Teaching, Learning & Assessment Policy

Dec 2016

Expectation

Partnership

Leadership

Growth

What is needed is a culture
of success backed by a belief
that all can achieve.

Black and Wiliam 2001

PRIMARY
ADVANTAGE
SCHOOLS ACHIEVING
MORE TOGETHER

Contents

Primary Advantage Commitments

Expectation

We believe passionately in improving the life chances for all our pupils.

We have the highest possible standards and will use our resources and expertise to unlock learning in all its facets for all our children. No barrier is too great; no learning is left behind. Skilled teachers use the most effective teaching methods to motivate learners and raise aspirations.

Our schools are special places to work. We want to attract and retain staff at all levels that are willing to think flexibly, work with rigour and precision, and go the extra mile.

Partnership

We work in partnership, pooling our expertise and resources in order to achieve collectively what we may not be able to achieve individually.

We promote a collaborative approach whilst developing the capacity of each school to serve its own community and retain its distinct identity.

We have developed approaches which we know make the most significant impact on pupil outcomes. These are well considered systems, approaches or policies which can be implemented in a range of settings with the appropriate levels of support.

Leadership

Our leadership structure aims to make the most of our shared resources, maintain high expectations and secure high standards.

We build leadership sustainability by spotting talent and creating opportunities for staff at all levels to receive high quality training and leadership experiences.

We recognise the importance of individuality, spontaneity and creativity in developing innovation.

We seek to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of each school by capitalising on centralised services and sharing systems and procedures.

Growth

Through the work of our Teaching School we are able to offer excellent professional development for current practitioners, leaders and future recruits to the profession. Teachers have many opportunities for professional growth through our development and masters programmes.

Staff, pupils and families have opportunities for growth through links with our partners, schools and a wide range of enrichment activities.

Every teacher is a great teacher; every school is a great school. We aim to move incrementally towards excellence in all aspects of our work.

All pupils will make good or better progress and will be properly equipped for the next stage of their schooling.

Learning environments are of high quality where pupils feel **safe and secure, known and valued and motivated to learn.**

Curriculum provision is bespoke, broadens horizons and inspires our pupils to become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens.

Our learning community provides opportunities for growth for pupils, staff and families.

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1. Introduction

Expection

We believe passionately in improving the life chances for all our pupils.
We have the highest possible standards and will use our resources and expertise to unlock learning in all its facets for all our children. No barrier is too great; no learning is left behind. Skilled teachers use the most effective teaching methods to motivate learners and raise aspirations.
Our schools are special places to work. We want to attract and retain staff at all levels that are willing to think flexibly, work with rigour and precision and go the extra mile.

Although a diverse group of schools, at our core we share the following beliefs about teaching, learning and assessment:

- Children should not just learn but develop the attributes that allow them to be great learners and thinkers.
- All children have the opportunity to access and master all learning; it is our job to ensure that all children are enabled to do this.
- Children should not just attain against National Curriculum objectives but should achieve through deep learning experiences.
- Our rich curriculum should be delivered through carefully crafted sequences of learning.
- Individual lessons are precisely structured in order to create learning, not deliver teaching.
- Our classroom practice is based on sound pedagogy and the belief that children learn best through collaboration and enquiry.
- Assessment in all its forms is at the heart of teaching and learning; it gives direction and impact to what we do.

Because we are a diverse group of schools, **the implementation of the policy** and the use of the toolkits will be underpinned by each school's ethos, values and distinctive character. By adopting a Federation approach to teaching, learning and assessment, we aim to provide consistency of teaching, learning and assessment across all our schools.

Whilst this policy articulates a clear approach adopted by our Federation Schools, it is important to remember that adopting a broad template for structuring teaching, learning and assessment does not preclude:

- **Spontaneity**
- **Creativity**
- **Imagination**

…..unless you let it

The policy also makes reference to a range of toolkits which give greater detail and guidance on how these principles and approaches can be applied in school, in the classroom and at home. The toolkits provide detailed guidance to teachers and leaders and include guidance for parents. Our approaches are enhanced by comprehensive professional development programmes.

2. The Learner

We have identified the key learner attributes we promote across our schools. By focusing on these attributes, across a broad and balanced curriculum, our children develop the skills and capabilities to become effective life-long learners.

These attributes and capabilities support our approach to teaching, learning and assessment which ensures all children can master all learning.

