



# Thirsk School

& Sixth Form College

## Assessment Policy

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### visions

TOLERANT

HAPPY

INSPIRATIONAL

RESILIENT

SUCCESSFUL

KNOWLEDGEABLE



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### 1. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Provide clear guidelines on our approach to formative and summative assessment and feedback and reporting.
- Establish a consistent and coherent approach to the practice of assessment, marking and feedback that is rooted in evidence-led practice.
- Establish a consistent and coherent approach to recording summative assessment outcomes and reporting to parents.
- Clearly set out how and when assessment practice will be monitored and evaluated.

### 2. Principles of Assessment

- Assessment must serve learning by providing teachers and learners with better information, leading to better decisions in learning design and approach to learning. This happens when

the principles of good assessment are well understood, and assessment is focused and purposeful.

- Assessment is not just evaluation of information; assessments themselves must be designed to high standards to provide meaningful information.
- Good assessment also acts to support metacognition, retrieval practice, and the transfer of knowledge by application in new contexts.
- Appropriately managed assessment should be motivating, and the purpose should be made clear to students.
- Formative, diagnostic assessment should be used as a regular and routine part of planned learning, both to inform teaching and learning and to identify any areas for improvement.
- Summative assessment is used to evaluate learning and progress by awarding an attainment mark, grade or outcome to a student. Summative assessment must accommodate all access arrangements and 'usual ways of working' to support students with specific needs.
- Feedback, in all its forms, should underpin any approach to assessment in order that all students know and understand the progress they are making and what their next steps are to continue to improve. Through feedback, subject staff also identify where there are gaps in students' knowledge and understanding. Students should be expected to actively engage with feedback.

### 3. Assessment Approaches at Thirsk School

At the heart of any good school lies an effective and powerful relationship between the three pillars of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. At Thirsk School and Sixth Form College, we see all forms of assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning, and it is inextricably linked to our curriculum.

We use three forms of assessment: day-to-day in-school formative assessment, in-school summative assessment and nationally standardised summative assessment. All forms of assessment are designed to assess the extent to which a student has grasped the key knowledge and skills that are essential within that subject and year.

#### 3.1 In-school formative assessment

Effective in-school formative assessment enables:

- Teachers to identify how students are performing on a continuing basis as well as to identify gaps in knowledge and/or understanding; they can then use this information to provide appropriate support or extension, evaluate teaching and plan future lessons.
- Students to measure their knowledge and understanding against learning aims and identify areas in which they need to improve.
- Parents/Carers to gain a broad picture of where their child's strengths and weaknesses lie, and what their child needs to do to improve.

At Thirsk School, formative assessment takes a range of forms, including but not limited to:

**Low Stakes Testing:** This is effective in enabling teachers to know whether key knowledge has been retained and whether there are any misconceptions or misunderstandings either in the class as a

whole, or in individual pupils. Low-stakes tests can include quizzes, vocabulary tests and short multiple-choice tests. These are frequently self- or peer-marked.

**Targeted Questioning:** This is an important part of how teachers assess the effectiveness of learning in the classroom. Teachers direct questions to individual students across the class, highlighting where additional support or further challenge might be needed. This is often used to complement low-stakes testing, perhaps to check whether misconceptions have been addressed.

**Maintenance Marking:** This is when teachers routinely read, check and monitor students' books or folders. This process provides crucial ongoing information about how well students are learning and whether any misconceptions are forming. Maintenance marking is 'light touch'. It is undertaken regularly but according to a manageable schedule.

**Detailed Marking:** Teachers provide formal written feedback to students according to a set schedule, upon completion of a significant piece of work, an end of topic assessment or a sequence of lessons.

The feedback is provided through the 'Green Sheets'. These sheets outline the progress students are making against the curriculum intent and highlight specific areas of strength and areas for further development. A key feature of this formal feedback process is the opportunity for students to have dedicated reflection time, to allow them to act on the suggested strategies for improvement.

### 3.2 In-school summative assessment

Effective in-school summative assessment enables:

- Governors to reflect on trends and patterns in internal data and to ensure that the Senior Leadership team is tackling areas of weakness.
- School Leaders to monitor the performance of student cohorts, identify where interventions may be required, and work with teachers to ensure students are supported to achieve sufficient progress and attainment.
- Teachers to evaluate learning at the end of a unit or series of lessons and the impact of their own teaching, or of their curriculum, or the way a scheme of learning delivers it.
- Students to understand how well they have learned and understood a topic or course of work taught over a period of time. It should be used to provide feedback on how they can improve.
- Parents/Carers to stay informed about the achievement, progress and wider outcomes of their child across a period of time.

