

Assessment in Class

One



What is assessment?

Assessment is the process of deciding what a child can do and what support they need to achieve the next steps in their learning. It is an on-going process and builds a picture of the whole child and the things they need to do to improve their learning.

It is important to remember that all children are different and progress at different rates. By using our knowledge as professionals of the things that children of the same age are achieving teachers can use assessment to say whether a child is meeting the expectations for their age, has exceeded the expectations for their age or needs more support.

When we assess children and what they can achieve we are assessing what they can do **consistently, independently, across a range of contexts and over time**. This is to ensure that our assessments of the next steps are accurate and valid. Teachers are gathering information all the time from all the people involved with a child, including teaching assistants, parents and other family members. This helps us to build a picture of the child as an individual, as well as showing what a child can do in a range of contexts. Assessments should be made using a range of evidence, not just one piece of work or one test, in order to make sure that the skills the child is demonstrating have been internalised and assimilated into their knowledge of the world.

Another crucial thing to remember is that children perform differently for different people and in different situations. The skills your child demonstrates working one-to-one with an adult are going to be different to the skills they demonstrate when working in a group or when working completely independently. This is why the emphasis is on what children can do independently. This does not just mean "on their own" but also means that judgements should not be reached directly following teaching; rather they should be made when skills are applied in different contexts. (For example, if a child is taught to write an information text during work on India it is more valid to assess their skills a couple of weeks later whilst learning about animals than straight away. This ensures that the skills have been internalised, rather than repeated and provides a better picture of what the child can do and what their next steps are.) There are two types of assessment: formative and summative.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is happening all the time. It involves deciding how well a child has met learning objectives in each session and what they need to practise or move onto next. These assessments are often informal and can take the form of "mental notes" or be recorded for a teacher's records. Formative assessment is used to adapt a teacher's plans for the following session, or within a current session, depending on whether more consolidation, support or extension is required. Evidence for formative assessment can be gained from written work, talking to children, observing what they are doing and listening to what they say as they are working.

Summative Assessment

Summative assessments are made at the end of a unit or key stage to provide a way of "summing up" the learning of the children. These can take the form of written tests (a spelling test, for example, is a summative assessment of your child's spelling), concept maps where children are asked to record what they know before and after a topic or other pieces of work that are assessed. The phonic assessment for Year One children and the decision about whether or not a child has met the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) at the end of their Reception year or the expectations for the end of Year Two are all examples of summative assessments. These assessments are used to provide a picture of what a child can do at that moment. They are also used to compare children across the country and to highlight areas for further development. However, as with formative assessments, the main purpose of summative assessment is to provide a picture of what a child can do and the things they need to develop next.

Assessment in Class One

The majority of assessment that is carried out in Class One is formative assessment. Planning is then adapted to be able to meet the needs of the children and provide accurate next steps for their learning journeys. This approach is the same whether your child is in Reception or Key Stage One with observations of what children can do in different situations being the main way of providing evidence. However, the activities that might be provided to gather evidence and how the end of key stage expectations is reported to parents are different.

Assessment during the Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are between the ages of 0 and 5. Throughout their Reception year children will have been assessed using the age-stage bands in Early Years Outcomes. This is non-statutory guidance that outlines what children are expected to be able to do at different stages of their development. This guidance is also used by preschools and nurseries. By using the age-stage bands in Early Years Outcomes teachers can provide activities that are matched to a child's ability and that provide opportunities to support (or scaffold) their learning to the next stage. At the end of their Reception year all children in the country are assessed against the seventeen Early Learning Goals and a decision is made about whether they have met the expected level, have exceeded the Early Learning Goals and are working in Level One of the National Curriculum or have not yet met the expected level. A comment is also made on the three characteristics of an effective learner: playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically. This information is fed back to parents and is used to inform the planning and teaching during the first term of Year One so that the pace of learning is continued and there are no gaps in the learning journey of individual children. The information is also currently used to provide information to the government and Local Education Authorities about how schools in different parts of the country are performing, although this is not the main purpose of the assessments.

The main approach during the EYFS is to follow where the children lead. This involves having a dynamic curriculum that changes depending on the interests of the child. In order to plan and assess effectively we observe what the children are doing before providing activities and resources for them to make the next steps in their learning. When we observe a child doing something they haven't done before we make a note of it for their learning journal. As of November 2015, we are using Tapestry, an online learning journal, to record these assessments. This provides a way of keeping evidence of a child's learning. We might also take photographs – after all, a picture tells a thousand words! – or keep evidence of their recorded work. As the children get further into the Reception year we will begin to take them out of their play to be able to address specific gaps in their learning that they might have. However, the majority of their day will involve learning through play and experimentation. (They are also welcome to join in with what the older children are doing, should it spark their interest, as these activities will enrich their learning.)

Assessment at the end of Key Stage One

Following the introduction of the new National Curriculum in September 2014 the assessment arrangements for the end of Year Two are currently under review. For the academic year 2016-17 we have been using the Interim Performance Descriptors to assess children at the end of Key Stage One. These have taken assessment in Key Stage One from a "best fit" model to a "whole fit" model, which means that children need to achieve every statement to have reached the expected standard for the end of Key Stage One. The assessment arrangements for September 2017 onwards are still under review. When these have been confirmed we will hold an information meeting for parents.

Y1 Phonic Test

The Year One Phonic Test was introduced in 2012. It is designed to assess a child's ability to decode words using their knowledge of phonics and to provide information on what letter-sound correspondences children need further help with. It is conducted by a teacher known to the child (usually their class teacher) in a one-to-one situation and is supposed to be as non-stressful as possible for the children. It is supposed to take between four and ten minutes per child. The assessment is made up of a mixture of real and "alien" words. Alien words are nonsense words which have been put into the assessment to ensure that children are using their phonic knowledge accurately. The alien words are displayed opposite a picture of an alien to help children to understand that these words should not make sense. Children who do not meet the national expectation during the Year One assessment, which is made in June, are reassessed a year later.

Contributions to assessments made by others

Your child's teacher will be the person who makes the assessments of what your child can do consistently, across a range of contexts, independently and over time. However, they will gather evidence from a variety of people and situations. How children demonstrate their learning out of school provides a lot of different information and we welcome contributions from parents and carers. One way you can add your observations is through writing a "Wow" card when you have seen your child do something new. These can then be added to the board in the classroom to share with everyone before being stuck into your child's learning journal. You can also come and tell your child's teacher about things that you have seen or heard your child do. Children behave differently with different people and on different days and teachers use all of this information to form their judgements. All children in Class One now have a Tapestry account, so you can also contribute to your child's learning journey through the use of Tapestry throughout their time in Reception and Key Stage One. This account is linked to the account they had at preschool if their preschool used Tapestry, so their whole learning journey can be seen in one place.

How do I know that the judgements made by my child's teacher are accurate and valid?

At Hyde CE Primary School we recognise how important it is that you are confident in the judgements made by teachers about your child and we have several strategies to help ensure this:

- We regularly (once a half term) moderate reading, writing and maths between the three classes. This is where we look at work from each of the classes and see if we agree with the judgements that have been made.
- We meet with other local schools to moderate work, both formally on courses and informally at staff meetings
- Every four years EYFS, Key Stage One and Key Stage Two are moderated by external moderators. These are experienced practitioners employed by Hampshire County Council who are experienced at making judgements and who check that our judgements are in line with the rest of the County
- We make sure that our judgements reflect what children can do consistently, across a range of contexts, independently and over time, rather than relying on one off pieces of work or tests
- We track the progress of your child every twelve weeks against the national expectation so that we can see if any children need extra help or extension activities