mathematics in May/June and subject exams internally.

Pupils at Key Stage 4 will be measured against the CAT outcome from tests done at the end of Year 10. These tests provide suggested outcome grades for the GCSE subjects taken by each pupil. These are individual and need to be discussed between the pupil and the subject teacher. When a grade is agreed by the teacher

and pupil, this is set as the target grade for pupil tracking. This grade can be changed after a period of review.

Key Stage 5

Pupils in Key Stage 5 will take December exams as mocks in subjects other than BTEC courses and Home Economics in Year 14.

The grade the pupil achieves during pupil tracking events is the working grade. The difference between the target grade and the working grade will determine whether the tracking inputs are green (above target), yellow (on target) or red (below target).

Data from GCSE outcomes create chance analysis graphs which are used to predict AS and A2 grades. These will be used in conversation with the individual pupils to decide a target grade for each pupil.

Pupils in Years 11-14 are assessed externally as follows:

- Year 11: modules in BTEC courses, some GCSE subjects, May/June
- Year 12: GCSE examinations, May/June
- Year 13: AS examinations, May/June
- Year 14: A2 and AS resits, May/June

Some GCSE, AS and A2 subjects will have visits by external examiners for practical aspects of the courses from March-May.

Most subjects at GCSE, AS and A2 have a component of controlled assessment or coursework to submit. The school's Controlled Assessment Policy provides all relevant information.

Recording and reporting

Keeping valid and up-to-date records of pupils' assessments ensures regular and relevant communication of attainment and progress can be made available to pupils, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Both formative and summative assessment events should be detailed in departmental schemes of work.

Through SIMS and ParentApp, additional information can be noted to record achievement in a range of both academic and non-academic arenas. Pupils may incorporate areas of success into their Pupil Progress Files. Pupils completing UCAS applications may use this information.

Full reports are completed once a year for all pupils:

	PT 1	PT 2	PT 3	PT 4
Year 8		December exams Interim report		May exams Full report
Year 9		December exams Interim report		May exams Full report
Year 10		December exams Full report		May exams Interim report
Year 11		December exams Interim report		May exams Full report
Year 12		December exam Full report		
Year 13		December exam Full report		
Year 14		December exams Full report		

Interim reports will detail the pupil tracking outcome, the measure against the target grade and an effort grade.

Parents' consultation meetings will take place for each Year Group throughout Terms 1 and 2. These are a valuable opportunity to connect with parents and guardians about the following:

- Progress and achievement
- Homework
- Classwork
- Coursework/controlled assessment
- Effort and attitude
- Presentation of work and personal organisation
- Behaviour
- Targets for improvement

Roles and Responsibilities

The Assessment Policy and its implementation across departments is monitored and evaluated by:

- Vice Principal (Curriculum)
- Senior Teacher (Pupil Improvement)
- Curriculum Leaders

The Vice-Principal (Curriculum) and Senior Teacher (Pupil Improvement) are responsible for leading Curriculum Leaders to review, monitor and evaluate all aspects of the Assessment Policy within the context of the whole School Development Plan.

Vice-Principal (Pastoral), SENCo, Senior Teacher (Pupil Achievement) should liaise with examination officers, parents and pupils to ensure that appropriate access arrangements are in place for examination candidates.

Curriculum Leaders should devise a departmental assessment and homework policy, in line with the whole-school assessment policy. This departmental policy should be dynamic and informative, providing structure and purpose to assessment procedures used at departmental level. Curriculum Leaders should establish subject specific expectations, guidelines and procedures for assessment in the department.

Subject teachers should become familiar with the whole-school assessment policy and engage with the departmental policy in everyday teaching and learning. All aspects of assessment should be compliant with this policy. Subject teachers are responsible for setting appropriate and meaningful homework, and for collating, marking, annotating and returning homework in a timely fashion. Persistent failure to complete homework to the appropriate standard should be sanctioned in line with the departmental procedures. Subject teachers are responsible to engaging with individual pupils after each tracking event to review progress and suggest strategies for improvement.

Form Tutors have responsibility to lead in Tracking Intervention Mornings by meeting with individual pupils to review overall progress and discuss strategies and targets for improvement.

Examinations Officers

The Internal Examinations Officer has responsibility for the organisation and timetabling of the December and May/June exams. The External Examinations Officer has responsibility for liaising with pupils, teachers, parents and exam boards about all aspects of external assessment.

Pupils

Pupils will have opportunities through the school year to reflect on their tracking performance and, through self-assessment, to set targets for improvement. This will be guided by Form Tutors and a pupil logbook will be used to support this task.

Parents/Guardians

Parents are invited to participate in the successful development of their children in all aspects of school-life. They are encouraged to attend Parents' Meetings, to engage with progress through the homework diaries and ParentApp and to ensure that appropriate time is given to homework, revision and controlled assessment work at home.

Quality Assurance

All formal reports are firstly completed by subject teachers with a review comment by Form Tutors, following checks by SLT (subject comments) and Heads of Year (Form Tutor comments). The Head of Year liaises with the Senior Teacher for Pupil Improvement to discuss pupils identified as underachieving, with appropriate strategies for intervention put in place.

External examination results are analysed at departmental level and then reviewed by the Curriculum Leader with the Headmaster/Vice-Principals. Comparison will be drawn between previous years' outcomes and the NI averages. Factors relating to good and poor achievement will be identified and noted for action planning.

The Assessment Policy will be reviewed annually and amended as required.

Linked Documents

- Assessment Handbook
- Class Movement Procedure
- Reporting Guidance
- Departmental Handbooks
- Literacy Policy
- Controlled Assessment Policy

- Data Protection Policy