

# Renfrewshire Council: Education and Leisure Services

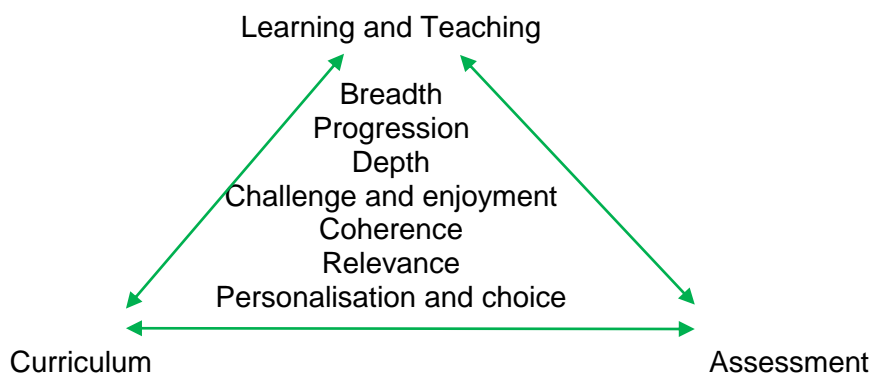
## Assessment Policy

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Curriculum for excellence promotes effective learning and raising achievement for all children and young people from 3 to 18. Assessment is a key element of this and it is critical that it is used to support individual learning, and provide information to learners, parents, other education establishments and employers about the standards that have been achieved.
- 1.2. *Building the Curriculum 5* (BtC5), published in January 2010, sets out the framework for assessment in Scotland. The framework describes a range of approaches which will be used to raise standards and expectations set out in the experiences and outcomes of curriculum for excellence. The implications of this document are considerable in respect of the expectations that it places on local authorities and education establishments to ensure that high quality learning and teaching is promoted, standards and expectations are raised, and a coherent system of quality assurance is in place to support practitioners in achieving consistency and confidence in their professional judgements.
- 1.3. The national framework has informed Renfrewshire Council's assessment policy. This will support practitioners and establishments in developing and implementing consistent approaches to assessment which reflect the values and principles of curriculum for excellence. Renfrewshire Council's assessment policy builds on existing approaches to assessment which have been developed through the use of *Assessment is for Learning* (AifL). It recognises that good practice and expertise in assessment exists across all sectors of education and promotes the sharing, reflection and implementation of existing good practice with the aim of raising standards of achievement for all learners.

### 2. Rationale

- 2.1. The central purpose of assessment is to support learning. This assessment policy will support establishments and practitioners in developing a consistent and coherent approach to planning the curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment, as demonstrated in the following diagram:



- 2.2. This policy focuses on the importance of gathering good quality evidence of learners' progress through relevant experiences. To achieve this, staff will need to plan a range of approaches to assessment that reflect the breadth, challenge and application of learning and the wide range of skills being developed. Examples of how this might be achieved are attached as appendices 1 and 2 to this policy.

### **3. Context**

- 3.1. "*Curriculum for Excellence* aims to ensure that all young people in Scotland achieve the high standards of achievement, including attainment, needed for life and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The knowledge and understanding, skills, attributes and capabilities that children and young people will need for the future will be different to those in the past and within a more challenging environment".  
(BtC5: Framework for Assessment January 2010)
- 3.2. This assessment policy will support practitioners in their planning, design and implementation of the curriculum and approaches to assessment. It will ensure that the values and principles of CfE are reflected in the learning experiences of all children and young people from 3 to 18.
- 3.3. The policy also acknowledges the importance of the role of learners and parents in supporting learning and their entitlement to be informed of learners' progress.

### **4. Principles of Assessment**

- 4.1. Assessment is an integral part of learning and teaching. It helps provide a picture of the learner's progress and achievements, and identifies the next steps in learning. It is important that assessment is used to support learning by ensuring that learners are engaged in all aspects of assessment processes, and that assessment is viewed from the learner's perspective.
- 4.2. The principles of assessment which include supporting learning; learner engagement; and ensuring appropriate support are further detailed within *Building the Curriculum 5*.

