

## **The Highland Council Education, Culture and Sport Assessment is for Learning Policy**

### **Background**

The Highland Assessment is for Learning Policy aims to clarify, for school staff, young people and parents/carers, the role of assessment within learning and teaching.

It should be read in conjunction with the Highland Learning and Teaching Policy and its complementary Toolkit which may be accessed on-line on [www.highlandschools-virtualib.org.uk/ltt](http://www.highlandschools-virtualib.org.uk/ltt) In particular, schools and learning centres will find useful the Toolkit items on Formative Assessment, Summative Assessment and Personal Learning Planning.

The Highland Assessment is for Learning Policy has been informed by developments within Highland, the work in England and Wales of Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam [*Working inside the Black Box*, 2002] and in Scotland by the Assessment is for Learning project. These initiatives and related international research have built up a substantial body of evidence which is impacting on educational policy and practice in the UK and beyond. This research evidence confirms that effective assessment advances the learning and teaching process, raising attainment and achievement.

### **Introduction**

Assessment can take three related forms.

Assessment *for* learning is essentially formative. It is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence so that learners, parents/carers and teachers can decide through high quality dialogue where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there.

Assessment *as* learning can be seen as essentially evaluative. It is about using assessment to learn how to learn. It encourages the development of autonomous learners. In effective assessment *as* learning, teachers and learners identify and reflect on their own evidence of learning, and practise peer and self assessment. Personal learning planning embraces these processes and provides a supporting framework.

Assessment *of* learning is essentially summative. It is carried out for the purposes of measuring, analysing and reporting performance. Effective assessment *of* learning supports school and local authority monitoring of standards, providing information which will influence resource and planning decisions. For the individual it brings awards which are important passports to opportunities in work and education.

Feedback is a fundamental concept in these three kinds of assessment, providing a sure focus for improvement.

An AifL school (see appendix 1) is one in which all three elements of assessment complement each other, contributing towards very good learning and teaching. All Highland schools, then, should aim to be AifL schools. They may begin to evaluate progress towards this aim by using the audit schedules (appendix 2).

## **Key Principles**

What are the key principles which inform our assessment ? Research and experience indicate that the following five principles are fundamental to effective assessment:

**Assessment is a key professional skill.**

Teachers require the professional knowledge and skills to manage assessment effectively: planning, sharing standards, observing, interpreting evidence of learning, giving feedback to learners and supporting them in self assessment, using assessment information to monitor and plan for improvement. Teachers and managers should be supported to develop these skills through local moderation activities and good quality continuous professional development.

**Assessment is central to classroom practice.**

Much of what teachers and learners do in the classroom can be described as assessment - tasks and questions, observing and interpreting what learners say and do, making and recording judgements about how learning can be improved. Planning and teaching should provide opportunities for learner, teacher, peer assessor, and parent/carer to obtain and use information about progress towards clear learning goals. Planning and teaching should also be flexible enough to respond to emerging ideas and skills in the classroom, at play and at home.

**Assessment is sensitive and constructive and motivates learners.**

Teachers, parents and peer assessors should be aware of the impact that comments, marks and grades can have on learners' confidence and enthusiasm. They should be as constructive as possible when providing feedback ('two stars and a wish'). Error should be seen merely as a stepping stone to success. Adverse comparison with others can demotivate and lead to withdrawal from the learning process. Motivation can be enhanced by protecting the learner's autonomy - providing choice, constructive feedback, opportunity for self-direction . . . and fun.

**Assessment helps learners know how to improve.**

For effective learning to take place, learners need to understand what they are trying to achieve – and want to achieve it. They need to become as aware of the 'how' of their learning as they are of the 'what'. Personal learning planning plays a significant role in this process.

**Assessment recognises and celebrates all achievement.**

We need to value and recognise achievement whatever its shape and form, wherever it takes place at home, in school, in the community. Assessment should enable all learners to achieve their best and have their efforts recognised and celebrated formally and informally.

## **Key characteristics**

Given our key principles, what kind of assessment practice should we expect to see and hear in our homes, schools/learning centres and at local authority level ?