At Thirsk School, summative assessment will typically occur at the end of a topic or a section of the curriculum, to test the learning that has taken place in the preceding period. These assessments are designed to evaluate knowledge and skills development over the medium term. The frequency of these summative assessments varies across subjects, but they tend to take place half-termly for the core subjects or termly for non-core subjects. There will additionally be end-of-year summative assessments (end of year exams) for students in all year groups across all subject areas. Following summative assessments, students will receive detailed feedback through the Green Sheets, as outlined in section 3.1. All summative assessments are quality assured to ensure consistency in levels

of challenge. Standardisation and moderation are undertaken within each subject area to ensure that all tests are marked to the same standard. Where students require additional support to complete summative assessments (for example extra time, the use of a reader or the use of a word processor), these arrangements are put in place to ensure that all students can access the assessments.

### 3.3 Nationally standardised summative assessment

Nationally standardised summative assessment enables:

- Governors to reflect on trends and patterns of attainment and achievement in the broader national context, assess the performance of the school and to ensure that the Senior Leadership Team is tackling areas of weakness.
- School Leaders to monitor the performance of student cohorts, identify areas of strength or under-performance and work with teachers to ensure students are supported to achieve well.
- Teachers to understand national expectations and assess the performance of their students in the broader national context.
- Students and parents to understand how students are performing in comparison to students nationally.

At Thirsk School, we use a range of nationally standardised assessments, including:

- CATS: Upon transition into year 7 our students sit the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) Cognitive Ability Tests (CATS). These provide a mechanism for evaluating potential. The tests cover verbal reasoning, non-verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning and spatial reasoning. CATS can be useful where Standards Attainment Test (SATS) information from primary schools is missing, or to challenge expectations that may arise from performance in SATS. CATS may also offer insight into specific learning difficulties a student may potentially have.
- Reading Age Tests: We use reading age tests to give teachers crucial information to ensure that planning for lessons takes account of needs relating both to access and challenge.
- Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications: In Key Stage 4, students follow courses leading to qualifications including GCSE, BTEC, OCR Cambridge National, Functional Skills.
- Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications: In Key Stage 5, most students follow courses leading to level 3 qualifications including A-Level and OCR Cambridge Technical. Some students follow

courses leading to level 2 qualifications including GCSE, BTEC, OCR Cambridge Technical, ASDAN CoPE.

#### 4. Collecting and Using Data

##### 4.1 Frequency of Data Collection

Data relating to students' progress and achievement is recorded on Bromcom, our management information system. Teachers use summative assessments to inform their judgements relating to students' levels of progress and achievement. The cycle for collecting assessment data is set out in the table below.

YEAR GROUP	FREQUENCY OF DATA COLLECTION	TIMING OF DATA COLLECTION
7	Twice per year	February and June
8	Twice per year	February and June
9	Three times per year	November, March and June
10	Three times per year	November, March and June
11	Twice per year	December and March
12	Five times per year	October, December, January, March and June
13	Four times per year	October, December, January and March

#### 4.2 Data Collection Mechanisms

At Key Stage 3, students are assessed in relation to the expected curriculum standards at that point in the year. They are judged to be developing towards the standards, meeting the standards or exceeding the standards. Further explanation is given in the table below.

Assessment Scale		Descriptor
E	+	The student has applied all the skills and knowledge expected and regularly meets additional challenges.
	-	The student has applied all the skills and knowledge expected and has met some additional challenges.
M	+	The student has applied all the skills and knowledge expected.
	-	The student has acquired all the skills and knowledge expected.
D	+	There are gaps in the student's skills and knowledge that they are trying to close.
	-	There are significant gaps in the student's skills and knowledge that will hold them back.

At Key Stages 4 and 5 students are assessed using the grading scale for their qualification. For GCSE qualifications, this is a 9-1 scale, with 9 representing the highest level of attainment. For A-Level qualifications, this is an A\*-E scale, with A\* representing the highest level of attainment. For vocational qualifications, a pass/merit/distinction scale is used.

