

Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School

Assessment Policy

Issued by	School Lead
Last review	19/08/22
Approved by Council	Oct 22
Circulation	Elmfield Website Google Drive - Policies

Our Principles

Our central tenet is that feedback and assessment is a vital support for pupil's learning and development. Furthermore, we hold that the learning being assessed should take the whole person into account; including assessment of socialisation processes, qualification outcomes and the appreciation of the development of the person. Beyond all else, assessments which colleagues conduct must evaluate, comprehensively, the things that Waldorf education values.

As we posit that learning should be experiential and social, performance assessments are usually appropriate: i.e naturally occurring evidence as the normal part of the lesson. Thus, the school acknowledges that effective assessment can take many forms. Colleagues have great freedom to make use of approaches that are appropriate to the pupils in their care: there is a useful summary of potential feedback approaches [here](#).

In many ways, the teacher is at the heart of this policy. It is the teacher who oversees and ensures the progress of all the children in their care and it is their expertise, knowledge and experience that informs all assessments. Likewise, it is the outcome from these assessments that subsequently impacts on the preparation of the teacher to meet the needs of this children.

In his lecture of 30th December 1921, Steiner said:

The Waldorf idea is that all the teaching will be so organised that the maximum amount of learning experiences or content can be bought to the pupils in the minimum amount of time using the simplest possible means.

Whilst short-term interventions, specialist teaching and external support have their place, 'quality-first' teaching is the simplest possible means to ensure pupils progress.

Thus, at Elmfield, we must:

- Establish a consistent approach to the way in which students receive feedback
- Ensure that all feedback is supportive, specific and helpful.
- Make certain that assessment should be effective, unobtrusive, embedded in classroom practice and unbureaucratic, yet also well documented.
- Maintain focus on identifying gaps in knowledge and planning learning opportunities which close those gaps rapidly.

Elmfield's Assessment Values

Assessment and evaluation are expressions of the values we hold and enable us to identify what we value and to make judgements about this. This means formulating what we value, finding appropriate indicators for this, observing closely and interpreting intelligently and insightfully.

At Elmfield, we must find the right balance, so that the domains of socialisation (being), qualification (skills and knowledge) and becoming a subject (disposition, motivation, interests) are respected and do not crowd out each other.

This document highlights that Waldorf practice uses formative, ipsative and summative assessment for different purposes.

Formative and Ipsative Assessment

Teachers at Elmfield will, as a matter of course, give pupils individual, ongoing and specific feedback. It is important that pupils understand, in age-sensitive and language-appropriate ways, which may be implicit and explicit, what the learning aims are and how they can meet them. What is essential, particularly before a pupil enters the Upper School, is that such assessment is also ipsative: helping the learner to recognise their own progress against their own achievements and levels of participations - not as a result with a preoccupation with any external standard.

In order to best support this approach, at Elmfield School we wish teachers to adopt strategic minimal marking, often described as a 'no more marking' policy, by using the very least physical marking in books possible for each child, on a case-by-case basis. Our small class sizes, deep and well-established relationships between pupil and teacher and well-crafted, developmentally appropriate, curricular allows for rich and effective formative and ipsative assessment distinct from unnecessary, and laborious, marking in books. Teachers, through an expert and well-considered use of verbal feedback, 'live' marking and peer and self-assessment, can build up an appropriate understanding of the progress of each child with no need to 'performatively' mark for other audiences.

Summative Assessment

In order to effectively facilitate this 'no more marking' approach, whilst also ensuring appropriate oversight of pupil development, Summative methods should be used at the end of learning blocks and in year-end assessments to show performance of groups and individuals over time and for purposes of quality assurance.

David Didau writes extensively on the differences between Formative and Summative Assessment here. However, modes of assessment colleagues may use might include: observation and monitoring of performance or activities; projects; group work using checklists with criteria, including naturally occurring evidence; feedback on main lesson books, presentations and portfolios; end of block written tests; oral exams; and self-evaluation.

Main Lesson Books

In order for these Summative Assessments to be valuable, we need them to review the progress across the learning unit. This is difficult to achieve if only the final artefact is considered within the Main Lesson Book. (colleagues may be familiar with '[Austin's Butterfly](#)' which highlights this effectively. Thus, in common with other SWFS schools, we will move away from having a Main Lesson Book for 'best' with an attendant practice book with much work in it and have pupils, across the school, produce one overarching book that will be assessed.

Pupil Progress meetings

As a matter of good practice, the school will review the progress of each pupil on a termly basis. The SENCO, Education Manager and Class Teacher/Guardian will, in a formally scheduled meeting, review the available assessment information about each child in the class and discuss their progress. This is not just about measuring the delivery of cognitive knowledge and subject-based knowledge and skills but has to do with making judgements about pupils' learning processes and overall development and appreciating their development as persons, their achievements and interests. It is also about recognising emergent qualities in the person. These Pupil Progress Meetings will, likewise, consider the impact of any interventions and discuss appropriate deployment of support resources within the classroom.

Parents meetings

As with Pupil Progress meetings, these should occur termly in order to help parents feel fully involved in their child's journey. It would be anticipated that the 'group' parents evening should occur at the start and end of the year, with 1:1s occurring around February where trends will have been established and a meaningful discussion of progress and next steps can be achieved.