### Homes

Parent/carer-learner dialogue which:

- facilitates regular reviews of progress towards learning outcomes
- builds confidence through effective use of praise, encouragement and the clear identification of what needs to be done to improve ('two stars and a wish')
- promotes informed constructive feedback from home to school.

### Schools/Learning centres

Policy and practice in which:

- pupils, staff and parents are clear about and share what is to be learned and what success would be like
- pupils and staff are given feedback about the quality of their work and how to make it better
- pupils and staff are fully involved in deciding next steps in their learning and identifying who can help
- classroom assessment involves high quality dialogue based on thoughtful questions, careful listening and reflective responses
- staff use assessment information to monitor their establishment's provision and progress, and to plan for improvement
- staff talk and work together to share standards in and across schools
- staff use a range of evidence from day to day activities to check on pupils' progress
- pupils and staff identify and reflect on their own evidence of learning
- pupils and staff help to set their own learning goals
- pupils and staff practise self and peer assessment.

### Local authority

Support to schools and centres which:

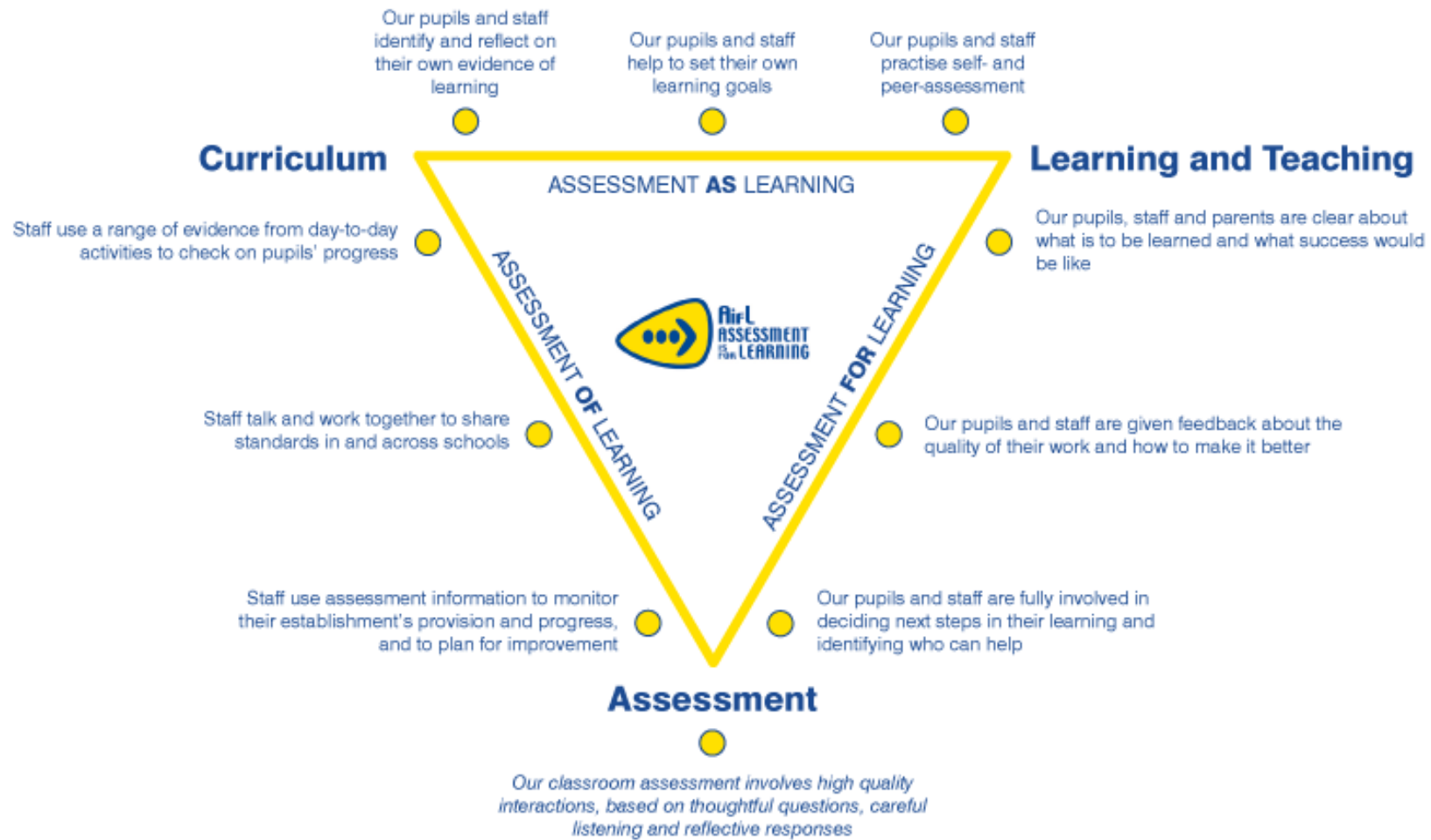
- embeds local moderation, formative assessment and personal learning planning at the heart of practice through policy development, guidance and CPD
- adopts national standards (3-5 Curriculum, 5-14 Levels, S-Grade and NQ criteria) as benchmarks for monitoring attainment at school and local authority levels
- analyses attainment and provides regular reports about performance and trends at school, associated school group and local authority levels
- uses assessment evidence to inform resource decisions.