### **5. Aims of this Policy**

- 5.1. The aim of Renfrewshire Council's assessment policy is to advise and give guidance to establishments and practitioners as they continue to embed the principles of AifL and further develop consistent approaches to assessment in order to:
- promote high quality learning and teaching;
  - raise standards of achievement and expectations;
  - achieve consistency in applying national standards and expectations;
  - provide support to establishments and practitioners as they continue to develop and embed consistent approaches to assessment;
  - support establishments and practitioners in meeting the entitlement of learners and parents in relation to assessment and reporting; and
  - promote continuous improvement by using benchmarking information and monitoring standards.

- 5.2. To support this, the assessment policy will promote the development of:
- a more effective assessment system which supports greater breadth and depth of learning and a greater focus on skills development;
  - a better connected assessment system through collaborative working and developing better links at the transition stages;
  - better understanding of effective assessment practice and sharing of standards and expectations which will result in more consistent assessment; and
  - more autonomy and professional responsibility for teachers.

## **6. Why we Assess**

- 6.1. We need to assess learners' progress to ensure that they are achieving the standards and expectations appropriate to their age and stage of development. By assessing learners' progress and development, teachers and other professionals will be able to support learning effectively and plan the next steps in learning; and inform pupils and parents of progress in learning.
- 6.2. By assessing the progress of children and young people, practitioners will be able to ensure that the learners' progress is on track and take action to address any problems at the earliest opportunity. It is particularly important that robust and accurate assessment of learners' attainment and achievement takes place at transition points, for example, from pre-school to primary 1; from primary to secondary school; and between stages in schools.

## **7. What we Assess**

- 7.1. Assessment needs to be planned across the broad range of contexts and settings in which the curriculum is experienced and should focus on the application of standards and expectations of each learner's progress and achievement in:
- knowledge and understanding;
  - skills; and
  - attributes and capabilities.
- 7.2. The senior phase of young people's education builds on the broad general education, with assessment continuing to focus on planned learning across the curriculum. However, during the senior phase a substantial part of assessment will contribute to young people gaining formal qualifications and awards through which young people will continue to develop the four capacities and the range of skills for learning, life and work. The assessment of learning in the senior phase may also include recognition of achievements for example the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, college certification and a wide range of youth awards.
- 7.3. Further detail and advice on standards and expectations; assessing progress and achievement in learning; and assessing the breadth, challenge and application of learning can be found in *Building the Curriculum 5* and in the guidance in the relevant *Building the Curriculum 4: Principles and Practice* papers. In addition, appendices 1 and 2 of this policy provide further information on assessment of skills.

## **8. When we Assess**

- 8.1. Throughout this policy, the importance of the use of assessment to support learning and teaching is highlighted. This is best achieved through the use of a range of assessment methods.
- 8.2. It is widely accepted that practitioners assess constantly as part of daily learning and teaching, and periodically a wider range of evidence is evaluated to ensure that learning is on track and to enable the teacher to plan ahead and record and report on progress.
- 8.3. Well planned transition arrangements are fundamental to maintaining children's and young people's progression in learning. It is essential that all practitioners, staff, parents and support agencies work together to share information and to involve learners in this process.
- 8.4. Further information of when to assess can be found in *Building the Curriculum 5*, and in the relevant *Building the Curriculum 4: Principles and Practice* papers.

## **9. How we Assess**

- 9.1. Assessment involves using a variety of approaches and a range of evidence to reflect on, and evaluate and check on learners' progress.
- 9.2. Further information on using a variety of approaches to assessment; and making assessment fit for purpose to ensure that it is valid and reliable is included in *Building the Curriculum 5*. In addition, *the National Assessment Resource* (NAR) provides support for a single coherent assessment system through which understanding and professional practice in assessment, and standards and expectations will be developed and shared. It is anticipated that establishments will use the NAR to develop a shared understanding of standards and expectations.
- 9.3. Work is ongoing to develop a *Renfrewshire Assessment Resource* for early to fourth levels, based on the moderation work undertaken by practitioners during school sessions 2010-12. This will provide quality assured advice on standards and expectations for all experiences and outcomes.
- 9.4. In the senior phase, the next generation of National Qualifications will have a key role in raising standards of achievement for all. Approaches to assessment in this phase of young people's education will continue to support learning and take account of the need for breadth, challenge and application of learning.

