

# Assessment Policy



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## 1. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Explain The Queensmill Trust's unique approach to pupil progress and assessment.
- Provide clear guidelines on the Trust's approach to formative and summative assessment.
- Establish a consistent and coherent approach to recording summative assessment outcomes and reporting to parents.
- Document how and when assessment practice will be monitored and evaluated and by whom.

## 2. Legislation and guidance

Schools have been free to develop their own approaches to Assessment since the National Curriculum levels were removed in 2014.

This policy refers to:

- The recommendations in the final report of the Commission on Assessment without Levels
- Statutory reporting requirements set out in the Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005: schedule 1

## 3. Principles of assessment

The Queensmill Trust regards formative and summative assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning. Queensmill School, Kensington Queensmill School and Queensmill College keep accurate records of student's achievements, ensuring that assessments are manageable and that they lead to useful information that informs both parents/carers and teachers' future planning and target-setting.

Teachers assess students' termly progress against individualised 'I can' targets. Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) are target-setting and tracking documents which set out these 'I can' targets in two areas: learning and autism. Regarding learning, teachers set personalised 'My Learning' targets focused on Literacy, Maths and Physical Development in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and English, Maths and Science for students in Key Stages 1-3. Independence, Vocational Skills, Community Access and Health 'My Learning' targets are set for students in Key Stage 4 and beyond. Students completing an internship at Queensmill College, as a part of the Project Search programme, work on learning targets relating to employability. The curriculum and associated set of targets a student follows then depends on his/her chronological age and the curriculum that s/he follows, but are additionally determined by educational setting. Teachers of resource base students,

for example, may work with mainstream teachers to set learning targets relating to the mainstream lesson content that the resource base student will access, that term.

While PLPs set out the curriculum targets that the student will work towards, targets are also set in autism. Teachers and therapists work together to set termly 'My Autism' targets and these are mapped onto the Social Communication, Emotional Regulation, Transactional Supports (SCERTS) programme which all Queensmill Trust teachers and therapists are trained in. All students are set targets in the core SCERTS domains of Social Communication and Emotion Regulation (two targets each). The specifics of what exactly is targeted for each student varies considerably, depending on who the young person is, what their goals are and how these link to long-term priorities as set out by their EHCP. In this way, the target-setting system is sufficiently flexible enough to meet each student's needs uniquely as the targets that are drafted are those that are relevant and meaningful for them. 'My Autism' targets help students to overcome the difficulties of their autism, including communication, social and interpersonal skills, flexibility to cope with change and any sensory issues. As with the 'My Learning' targets, 'My Autism' targets are supported by specific strategies and activities and personalised success criteria. Teachers and therapists also use the SCERTS framework to create working targets and suggest potential targets for Emotional Regulation and Social Communication at the same time intervals. Towards the end of the term teachers/therapists review student progress towards the success criteria associated with each target and provide summative judgements ('mastered', 'secure', 'emerging' or 'experienced'), dependent on the level of mastery achieved by the student. With the strategic implementation of personalized transactional supports, such as adaptations made to learning resources and sensory supports, it is expected that students will be 'secure' in their knowledge or skill acquisition by the end of the term.

We recognise that progress is not only upwards but that our children and young people progress through widening their experiences, maintaining skills and generalising skills across contexts and with a range of people. We aim for our assessment to demonstrate the range of progress made both vertically and laterally. We recognise that 'Not all learners develop in the same way. Their progress is complex and may not develop sequentially' (Quest for Learning, Northern Ireland Curriculum, 2011). While teachers therefore use progression maps and schemes of work to support students to acquire skills in a sequential way, we understand that not all students will respond to their learning in the intended way and that several additional factors, including the extent of the students' autism, may support/hinder progress. We also understand that student progress can be impacted by autistic regression or circumstances outside of the school's control (e.g., reduced attendance). Teachers continually draw on a range of information in setting students' targets, including their own observations and the outcomes of previous assessments.

#### **4. Assessment approaches**

The Queensmill Trust views assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning and it is inextricably linked to curriculum.

We use three broad overarching forms of assessment: day-to-day in-school formative assessment, in-school summative assessment and nationally standardised summative assessment.