Whole School Marking Policy

As a school, we will ensure:

- The regular and timely use of feedback to ensure pupils can make rapid progress. This will include formal teacher assessment, and also the opportunity for self and peer marking. Within the Upper School, it will involve the examination of exemplar answers and the sharing of success criteria.
- Pupils receive written feedback at the end of a Main Lesson block (3 weekly in Middle and Upper School and half-termly in Lower School) and, for subject teachers, at the end of a half-termly unit of work.
- Colleagues make use a common language within their Summative Assessment across the school.
 - To aid this, we will make use of a Point in Time Assessment framework (see Appendix One) in use by many other SWFS schools
 - Words and Colour will be used in Lower and Middle School, with Levels only being used with appropriate classes in Upper School.
 - These Summative assessments for each child will be collected into Integris once a half-term for both Main Lesson and Subject Lessons and will form the basis of a discussion at Pupil Progress meetings.
 - To aid with this, Subject Guardian will provide tracking grids for their subjects which will assist Class
 - Teachers in their assessments. An example of literacy can be found here.
- Such written feedback provided to pupils in a summative assessment may include, in an age-appropriate manner, reflections upon:
 - Constructive participation in the social practices of the class
 - Ability to work with others

- Listening when others (not just the teachers) speak
- Being able to articulate one's thoughts, feelings and intentions in ways others can understand
- Understanding of the topics being taught as expressed in words, text and images
- Application of relevant subject-specific skills
- Ability to learn from mistakes and improve their work
- Ability to work independently and with others in projects
- Self-assessment and setting own goals
- Aesthetic presentation of work
- Motivation as manifest in behaviour
- Students have time to reflect and evaluate their learning. The teacher will:
 - Give students adequate time to reflect on feedback identifying actions needed for improvement
 - Ensures students understand all feedback they are given
 - Gives staff time to give additional differentiated feedback to students who may need more support
 - to improve their knowledge

Feedback approach

Formative assessments can take a variety of forms, including: retrieval practice; asking a child to explain what they are doing; short answer questions - both verbal and written - and multiple-choice questions. Likewise, whilst a summative assessment may well take the form of a 'test' at the end of a block of teaching, it would be more common for this assessment to be written feedback by the teacher about work completed during the learning unit.

Examples of good practice

Good written feedback from a teacher on a summative exercise will always comprise of at least two elements:

- What the learner has done well
- A brief indication of how improvement can be made.
-

Importantly, colleagues will want to include prompts or further questions to extend the pupils' thinking.

"You've used adjectives correctly. Your work would be even better if you had a wider variety of vocabulary"

"You have made your points well, however to improve your work you must always include examples"

This could take the form of a 'two stars and a wish' approach or Even Better If (EBI) or What Went Well (WWW).

Remember, however, if there are too many improvements on a piece of work, the feedback can become less productive. Focusing on a quality of feedback, rather than a quantity of areas is always most beneficial.

Use of prompts

The best kind of prompt gives pupils just enough information to point them in the right direction but not too much that the next step is too easy. Examples could be:

“Your solutions are all correct but a bit brief”

“Explain why you think x, y or z”

If students need more help than useful prompts:

“Re-do this problem/exercise. You might want to try...”

“Give more detail about the importance of ...”

Prompts can be given in the form of specific examples or questions:

“Your description of John’s personality is detailed but what did he look like and how could this help us with the question?”

“Read through my worked example then use it to help you answer the following question...”

It is essential that pupils are given time to read over comments and prompts and then have the opportunity to respond to them.

Indeed, at the conclusion of a learning unit, pupils should be encouraged to assess their own activities in age-sensitive ways. Younger children should be invited to express their feelings and thoughts about their activities

(see **Appendix #2 - Summative Assessment – Lower School** below). Older pupils should be encouraged to reflect on their performance (see **Appendix #3 Summative Assessment – M & U School** below) and can also participate in formulating appropriate criteria (what makes a good presentation?) and self-assess. Students in the Upper School should apply the same criteria used by their teachers – drawing, where appropriate, on exam board Assessment Objectives.

Examples of poor practice

Elmfield embraces a ‘no more marking’ approach to avoid the need for meaningless or ‘tick and flick’ approaches to assessment.

9/10 good effort
6/10 not bad
4/10 you can do better

Statements like the ones above are too vague.

The school only wishes useful feedback to be written for pupils. It is essential to be specific about what exactly is good or not so good about the work when providing feedback.

Responsibilities

Class/Subject Teachers

Feedback in line with the whole school policy: written feedback on Summative assessments at the end of a learning unit; formatively throughout the lessons to support progress and with individualised advice. Make use of opportunities for peer and self-assessment. Encourage pupils to have a sense of pride in their work and to challenge incomplete or untidy work.

Subject Guardians

Ensure an appropriate Subject Specific Tracking Grid is in place which reflects and meets the needs of the subject content and is in harmony with the Whole School policy. Monitor the application of the Feedback and Marking Policy for their subject to ensure it is consistently applied by carrying out a planned programme of learning walks. Provide feedback to staff on their work. Provide College with feedback on the strengths and areas for development in relation to their subject delivery in Main Lesson. Ensure that less effective practice is identified and necessary support is provided to ensure improvement.