## **10. Tracking Learners' Progress**

- 10.1. Information on learners' progress gathered through planned assessments should be recorded within a systematic tracking system. This will allow practitioners and managers to have a clear picture of whether individual learners are progressing through experiences and outcomes at an appropriate pace. Within the tracking system, progress should be recorded with reference to a 'developing', 'consolidating' and 'secure' learner. Systematic tracking of progress will then allow practitioners to identify next steps in learning and inform reporting on progress and achievement.

10.2. The tracking system should also allow practitioners to track coverage of experiences and outcomes. This will ensure that learners are experiencing appropriate breadth across curricular areas, within their broad general education.

## **11. Reporting on Progress and Achievement**

11.1. Reporting the progress of learners has two main purposes. Firstly, it provides clear positive and constructive feedback about children's and young people's learning and progress. It also creates opportunities for discussion about the next steps in learning, between learners and those teaching and supporting them. It is important that this process is manageable and proportionate while providing the necessary information.

11.2. Parents are entitled to information on their children's strengths, progress and achievements. They should also be informed of any gaps in their children's progress and have the opportunity to discuss how they can help.

11.3. Further information on reporting progress and achievement can be found in *Building the Curriculum 5*, and in the further guidance *Building the Curriculum 5: recognising achievement, profiling and reporting*, published in June 2010. Work is ongoing to further develop local authority guidance and support in recognising wider achievement, profiling and reporting.

## **12. Self-evaluation and Continuous Improvement**

12.1. Renfrewshire education establishments are very familiar with the framework of quality indicators set out in *How Good Is Our School (3)* (HGIOS3) and *Child at the Centre* (CatC). These provide a focus for reflecting on professional practice for improvement in schools and pre-5 centres. In using these frameworks, staff reflect on a wide range of evidence and data to support their evaluations and to identify areas of strength and areas for development. Schools and pre-5 centres will continue to use these frameworks to ensure that appropriate assessment procedures are developed and implemented.

### Ensuring Consistency

12.2. It is essential that in Renfrewshire establishments, consistency in assessing standards and expectations is achieved. It is expected that this will apply within and across establishments. In order to arrive at a shared understanding of standards and expectations, staff will work in their individual establishments and across clusters to develop and share practice. At local authority and national level, approaches for quality assurance and moderation are continuing to be developed.

12.3. In developing a robust and consistent approach to assessment:

- practitioners will work together to plan learning, teaching and assessment, thereby enabling them to share their understanding of standards and expectations of performance;
- practitioners will build on existing standards and expectations, and engage with colleagues to share and confirm expectations;
- exemplification from the *National Assessment Resource* (NAR) will be used to support assessment activities;

- assessment of learners' achievements and attainment, from early level to fourth level will take place across all subject areas and will be reported to learners and their parents. This data will be submitted annually to education and leisure services, where it will be analysed and will inform further discussion at school level, and with head teachers, senior managers and education officers; and
- performance management meetings relating to the new National Qualifications will replace the existing performance management meetings which currently take place in secondary schools.

12.4. Further information and advice on current approaches to quality assurance and moderation, which assist in the development consistent practice, is included in appendix 3 of this policy.

12.5. Education authorities have a statutory duty to ensure continuous improvement within their education establishments. Through the establishment review process, gathering and analysis of performance data, and from self-evaluations of individual establishments, Renfrewshire Council will ensure that there are suitable arrangements in place to ensure consistency in assessment standards and expectations, and to focus on any action required for improvement.

### **13. Policy into Practice**

13.1. It is expected that all establishments will use this assessment policy and the identified resources to develop their own policy and practice.

### **14. Impact Assessment**

14.1. This policy complies with Renfrewshire Council's equality and diversity schemes. It has a key role in supporting the council in its duty to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity.

### **15. Review**

15.1. This policy will be reviewed as further guidance and advice is provided by the Scottish Government and Education Scotland.

### **16. Conclusion**

16.1. This assessment policy promotes high expectations of performance, which will be supported by effective assessment procedures which place the learner firmly at the centre of the assessment process. By developing and implementing this assessment policy it is expected that:

- levels of attainment and achievement will be raised, at all levels;
- a seamless, consistent assessment process will be in place and provide effective transition for all learners from 3 to 18; and
- learners and parents will have a key role in the assessment process.