#### 4.1 In-school formative assessment

Effective in-school formative assessment enables:

- **Teachers** to identify how students are performing on a continuing basis and to use this information to provide appropriate support or extension, evaluate teaching and plan future lessons.
- **Students** to measure their knowledge and understanding against learning objectives, and identify areas in which they need to improve (where they have the cognitive capacity and self-awareness to do so). Students are supported with the early stages of this using child-friendly PLPs which students may have on their desks or next to their schedules to refer to, with adult guidance. Through actively engaging with these, students are afforded the opportunity to develop skills in understanding what they are working towards and to develop greater self-awareness and self-efficacy.
- **Parents/carers** to gain a broad picture of where their child/young person's strengths and weaknesses lie and what they can do to help their young people to improve and achieve.

#### 4.2 In-school summative assessment

Effective in-school summative assessment enables:

- **School/College leaders** to monitor the performance of student cohorts, identify where interventions may be required (e.g., booster clubs) 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 period and the impact of their own teaching. Teachers at The Queensmill Trust are supported to do this through termly progress tracking meetings which are guided, semi-structured interviews based on the outcomes of their class assessment data.
- **Students** to understand how well they have learned and understood a topic or course of work taught, over a period of time (where students have the cognitive capacity and self-awareness to do so). This should be used to provide feedback on how they can improve, again, where meaningful to the individual student in question. This is done through reflection exercises, such as looking at photographs of the student engaged in activities or work tasks.

- **Parents/carers** to stay informed about the achievement, progress and wider outcomes of their child/young person, across a period of time (e.g., termly and annual reporting to parents/carers).

#### 4.3 Nationally standardised summative assessment

Nationally standardised summative assessment enables:

- **School/College 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 understand national expectations and assess their own performance in the broader national context.
- **Students and parents/carers** to understand how students are performing in comparison to students nationally.

Nationally standardised summative assessments include:

- EYFS profile at the end of Reception.
- Reception Baseline Assessment for all students in Reception during their first term at school.
- Phonics screening check in Year 1.
- National Curriculum tests (where appropriate) and teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2) and Key Stage 2 (Year 6).
- GCSEs and vocational qualifications at the end of Key Stage 4, and AS levels, A-levels and other Post-16 qualifications in Key Stage 5.

Nationally standardised summative assessments such as these are inaccessible for most students attending Queensmill School, Kensington Queensmill School and Queensmill College due to the complex autism and cognitive delays that students present with. Therefore, the Trust are unable to administer such assessments to its students, at large. Small numbers of students attending the Fulham Academy secondary resource base can access functional skills tests and GCSEs in subjects that are meaningful for them. Where students show they have this capacity, and the emotional regulation skills to manage tests/exam situations, they are supported to engage fully.

Further details on Assessment across The Queensmill Trust can be found in the methodology reports for Queensmill School, Kensington Queensmill School and Queensmill College, respectively.

## 5. Attendance

Queensmill School, Kensington Queensmill School and Queensmill College monitor student attendance. Persistent absence is followed up by Phase Leaders, Deputy Heads and the respective Heads of School/College. Where low attendance is a concern, senior leaders work with families to put the necessary supports in place to assist students to increase their attendance at school/college. While there are numerous reasons why a student's attendance rate might be consistently, or periodically, low, the negative impact of Coronavirus (Covid-19) on student attendance cannot be denied. Indeed, this has been recognised nationally. Some newspapers have described a 'cultural shift' since the pandemic which is causing an attendance crisis in British schools. The DfE is looking at policies to improve attendance and attendance continues to be an item high on the agenda for Ofsted. For autistic students who may not have attended school as regularly during lock down, the break in routine has meant that some students have found transitioning back to school full-time especially hard. Following strategic planning with parents/carers, several Queensmill students who struggled with low attendance post-pandemic have successfully transitioned back to school with the assistance of school staff visiting students' homes.