College

Review, half-termly, Main Lesson books. Provide feedback to staff on their work and, where necessary, expert support is in place to ensure improvement. Provide feedback to the Education Manager.

SLT

Ensure Subject Guardian Tracking Grids are in place and adhere to the Whole School Policy. Ensure monitoring takes place via a planned programme of whole school learning walks. Take notice of the findings of College and act on their advice. Monitor the overall picture of curriculum delivery across the school.

Evidence Base

This policy is informed by the Assessment Colloquium held at St Paul's Steiner School in London in June 2022. It likewise borrows, liberally, from the work of Martyn Rawson in his text Steiner Waldorf Pedagogy in Schools.

Furthermore, it takes notice of the Independent Teacher Workload Review Group who published a report following the Department for Education's (DfE's) workload challenge in 2016.

The section on marking says we should make assessment:

- **Meaningful:** marking should vary by age group, subject and what works best for the pupil and teacher
- **Manageable:** marking practice should be proportionate. Bear in mind the impact on teacher workload, when you think about how often and how deeply teachers mark
- **Motivating:** marking should help to motivate pupils to progress. Do not assume this means writing in-depth comments or being universally positive

Furthermore, there have been a number of recent studies on the effectiveness of marking and feedback in schools. The EEF notes that feedback has a “very high effect on learning” with a suggested improvement impact of up to **8 months**. Whilst written comments on completed work offer an opportunity to provide students with a record of clear and specific information, such an approach must not be the only method colleagues used. Depending on the situation and the nature of the task, other forms of feedback - such as verbal feedback - can be immediate and therefore have greater impact. Reports have suggested that teachers should consider giving feedback less often, and instead focus on the **quality of feedback**.

Within this policy, therefore, we aim to ensure that “meaningful, manageable and motivating” feedback is provided to all pupils.

You can read more about these findings from the EEF findings, and access their toolkit [here](#).

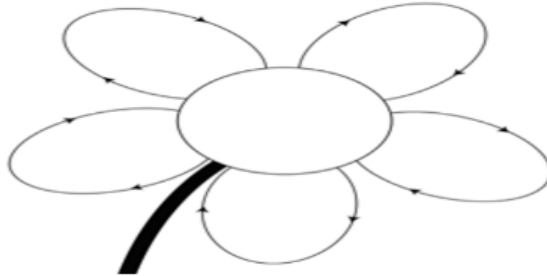
Appendix 1

On Track Point	Description of a child at this point
Well below Level 0-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Regularly unable to access the curriculum for their class or the class below ○ Requires additional classroom support, will often have significant SEND or EAL barriers to learning ○ Will undertake different tasks to the rest of the class
Cause for Concern Level 2-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is able to access the curriculum or the one below with support and scaffolding ○ Likely to have SEND or EAL barriers to learning ○ May undertake tasks that are modified or completely different to the rest of the class ○ Struggles to grasp new tasks without significant support and scaffolding ○ Struggles to embed new concepts
Emerging Level 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is able to access the curriculum of their class, will require scaffolding and support ○ Does not grasp concepts quickly ○ Needs support to embed concepts ○ Can apply concepts with support and scaffolding
Expected Level 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meets many of the curriculum expectations their class ○ May make errors, but usually able to improve work following feedback and support ○ Has some gaps in learning ○ Is generally successful in grasping and embedding concepts ○ Can apply skills and understanding independently, but not always successfully
Exceeding Level 6-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meets the vast majority of the curriculum expectations for their class ○ Usually grasps new concepts and embeds them quickly and independently ○ Is able to attempt learning that is beyond complexity of their class with some success ○ Can apply their age-appropriate understanding and skills to a wide range of contexts with regular success ○ Can clearly explain and justify their ideas ○ Can critique their own work and improve it
Well Above Level 8-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is exceeding the curriculum expectations for their class ○ The vast majority of times grasps new concepts and embeds them quickly and independently ○ Is often able to attempt learning independently that is beyond the complexity of their class with some success ○ Can apply beyond age-appropriate understanding and skills to a wide range of contexts with regular success ○ Can clearly explain and justify their ideas ○ Can critique their own work and others work, leading to improvement

Appendix 2

Appendix #2 - Summative Assessment – Lower School

<u>Something I have enjoyed:</u>



Name:	On Track Point (Colour/Word)	Teacher Comment
<u>Presentation</u>		
<u>Motivation</u>		
<u>Understanding</u>		
<u>Target</u>		

Appendix 3

Appendix #3 - Summative Assessment – Middle and Upper School

Name:	On Track Point (Colour/Word)	Teacher Comment	Student Comment
<u>Presentation</u>			
<u>Motivation</u>			
<u>Homework</u>			
<u>Understanding</u> <u>(Include assessment grade if appropriate)</u>			
<u>Target</u> <u>(AO: Upper school)</u>			<u>Something I have enjoyed:</u> <u>Something I am working towards:</u>