16.2. Appendix 4 of this policy outlines the roles and responsibilities of individuals and groups at establishment and local authority level, who are involved in the assessment process.

LJ/LG  
20 September 2011

## Approaches to Assessment and Range of Evidence

*“The knowledge and understanding, skills, attributes and capabilities that children and young people will need for the future will be different to those in the past and within a more challenging environment”*

(BtC5: Framework for Assessment January 2010)

Skills for learning, life and work are embedded in the experiences and outcomes and the senior phase of CfE. Progression in these skills and how they can be developed and applied across learning and in different contexts is outlined in *Building the Curriculum 4*. Assessment of skills should be part of, rather than separate from, assessment in different areas of the curriculum. Assessment should be an integral part of day-to-day learning and teaching, carefully planned at the same time as programmes of experiences, so that it reflects the learning, provides an emerging picture of progress and achievement in skills for all learners, and enables both staff and learners to gather and evaluate evidence and plan next steps in learning.

It is essential that staff use a broad range of contexts, supported by robust evidence, to check how a learner is progressing and that learning is secure.

### Evidence of learning

Assessment should be sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of all learners regardless of how and where their learning takes place. Contexts in which assessment could take place include:

- literacy and thinking skills may be evidenced through problem solving presentation in maths;
- numeracy and working with others may be demonstrated in a group project in social subjects; and
- health and well being and planning skills may be evidenced through a volunteering task.

### Reflecting on evidence

By participating in the assessment process and contributing to and evaluating their own evidence, learners will gain a better understanding of what is expected of them and how they can improve. It is important that assessment is planned and designed to help learners understand:

- why their skills are important;
- how their skills are developing; and
- how their skills can be used across the curriculum and in their lives in and outside the classroom and the establishment.

### Sharing standards and expectations:

It is essential that a robust and consistent approach to assessment is achieved through the sharing of standards and expectations. To achieve this:

- staff and other partners will need to talk and work together to evaluate evidence of progress and achievement;
- staff and other partners will need to work together to understand and share expectations and standards around skills development; and
- staff need to collaborate and use information from assessment to ensure that information about the amount and quality of the learning is both accurate and consistent, and is used as part of improvement planning to promote better learning.



## The Development of Skills for Learning, Life and Work

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) encompasses a wider range of learning than previous curriculum frameworks and includes the range of skills for learning, life and work. All children are entitled to opportunities to develop these skills across all curricular areas, from the early years through to the senior phase of learning and beyond. The development of these skills is essential to learning if we wish Renfrewshire's children and young people to develop as lifelong learners and to reach their potential.

Opportunities to develop skills may be offered in different ways that are appropriate to learners' needs. The opportunity to engage in active learning, interdisciplinary tasks and to experience learning in practical contexts is necessary if we are to enable children and young people to develop, demonstrate and apply a wide range of skills. It is recognised that practitioners will require guidance and support to do this.

Work is ongoing nationally and within Renfrewshire Council to develop guidance and to provide staff development and support in the development and progression of appropriate and relevant skills.

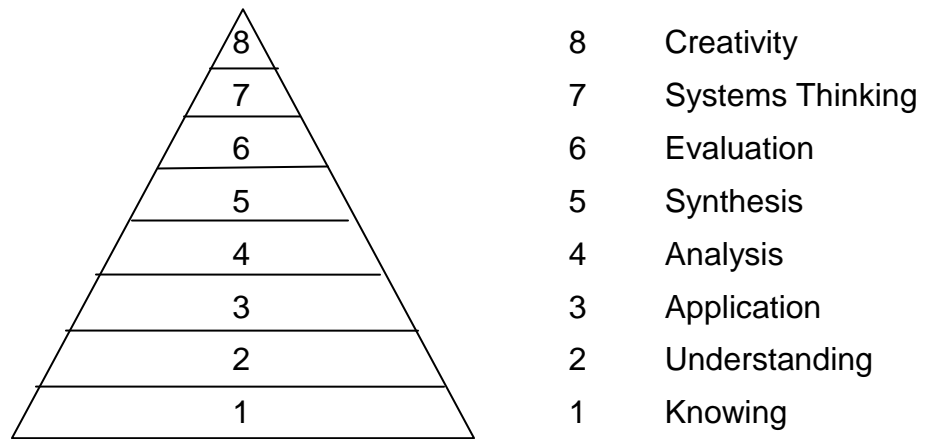
### Skills Development in Renfrewshire Schools