In terms of assessment, it comes as no surprise that students who do not attend school regularly enough are at risk of making limited, or no, progress against their PLP targets. Indeed, poor attendance is a barrier to learning and the implications of reduced attendance extend to other areas too, for example student wellbeing. All Queensmill Trust students who are on roll, regardless of any attendance difficulties, have a PLP written for them by their teacher/therapists at the beginning of each term. This ensures that provision is set out for all children/young people and that there is no delay to a student being able to work on his/her targets should they return from short (or long) term absence. Should the teacher deduce that there were not enough opportunities to work on targets with a particular child/young person by the end of any given term, due to attendance issues preventing such, teachers are instructed to document this in the PLP, for example:

*No progress judgement – As X (student's name) has not been attending school regularly this term, we have been unable to consistently work with him on his termly targets. Therefore, a progress judgement cannot be made as there were limited opportunities to work with him. X's attendance at school and the impact of this on his progress/wellbeing is being monitored by senior leaders.*

or

*No progress judgement – As X (student's name) has not attended school at all this term, we have been unable to work with him on any his planned termly targets. Therefore, a progress judgement cannot be made as there have been no opportunities to work with him. X's attendance at school and the impact of this on his progress/wellbeing is being monitored by senior leaders.*

The associated targets set for the student in Onwards & Upwards, the Trust's chosen software for collating termly assessment data, can then be deleted by the Assessment Coordinator so class group and whole school data is not unfairly skewed by inaccurate low judgements (i.e., 'experienced' or 'emerging' incorrectly used in place of not making a judgement). Conversations relating to student attendance and the impact of this on assessment are had at individual progress tracking meetings with teachers as well as at annual update to assessment meetings with teachers and senior leaders.

## 6. Collecting and using data

The Queensmill Trust regularly tracks student progress in each of its settings to ensure all students are making expected progress. This is done through the student's PLP and analysis of termly data which is examined through whole school and individual class figures. Termly meetings are held with teachers to discuss the rate of progress for their class. Where classes and/or individual students are making less than expected progress this is discussed and the possible reasons why are teased out through dialogue with the Assessment Coordinator. It is often possible to determine plausible explanations and this is used as a basis to develop strategies for those classes making less than expected progress. Similarly, where progress is above the expected level (75 – secure) it is discussed how to replicate to ensure students/class groups continue to flourish.

A termly data report is created that presents data trends ranging from whole school/college rates of progress for learning and autism progression down to rates of progress for subject/curriculum areas, key stages and class groups. This is analysed by the Assessment Coordinator and shared with the Executive Head and Heads of School/College to identify short and long-term data trends. Both the quantitative and qualitative data from each assessment cycle is then used by the Assessment Coordinator to plan approaches and priorities for the future. Once realised, these are then shared with teachers in meetings and communications so that data continues to inform improvements in school/college practice.

## 7. Reporting to parents/carers

Parents/carers have an entitlement to an annual written report on their child'/young person's progress. At The Queensmill Trust, the report takes the form of the Annual Review Teacher's Report. This report is celebratory in nature and documents the main achievements made that year in learning as well as in autism. The templates for teacher reports have recently undergone revision and now each learning and autism section features a subheading for needs/areas to improve. The amendment of the report templates to include such subheadings will enable teachers to write more holistically about each student by identifying what the students' specific needs are under each section, but also allowing room for commentary about the range of



transactional supports utilised by teachers/therapists to address those needs. The progress the child/young person is making in terms of managing his or her own autism, and making progress despite the impediments of their autism, are always reported to parents/carers at every meeting in the assessment cycle. As a statutory requirement, attendance/absence for the academic year are also made available to parents in the EHCP review document.

Annual reviews can take place at any point during the school year, typically, they occur during the Spring and Summer Terms. Transition year students (Years 6/11/14) are prioritised in this process and so their review meetings take place earlier in the late Autumn Term.

In addition to annual, statutory reporting, parents/carers are invited into school following their child's first six weeks, post-admission, where they are presented with an assessment of learning needs and autism presentation. Alongside a comprehensive report from the class teacher, there are separate contributions from Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy by means of their own reports.

