

# How Good is your School's Assessment?



An audit tool for school leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of assessment practices and procedures

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## Assessment

Assessment is the systematic process of gathering information about learning to make appropriate educational decisions. It identifies the student's strengths and needs and contributes to the design and implementation of effective strategies.

Well-designed assessment methods provide valuable information about student learning. They tell us what students learned, how well they learned it, and where they struggled. Assessment then becomes a lens for understanding student learning, identifying barriers, and helping to improve teaching approaches.

Effective assessment systems can improve educational outcomes for children and young people. Therefore, ensuring that a school's assessment procedures are effective and robust is an important element of the work of school leaders.

Recent developments in educational research and policy have greatly influenced the nature and purpose of assessment in schools. There is considerable evidence that formative assessment approaches, with increased focus on assessment as part of the learning process (Assessment *for* Learning), have had a significant impact on learning and teaching in schools. John Hattie's work on Visible Learning also highlights the key role of assessment in providing evidence of the impact of the teacher.

It is not the purpose of this paper to review established principles of assessment or the prevailing methodologies currently in vogue. The following pages propose a structured approach for evaluating the quality of assessment systems in educational establishments, along with a deep audit of 6 key features of assessment.

## Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Scotland's evaluation framework *How Good is our School 4?* highlights key features of effective assessment. In Quality indicator 2.3 (*Learning, Teaching and Assessment*):

- *Assessment approaches should allow learners to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding, skills, attributes and capabilities in different contexts across the curriculum.*
- *Assessment evidence should be valid and reliable.*
- *Assessment approaches should be matched to the learning needs of learners and used to support them to demonstrate where they are in their learning.*
- *Processes for assessment and reporting should be manageable and effective in informing improvements in learning and teaching.*
- *A quality body of evidence should be used to support assessment judgements and decisions about next steps.*

- *There should be robust arrangements for moderation of assessment across stages and across the curriculum.*
- *Assessments should provide reliable evidence to report on the progress of all children and young people.*

### **Evaluation of School Assessment Processes**

Based on Scotland's national framework HGIOS4, it is possible to identify key features or categories which form the basis of self-evaluation of a school's Assessment systems.

- 1. Meeting national advice on assessment**
- 2. Assessment tools and processes**
- 3. Planning assessments**
- 4. Assessment evidence**
- 5. Recording assessment information**
- 6. Moderation of assessment**
- 7. Reporting on learner progress**

### **Deep Audit of Assessment Processes**

The following pages illustrate how each of these key features of Assessment can be audited using the **Impact** online toolkit.

A full audit of QI 2.3 *Learning, Teaching and Assessment* can be accessed online at:

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## Theme 3: Effective use of assessment

### Meeting national advice

Building the Curriculum 5	
How Good is our School 4	
Education authority policies	
Standardised assessment guidelines.	
Curriculum for Excellence benchmarks	
The National Improvement Framework	
Scottish Qualifications Authority marking instructions, principal assessors and external verifier reports)	
HMIE inspection advice notes	
Understanding Standards website	

### Planning assessments

Assessment is ongoing and part of day-to-day teaching and learning.	
Assessment activities are valid, ie, they closely match the intended outcomes.	
Assessment approaches are reliable - ie, they provide quality evidence.	
Assessment is proportionate - ie, they do not place excessive burdens on staff or learners.	
Assessment approaches are matched to pupils' learning needs and capabilities.	
Assessments are fair and inclusive and allow every learner to show what they have achieved.	
Planned assessments reflect best practice, national standards and CfE benchmarks.	
Pupils are actively involved in planning how their learning will be assessed.	
Assessment information is used to plan the next stages of learning.	

### Assessment tools and processes

Teachers use diagnostic assessment to discover learners' strengths and weaknesses, and identify learning paths.	
Teachers use formative assessment to assess ongoing learning and to modify learning pathways.	
Teachers use summative assessment to determine learner progress against a particular specification or standard.	
Teachers assess the performance of pupils during tasks or activities.	
Teachers use a blend of oral and written questions, and plenary sessions to test knowledge & understanding.	
Teachers assess project or assignment work.	
Teachers assess skills, as well as knowledge & understanding.	
Teachers provide learners with opportunities for self and peer assessment.	
Teachers assess group work or collaborative learning.	
Teachers assess interdisciplinary learning and cross-curricular activities.	

<b>Moderation of assessment</b>	
Staff engage with school/department colleagues to determine shared standards and expectations.	
Staff engage with colleagues in other schools/cluster to determine shared standards and expectations.	
Assessment materials are developed and agreed across the school/department/cluster to support moderation.	
Examples of pre-marked learners' work help teachers to reach an agreed view on quality and standards.	
Teachers mark pupils' work in other classes or groups and engage in professional dialogue about the results.	
SMT, faculty heads/principal teachers sample learners' work to checking consistency of marking.	
Staff use benchmark data of similar schools to compare their learners' achievements to that of others.	
Teachers use a range of web resources to determine standards, eg, Understanding Standards, SQA Academy, Quality Networks.	
Assessment practices are improved through professional dialogue, moderation and holistic approaches.	

<b>Assessment evidence</b>	
Teachers gather evidence from day-to-day learning as well as from specific assessment activities.	
Teachers ensure evidence is appropriate to the learning being assessed and context.	
Teachers gather evidence through observations of learners carrying out tasks and activities.	
Teachers gather evidence through performances, oral presentations and group discussions.	
Teachers gather evidence during interactions and dialogue with learners.	
Teachers gather evidence through written responses of learners, eg, tests, essays.	
Teachers gather evidence through products or output, eg, piece of artwork, report, and projects.	
Teachers gather evidence through accounts provided by others (parents, peers, other staff).	

<b>Reporting on learner progress</b>	
Reporting provides clear, positive and constructive feedback about children's learning and progress.	
Reporting shows how well learners are progressing and their levels of achievement in all curriculum areas.	
Written reports highlight pupils' strengths, achievements and next steps in learning.	
Reporting highlights gaps in children's progress and difficulties in learning.	
Parents are encouraged to contribute to discussions about their children's progress and next steps in learning.	
Parents are made aware of ways they can support their child's learning.	
Pupils are encouraged to be part of the reporting process eg, pupil led parent consultations.	