It is expected that schools and pre-school establishments in Renfrewshire will embrace skills development as an integral part of the implementation of curriculum for excellence and ensure that all children have the opportunity to develop, progress and build on relevant and appropriate skills. The resources used to support this will be the decision of senior management teams and staff and will be developed in different ways according to the needs of each individual learner. However, national and local authority guidance is currently being developed to support the progression of skills for learning, life and work. This includes:

- (i) The Scottish Government Higher Order Skills Excellence Group has identified a taxonomy (classification) of skills, which will help teachers promote thinking skills in the classroom. This is similar to Bloom's Taxonomy, but includes two additional skills of *synthesis* (the combining of separate ideas to form a new concept) and *systems thinking* (an essential skill for dealing with complex issues and ideas). This taxonomy better reflects the skills required for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. Work is continuing at national level to develop this further and to provide a 'virtual' resource to support the development of skills for learning, life and work.

In Renfrewshire, work is ongoing to provide staff development on the higher order thinking skills for early to fourth level. This will support both the national development and the resource which is being developed by the local authority development group, described in (ii) below.

*The Scottish Government Higher Order Skills Excellence Group Taxonomy*



- (ii) A local authority development team is currently working on a progressive skills development resource for early to second levels. This resource makes extensive use of learning routines and collaborative working and will offer practical guidance on 'how' to develop skills in the classroom. This resource will be made available to all establishments, with staff development being offered to support it.

### **Current Approaches to Quality Assurance and Moderation of Assessment within Establishments**

Establishments and the education authority currently have a range of effective practices that contribute to ensuring consistency and a shared understanding and application of standards and expectations. The following are examples of current practice although these are not yet used consistently.

- Through focused learning visits to classes, staff evaluate learning and engage in professional dialogue about children's progress, thereby ensuring consistently high standards;
- Senior staff, for example head teachers, depute head teachers, principal teachers and faculty heads sample learners' work. Follow-up professional dialogue focuses on expectations, strengths of learners' performance, quality of feedback and agreeing next steps in learning;
- Individual teachers adopt strategies to avoid pre-judging outcomes, for example marking learners' work without being provided with names;
- Teachers, when teaching children at the same stage, share the same preparation time to allow collaborative planning, peer review and discussion of standards and expectations;
- Departmental meetings regularly include planning learning, teaching and assessment together in a coherent way. Staff are able to share effective strategies which they know have improved learning and achievement;
- Standards and expectations are shared through displaying learners' work aligned to levels to show progression, for example in writing displayed on a 'learning wall';
- Professional dialogue focuses on examples of learners' work that has been pre-marked to help reach an agreed view on quality and standards and to identify next steps in learning, particularly at points of transition;
- Staff use benchmark data of similar schools to compare their learners' achievements to that of others;
- Staff engage children and young people in discussions about progress and target-setting as part of planning to meet their learning needs; and
- In secondary departments (in addition to the activities listed above):  
Teachers cross-mark end of topic tests, unit assessments and prelims by marking pupils' work in other classes or groups and engage in professional dialogue about the results

## Roles, Responsibilities and Entitlements

### 1. Learners' Entitlement

- 1.1. Learners have an entitlement to be actively engaged in their learning and to have their learning assessed through a range of activities. To achieve this learners should:
- be involved in the planning and assessment of their learning;
  - be involved in sharing learning intentions and success criteria;
  - have access to, and experience of high quality interactions and feedback;
  - participate in reflection, setting learning goals and next steps in learning;
  - review their learning through self and peer assessment;
  - have access to appropriate support which is fair and inclusive;
  - be involved in reporting on their progress and achievement; and
  - have their achievements and successes recognised.

### 2. Practitioners

- 2.1. Teachers and other practitioners have a responsibility to plan, design and carry out assessment as an ongoing point of learning and teaching. In doing this, they should:
- work with colleagues to develop a shared understanding of standards and expectations, and apply these consistently. This should involve coherent planning, checking, sampling, reviewing and providing feedback for improvement;
  - ensure that assessment always supports learning and is based on a wide range of evidence;
  - develop learners' roles in moderation activities;
  - engage regularly in collegiate working;
  - evaluate evidence of learning to contribute to profiles and report on learners' achievement and progress; and
  - participate in quality assurance, moderation and CPD activities.