Each term parents/carers are provided with a PLP for their child/young person outlining the key objectives for the focus that term in both learning and autism. At this time, parents/carers are invited for their comments/feedback about the PLP. At end of each term a reviewed version of this document is also sent home; a summary of the progress judgements beside each success criteria for each target area. Typically, during the latter half of the Autumn Term parents are invited into school for a parents evening and throughout the year communication is frequent through daily diary entries and phone calls, as needed. Parent input into progress and assessment is encouraged wherever possible and where there are barriers to this, the Trust seeks to overcome these (e.g., by organising a translator at annual review meetings).

The Queensmill Trust has a strong ethos of understanding and meeting individual students where they are and celebrating success relevant to everyone. Communicating this to parents/carers is a key element of the process. Throughout the academic year there is frequent communication between home and school to share these successes. In many respects this sharing of successes can be used to support students and progress them further.

## 8. Training

All teachers, therapists and HLTAs receive training on the assessment values, systems and expectations at The Queensmill Trust when they join. This is refreshed annually for teachers especially as these members of staff work the most consistently within the Trust's dedicated assessment framework. New teachers are given a comprehensive two-part Introduction to Assessment training devised and lead by the Assessment Coordinator. This is followed up with individual support meetings to equip new teachers with the skills they need to conduct assessments accurately and with confidence. All teachers, regardless of how long they have been



with the Trust, receive an annual update to assessment teacher meeting where key messages for the year ahead are shared.

Additionally, when needed, staff are provided with CPD and training opportunities to deepen their knowledge and practice. This might be on a specific area relating to assessment (e.g., the annual review) or might be on the use and assessment of phonics or ASDAN, among others, as the need arises.

It is an aim of the Trust for all staff to be trained in understanding and effectively using the SCERTS framework and as such training in SCERTS takes place annually. In the interim, there is an Introduction to SCERTS session which is delivered by the Assessment Coordinator in conjunction with another senior teacher.

Materials/resources for SCERTS are accessible for all staff and there is a dedicated SCERTS folder on the shared drive that teachers/therapists consult and use prior to setting their SCERTS-based 'My Autism' targets.

## **9. Roles and responsibilities**

### **9.1 Governors/Trustees**

Governors/Trustees are responsible for:

- Being familiar with statutory assessment systems as well as how the Trust's own system of non-statutory assessment captures the attainment and progress of all students at Queensmill School, Kensington Queensmill School and Queensmill College.
- Holding school/college leaders to account for improving student and staff performance by rigorously scrutinizing/analysing assessment data.

### **9.2 Executive Head and Heads of School/College**

The Executive Head and Heads of School/College are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the policy is adhered to.
- Monitoring standards in core and foundation subjects.
- Analysing student progress and attainment, including individual pupils 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.

### **9.3 Assessment Coordinator**

The Assessment Coordinator is responsible for:

- Supporting teachers to understand and implement assessment procedures through regular teacher training, communications, and personalised support, as required.
- Collecting, analysing, and monitoring termly assessment data and reporting on key aspects of this.
- Organising the annual review process and associated documentation to ensure the process is smooth, clear and adhered to and that student outcomes (reviewed and written as a part of the annual review) are prepared to a high standard.
- Making changes to the Trust's assessment protocols where changes are in the best interests of students, parents/carers, teachers and the Trust at large.

#### **9.4 Teachers**

Teachers are responsible for:

- Following the assessment procedures outlined in the assessment policy and assessment methodology report.
- Attending assessment-related teacher meetings.
- Working with their class teams and therapists to ensure students make meaningful termly and annual progress.
- Completing assessments to a good standard and in a timely manner, saving these to pupil assessment folders in order to keep accurate and up-to-date records of student progress.

#### **10. Monitoring**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Executive Head, Heads of School/College, the Assessment Coordinator and the Chair of Governors. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

All teaching staff are expected to read and follow this policy. The Head of School/College is responsible for ensuring that the policy is followed.

The Heads of School/College will monitor the effectiveness of assessment practices across the school/college and will continue to work with the Assessment Coordinator to make improvements, where these are required.

#### **11. Links with other policies/documents**

This policy is linked to:

- Assessment Methodology Reports for Queensmill School, Kensington Queensmill School and Queensmill College.

- Teaching and Learning policy.
- Early Years Foundation Stage policy.
- Attendance policy.