Attributes:

Capabilities:
Thinking creatively, independently and critically to solve problems

Applying numeracy, literacy and communication skills in new situations and linking learning

Making decisions and informed choices

Effective Life-Long Learners
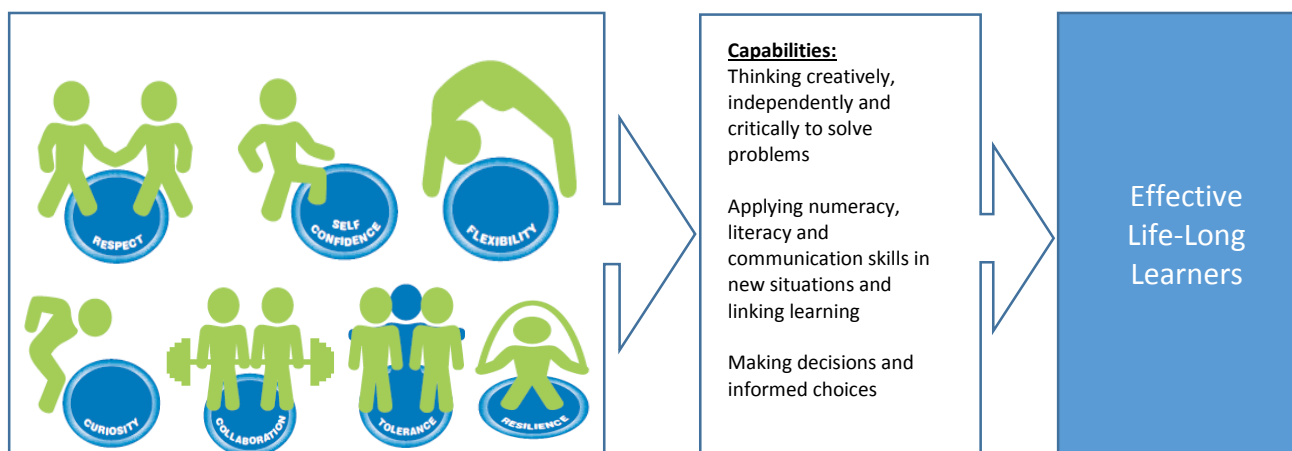
3. The Learning

3a. Vocabulary
Changes in the national approach to assessment have created much discussion and frequently the use of language has led to misunderstanding. For the purpose of this policy and to ensure clarity across the Federation, we have exemplified terms in the following ways:

Mastery: In the Federation, mastery means the secure acquisition of skills, concepts and knowledge. Mastery is not just knowing a fact, but using it in a range of situations. It is not just acquiring a skill but using it independently in different contexts.

A mastery approach to learning means it is our ambition that all children can acquire all learning. In a mastery learning environment, we must ensure that we provide sufficient time and employ instructional strategies so that all students can achieve the same learning.

Greater depth: Defining learning at greater depth isn't straight forward. It is complicated by the use of the term to describe attainment at a higher standard in national standardised tests.

Some children will be working **'at greater depth'.** This will be an overall judgment showing they have mastered learning **and** can transfer and apply this to a range of contexts, make connections and explain/teach concepts to others. Children working at greater depth tend to acquire and consolidate new learning quickly. They are likely to engage with deeper learning and higher order thinking skills more frequently and therefore need activities to suit their learning needs.

Higher order skills: Can be introduced at all stages of learning; they should not be regarded as the preserve of more able children. The ability to think in different ways can be developed and should be experienced by all pupils to some extent.

3b. Our approach to learning
We have adopted a mastery approach to learning and the curriculum with an ambition that all children master the same learning. This approach ensures all children are secure in central concepts and ideas, and key concepts are explored in greater detail. This develops children's conceptual understanding and encourages deep learning for all.

To support the mastery of all learning, we recognise the different stages of learning over time.