The *Learning and Teaching Toolkit* is a key resource. It contains reflection/discussion papers on assessment and other issues and can be used to support the implementation of school development projects and individual CPD programmes. It may be accessed on

[www.highlandschools-virtualib.org.uk/ltt](http://www.highlandschools-virtualib.org.uk/ltt)

**Appendix 1**

## What is an AifL School? A Place Where Everyone is Learning Together



## Appendix 2

### Using formative assessment to raise achievement: audit of classroom practice

In the left hand columns note down how your current practice matches the statement:

1 requires rethinking	2 elements require development	3 room for minor improvements	4 mirrors the statement
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In the right hand column note down any evidence you can use to support each assessment.

Evaluation				Formative Practice	Evidence
1	2	3	4		
				Prior learning is assessed at the outset by review (through questions, discussions, and simple self-assessment approaches like traffic lighting)	
				Learners are offered choices about what and how they learn and are supported to set their own goals	

			Appropriate learning intentions and success criteria are shared with learners in language they can understand	
			Learners are given verbal and/or written feedback focused on the learning intention/success criteria and worded to encourage and identify an area for future improvement ('two stars and a wish')	
			Learning is monitored/supported as it is happening (e.g. through observing, asking questions and talking to learners while they are working)	

			Time is allowed for learners to make agreed improvements which are recorded when necessary and where is most appropriate	
			Examples of work are modelled by teachers and learners and discussed to help all to become familiar with the thinking process and what good work looks like	
			Pupils have opportunities to explore and develop the skills and dispositions they need to become more effective in evaluating and directing their own learning (e.g. by learning how to use peer- and self-assessment)	

## The AifL School - Audit of Whole School Practice

In the left hand columns note down how your current practice matches the statement:

1 requires rethinking	2 elements require development	3 room for minor improvements	4 mirrors the statement
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In the right hand column note down any evidence you can use to support each assessment.

Current practice				AifL Practice	Evidence
1	2	3	4		
				Our classroom assessment involves high quality dialogue, based on thoughtful questions and other techniques, careful listening and reflective responses	
				Our pupils and staff are fully involved in deciding next steps in their learning and identifying who can help	

			Our pupils, staff and parents are clear about what is to be learned and what success is like	
			Our pupils and staff give and are given clear, timely feedback about the quality of their work and how to make it better	
			Our pupils and staff practise effective self- and peer-assessment	

				Our pupils and staff make choices and help to set their own learning goals	
				Our pupils and staff identify and reflect on their own evidence of learning	
				Our staff use a range of evidence from day to day activities to check on pupils' progress	

			Our staff and pupils record individual assessment information only when necessary and where is most appropriate to monitor progress and plan for improvement (personal learning planning)	
			Our staff use assessment information to monitor their establishment's provision and progress and plan for improvement	
			Our staff talk and work together to share national standards in and across schools	