#### 4.3 Use of Assessment Data

We use external data analysis systems at Key Stages 4 and 5 that allow us to compare school data to national data. This supports both the evaluation of end of year public examination results and in-year progress data. Using national datasets for comparative purposes is valuable most particularly for challenging subject areas that appear to be underperforming, identifying areas of greatest strength, monitoring the performance of student cohorts and identifying where interventions may be required. We also use target grades as an additional mechanism to evaluate student progress in relation to these targets. At Key Stage 4, the target grades are based on students' prior attainment data from the end of Key Stage 2 SATS. At Key Stage 5, the target grades are based on students' prior attainment data from the end of Key Stage 4 qualifications.

At Key Stage 3 we use our own internal data analysis systems that allow us to evaluate the progress of individual students as well as student cohorts. This also has the benefit of identifying where interventions may be required.

## 5. Reporting to Parents

The main reporting mechanism to parents is the data report. This is produced following each assessment point (as detailed in the table in section 4.1) and shared with parents/carers via the My Child at School app (MCAS). The final data report of the year will be accompanied by a detailed Form Tutor Profile. In the data reports, parents/carers will receive the following information:

- For students in Key Stage 3, a judgement of the student's performance in relation to age-related expectations on the E+/E-/M+/M-/D+/D- scale (as explained in section 4.2).
- For students in Key Stages 4 and 5, a judgement of the student's performance in relation to national grading criteria (GCSE grades 9-1; A Level grades A\*-E; Vocational grades Pass/Merit/Distinction).
- An indication as to whether the student is underachieving in each subject.
- An Attitude to Learning (ATL) score for each subject, on a 1-4 scale (with 1 being the highest grade).
- Attendance record since the last assessment point

Parents/carers of students with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) and those on the SEN K register will receive an additional report three times a year, detailing how they are progressing in relation to their individual targets set as part of the SEND Plan, Do, Review process.

There will be one Parents' Evening per year for each year group. At the evening, parents/carers will have the opportunity to discuss their child's achievements in all subjects, with a focus on strengths and areas for improvement.

## 6. Inclusion

The principles of this assessment policy apply to all students, including those with special educational needs or disabilities.

Assessment will be used diagnostically to contribute to the early and accurate identification of students' special educational needs and any requirements for support and intervention.

We will use meaningful ways of measuring all aspects of progress, including communication, social skills, physical development, resilience and independence. We will have the same high expectations of all students.

For students working below the expected levels of attainment, our assessment arrangements will consider progress relative to students' starting points and take this into account alongside the nature of students' learning difficulties.

## 7. Training

Teachers will be kept up to date with developments in assessment practice and will be able to develop and improve their practice on a regular basis through a co-ordinated programme of CPD. This takes place throughout the school year. Some of our teachers are involved in exam board external examining in order to develop their awareness of assessment and approaches to teaching and learning. The skills they gain are shared with other colleagues in school.

Mrs J Dickinson, Assistant Headteacher, is responsible for ensuring that the annual CPD programme reflects developments in assessment theory and practice.

## 8. Roles and Responsibilities

### 8.1 Governors

Governors are responsible for:

- Being familiar with statutory assessment systems as well as how the school's own system of non-statutory assessment captures the attainment and progress of all students.
- Holding school leaders to account for improving student and staff performance by rigorously analysing assessment data.

### 8.2 School Leaders

School Leaders are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the policy is adhered to.
- Monitoring standards in all subjects.
- Analysing student progress and attainment, including individual students and specific groups.
- Prioritising key actions to address underachievement.
- Reporting to governors on all key aspects of student progress and attainment, including current standards and trends over previous years.

### 8.3 Teachers

Teachers are responsible for following the assessment procedures outlined in this policy.

## 9. Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed regularly by Mrs J Dickinson, Assistant Headteacher. All teaching staff are expected to be familiar with and follow this policy. It is the role of Curriculum Leaders to ensure that subject staff comply with this expectation. Curriculum Leaders will work alongside their SLT Line Managers to monitor the effectiveness of assessment practices within their subject areas, through scheduled monitoring activities which include (but are not limited to) learning walks, lesson observations, work analysis, student voice activities. Senior Leaders will monitor the effectiveness of assessment practices across the whole school.