New Learning → Consolidation → Application → Mastery

Greater Depth
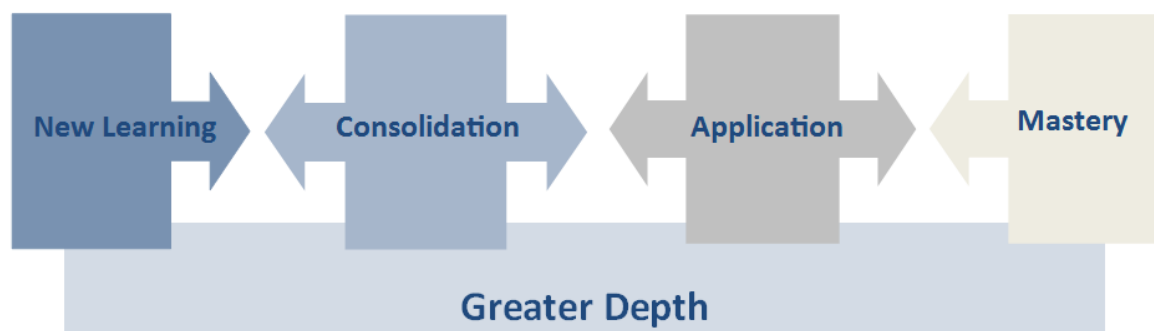
The model above shows how learning moves quite fluidly between different stages. Although certain tasks lend themselves to phases of learning it is unhelpful to attempt to categorise activities too tightly. The learning toolkit further explores how a range of models such as Bloom's taxonomy and the work of Norman Webb can provide teachers with helpful guidance for structuring learning and selecting appropriate activities.

Across a sequence of lessons pupils are introduced to 'new learning' and are continually provided with opportunities to consolidate and apply their knowledge, understanding and skills. We plan for a range of learning opportunities that support all learners to move through each stage.

3c. Enabling learning:
In the pursuit of mastery for all, we have re-evaluated how we look at differentiation. Our approach to teaching, learning and assessment is that all children access the same learning. In doing this we remove barriers and provide the tools for children to access the learning. If all children are accessing all learning, then we need to invest time in ensuring everyone can access this at a point that is appropriate to them. This point needs to enable learners to have the appropriate level of both challenge and scaffold.

With these tools, children are able to master each concept.

4. The Teacher

Growth

Through the work of our Teaching School we are able to offer excellent professional development for current practitioners, leaders and future recruits to the profession.
Teachers have many opportunities for professional growth through our development and masters programmes.
Staff, pupils and families have opportunities for growth through links with our partners, schools and a wide range of enrichment activities.

Through our Teaching Schools Alliance, we are able to provide focused training to support teachers in understanding the teaching systems and processes we use and to support staff in developing the skills they need to be highly effective in the decisions they make about the teaching they provide.

We have a culture of innovation and creativity which means best practice developed by staff at all levels can be tested and then shared to improve outcomes for learners.

Engaging in professional dialogue and collaboration is essential and opportunities for dialogue are created throughout the school year focusing on:

- The annual performance appraisal cycle
- A cycle of meetings to discuss and unpick learning across all classes (Fundamentals checks)
- The cross Federation Teacher Learning Community (TLC)
- Staff meetings and INSETs
- Coaching and mentoring meetings

5. The Teaching

5a. Planning Sequences of Learning

Across our schools in the Federation we have developed a rich curriculum and programmes of study to ensure progression in learning across all subjects. Sequences of lessons are planned to ensure all children can master the knowledge, skills and understanding required. We continually adapt our planning to respond to the needs of all learners.

We recognise that:

Planning is critical and underpins effective teaching, playing an important role in shaping students' understanding and progression. It is the area of work where teachers can bring their **passion** for a subject and their **desire to make a difference** together.

(Independent teacher workload review group, March 2016)

All our teachers and leaders consider the following in order to ensure planning is purposeful and sustainable:

- Planning a sequence of lessons is more important than writing individual lesson plans
- Planning should start from the curriculum to be taught not the activities – what is being taught today, not 'what we are doing today'.
- We recognise that pupils make progress by **building content and conceptual knowledge over time**. Planning should therefore identify what needs to be taught across a sequence of lessons [rather than individual lessons].
- Planning needs to be responsive to the children's learning and continually adapted based on the ongoing assessment of children's knowledge, skills and understanding.

If the curriculum is the central driving force of teaching, then time spent planning should not be wasted time. Lesson plans should be given the proportionate status they merit, and no more, to lessen teacher workload. By working together, drawing on available evidence about 'what works', teachers can increase their joint knowledge of a subject and of the best way to teach it.

Once the 'What' and the 'Why' are securely embedded for individual teachers then they can be free to teach in a way that best suits their professional judgement and experience. We firmly believe that children's learning is at the heart of our planning and it is only effective when it acts to review the outcomes and progress for all pupils.

5b. Individual Lesson Structure

When planning learning it is useful to consider the different phases that may take place within one lesson.

