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Making connections – an holistic approach to assessment: Broadwater CofE First and Middle School

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Brief description

At the heart of this school's outstanding performance is the precise understanding of the learning of individual pupils. This is founded on a coherent assessment framework that continually connects and cross-references outcomes from formative and summative assessment activities. Assessment is integral to the curriculum and teaching, and feeds into robust data and performance management systems to raise achievement.

Overview – the school's message

'As a school we have a deep desire to ensure our children are known well. Assessment practice is central to this and to a vision of learning that engages pupils, unlocks their potential, and underpins life-long self-improvement and fulfilment.'

Jez Wong, Headteacher



Jez Wong and Janet Sharp, Principal

The good practice in detail

A coherent and well-understood assessment strategy is the foundation of pupils' high achievement. Together, staff and pupils work to clarify strengths, areas for development and next steps in learning. Senior leaders have constructed an assessment framework which ensures that this ongoing process is rigorous. Their clarity about the different purposes of assessment and the priority given to ensuring that all assessment illuminates a picture of

each child's learning, aptitudes and well-being drives pupils' progress, pride and pleasure in learning. Assessment is embedded in the curriculum, teaching, data management systems and performance management. Excellent communication ensures that assessment information derived from these different contexts is connected and sharply focused on improving pupils' learning.

Assessment and the curriculum

The headteacher sees curriculum planning and design as critical to effective assessment: 'A caveat to any success in assessment has to be the time we have spent revising our curriculum so that it not only entuses our children but ensures the basics are done very well. Work was undertaken to analyse every subject to create continuity in the acquisition of skills throughout the school.' The subsequent 'blueprint of skills' forms the backbone of the school's creative learning approach and identifies regular assessment opportunities in core and foundation subjects. The variety of assessment techniques is carefully considered to ensure the full range of pupils' achievement is captured accurately. This groundwork frees teachers to develop a thematic approach to learning that allows children to practise skills in context and teachers to evaluate how successfully pupils apply new learning. Each term, time is dedicated to bringing staff together to review the impact of the curriculum and the effectiveness of assessment techniques on the development of pupils' skills.

Assessment and teaching

Lesson planning is a collaborative activity that is constantly referenced to the individual needs of pupils. Teachers have an accurate understanding of pupils' prior attainment and



high expectations for future attainment. Lesson planning is about supporting pupils in the journey from where they are in their learning to a destination that will push them to the limits of their potential. Clear and concise learning intentions are linked to the overarching blueprint of skills progression. High quality, ongoing professional development focuses on the use of assessment to support learning. Senior leaders stress the importance of developing a common understanding of what

successful assessment for learning looks like. A key feature has been the sharing of success criteria often combined with the use of exemplars, teachers modelling learning or pupils sharing their learning.

Pupils understand how to succeed and develop the skills of self- and peer-assessment from the Early Years Foundation Stage. These skills become refined and increasingly sophisticated as they progress through key stages.

The systematic use of success criteria also provides a structure for feedback to pupils including in marking and setting targets for improvement. This creates a meaningful relationship between classwork and pupils' medium-term targets for improvement.

The outcomes of assessment are regularly discussed formally and informally across the school. Teachers talk about the learning of individual pupils and exchange teaching methods

and resources that have helped to accelerate pupils' progress. They readily seek the advice of subject specialists and the special educational needs coordinator. The common question is: 'How can we move learning forward?' This continuous conversation also informs the identification of pupils across classes who require additional intervention. Teachers with expertise in developing the specific skills required deliver intensive support sessions as necessary. In addition, every class has a well-trained teaching assistant who works closely with the class teacher. Each assistant has five hours per week earmarked for personalising learning for targeted pupils. Where ongoing teacher assessment identifies gaps in pupils' knowledge or understanding this will be discussed with the teaching assistant who will follow through with remedial work.

Assessment, tracking and data management systems

Systems for tracking pupils' progress and analysing performance data have been overhauled. In the past, an assessment manager would input information about pupils' progress provided by teachers at regular 'assessment stops'. However, this did not encourage teachers' ownership of the information or their accountability for pupils' 'learning journey'. Now teachers input their own assessment information and have a complete picture of the attainment profile of individual pupils and different groups. In addition, 'assessment stops' are better timed to ensure swift intervention where necessary.

Assessment and performance management

In the spring term, senior leaders meet with every class teacher as part of the school's cycle of monitoring. The headteacher explains: 'At this meeting, we assess the quality of the classroom environment, monitor books and discuss data and individuals. We expect the process to be collaborative, allowing teachers to express any concerns and senior leaders to gain a deep understanding of pupils' individual needs. This gives the senior team a clear view of how the assessment framework is functioning – particularly with reference to intervention strategies. It also allows us to set rigorous performance management targets directly related to raising pupils' achievement.'

So what are the key features of the school's outstanding assessment practice?

- A clear and shared understanding of pupils' progression in each subject and the essential skills that underpin successful learning.
- A range of well-timed assessment opportunities embedded within the curriculum.
- Assessment outcomes used systematically to:
 - inform lesson planning
 - give precision to interventions
 - personalise learning.
- High-quality professional development in the use of assessment to support learning to ensure consistency in teachers' skills and the quality of teaching and learning.
- Data management systems that give teachers ownership of assessment information and are sharply focused on the

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progress of individual pupils and different groups.

- Challenging targets for pupils' progress that are central to performance management and drill down to the learning of individual pupils.

While the headteacher reflects that 'in many respects there is nothing original in any of these approaches', it is the coherence of the school's assessment framework that underpins an ethos of high expectations and a tenacious commitment to the success of every pupil.

The school's background

Broadwater CofE First and Middle School is larger than the average-sized primary in Worthing, West Sussex. It is led by a part-time principal, with overarching responsibility for the school, as well as a full-time headteacher. The school has achieved the Artsmark Silver award and the Investors in People Gold award.



Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

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