### 3. Parents' Entitlement

- 3.1. Parents are entitled to be actively involved in supporting their children's learning, and to be fully involved where their child needs additional support. To support this, parents should:
- receive regular information, about their children's strengths, progress and achievements;
  - be informed of any gaps in their children's progress and receive advice on how to help and support their children in their learning; and
  - receive information on the performance of all learners in the school in relation to expected levels at particular stages (P1, P4, P7, S1, S2 S3), in the first instance in key areas such as literacy and numeracy.

3.2. Parents are also entitled to be informed of how the school is applying national standards and expectations.

#### **4. Establishments**

4.1. A key role of managers in education establishments is to ensure that robust assessment practices are developed and applied consistently. In doing this, it is expected that managers will:

- provide opportunities for staff to work collaboratively in planning the curriculum, learning and teaching and assessment;
- provide staff with the opportunity to share and develop an understanding of standards and expectations;
- ensure that quality assurance and moderation activities are fit for purpose, proportionate, manageable and accessible;
- ensure that there is an appropriate focus on coherent planning, checking, sampling reviewing and providing feedback for improvement;
- ensure that appropriate monitoring and tracking of learners' progress is in place so that assessment information is used to support learning and involve learners in target setting;
- ensure that assessment is a key priority in all improvement plans;
- ensure that self evaluation is based on a wide range of evidence across all aspects of learning including benchmarking information to inform improvement planning and raising achievement for all learners; and
- provide an open and transparent account of how successful learners are in their learning and achievements and highlight their establishment's areas for improvement in their standards and quality report.

#### **5. Clusters**

5.1. Working in establishment clusters is essential to ensure consistency of practice and to support and build confidence in practitioners judgements. It is expected that clusters will:

- ensure that cluster moderation is a key priority on all cluster plans;
- organise moderation at all levels from early to third/fourth level;
- include partner providers of pre-school education;
- participate in the local authority moderation procedures; and
- nominate a head teacher in the cluster to be the main point of contact regarding moderation. This responsibility could be undertaken on a termly or yearly rolling process.

## 6. Education Authority

6.1. The education authority has a legal responsibility to secure improvement in the quality of school education and to ensure appropriate standards in education, therefore it should:

- support self evaluation and the improvement process;
- sample the quality and consistency of learning, teaching, assessment and achievement in schools within the authority;
- ensure that establishments have suitable arrangements in place to support practitioners' judgements and focus on any action required for improvement;
- facilitate cluster working and contribute to identifying a focus for moderation and verification activities to ensure fitness for purpose and proportionality, this should include ensuring an appropriate focus across transitions and involving partners across sectors;
- facilitate across authority moderation activities and link local practices with those at national level;
- moderate and benchmark information about the performance of learners;
- provide assurance that their establishments are consistently applying national standards and expectations and are participating in both local and national moderation activities and using those processes effectively;
- ensure that assessment information is used appropriately to support and challenge school staff to reflect on the links between classroom practice and outcomes for learners in order to inform planning for improvement;
- support non- local authority early years providers to meet the expectations of the local authority regarding moderation and assessment; and
- where HMIE make recommendations for improvements in quality assurance and moderation, education authorities will support and challenge establishments to ensure appropriate follow- through activities which focus on the required improvements.

**Key Documentation for Establishments, Teachers and Learning Professionals**

- Building the Curriculum 4 Scottish Government 2009
- Building the Curriculum 4: Principles and Practice Papers Scottish Government 2009
- Building the Curriculum 5 Scottish Government 2010
- Building the Curriculum 5: Recognising Achievement, Profiling Scottish Government 2010
- Improving our Curriculum through Self-evaluation HMle 2008
- Improving Outcomes for Learners through Self – evaluation HMle 2008
- Bloom’s revised taxonomy Lorin Anderson 2001
- How Good is Our School 3 HMle 2007
- Child at the Centre HMle 2007
- National Assessment Resource (NAR) Scottish Government Authority (SQA)
- Assessment is for Learning Scottish Government 2002