Teaching and learning are not the same thing. Encountering information is not the same as understanding it. While the stages are inextricably linked, they are separate processes. This must be reflected in the lesson.

Boundaries between the phases may be blurred

Phase one: emersion, set the scene, place learning in a wider context, link to prior learning; review previous lesson; provide the 'big picture', share learning objectives.

Phase two: pupils receive new information; instruction/exposition; (**teaching**)

Phase three: pupils make sense of information; processing; understanding; (**learning**)

Phase four: review information (plenary)*.

Teachers are likely to scroll through the phases more than once in any one lesson.

*Phases are not always sequential and review can be woven throughout the learning.

Phase 1 Overview
- Creating an appropriate climate for learning
- Linking the lesson to prior learning
- Providing an overview of the lesson- the 'big picture'
- Sharing learning intentions with pupils and then referring to throughout
- Triggering the brain- prime the children by getting them to look or listen out for key points
- Stimulating curiosity, generating interest and setting the challenge- if captured in the first few minutes of the lesson this goes a long way to ensure high quality learning

Phase 2 Teaching
- Explicit modelling of learning to develop a new concept or skill supported by think alouds
- Assisted modelling provides further scaffolding
- Independent application enables teachers to assess learning so far and support
- Periods of exposition are short- input based on pupil's age plus 2 minutes for max. impact
- More than one 'beginning' is created
- Punctuated with questions
- Phase 2 and 3 integrated with children 'having a go' with activity that breaks up exposition
- New information is presented in several different ways- learning is multi-sensory

Phase 3 Learning
- Pupils: Develop , demonstrate and discuss understanding to make sense of information
- Teachers: encourage, reassure, guide, prompt and challenge pupils towards understanding
- Promote quality interactions through a dialogic approach
- Use a range of effective questioning strategies
- Talk- 'think, pair, share' and 'turn and tell your partner' are regular features in lessons
- Tasks engage pupils and challenge them to think
- Pupils work both independently and collaboratively for a sustained period

Phase 4
- Reviewing what has been learned
- Reflecting on how it has been learned
- Review is woven throughout the entire lesson
- Pupils are actively involved in summarising their learning
- All pupils can reflect on what they can now do and/or now know that they couldn't do before.
- Refer back to the learning intention and success criteria and self-assess
- Aim to finish the lesson with a question mark not a full stop

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5c. Pedagogical strategies

Primary Advantage teachers use a range of pedagogical strategies to ensure high quality teaching, learning and assessment is taking place within each phase, at every stage. We know learning takes place when teachers make appropriate and precise decisions about the teaching strategies they use.

Each of these strategies is explored in greater depth within the teaching toolkit (see appendix)

Co-operative learning standards embedded

Conditions for learning established

Learning intentions clear and shared

Opportunities for rich and purposeful dialogue

Well planned success criteria that pupils are actively engaged with

Tools provided to enable all children to access the learning

Effective questioning

Learning sequences are well planned

Pupils are actively involved in learning

Peer and self assessment

Regular and clear feedback which promotes learning

Effective use of additional adults

Enhanced Learning

6. Marking and Feedback

A small number of basic principles underpin our approach to marking and feedback. These are further exemplified in the learning toolkit. Schools in the Federation have refined these basic principles and expectations into their own school practices.

1. Teachers must use pupils' recorded work to assess understanding and address pupil misconceptions as part of the teaching cycle.
2. All work should be acknowledged however, this might be by the teacher or through peer or self-assessment.
3. Peer and self-assessment are powerful tools and pupils should be guided in their appropriate use. Pupils should also be encouraged to reflect on their own learning.

7. The Assessment of Learning

Improving learning through assessment depends on 5 deceptively simple, key factors:

- the provision of effective feedback to pupils
- the active involvement of pupils in their learning
- adjusting teaching to take account of the results of assessment
- a recognition of the profound influence assessment has on the motivation and self-esteem of pupils
- the need for pupils to be able to assess themselves and understand how to improve

Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam, 1998

7a. The Fundamentals

The Fundamentals approach to assessment reflects the mastery approach to learning and supports the premise of 'no learning left behind'. It is a binary secure-fit model.

Key learning outcomes have been identified for the end of each academic year, for reading, writing, mathematics and science which we refer to as The Fundamentals.   The majority of children work towards their chronological age-related Fundamentals in order to be ready for the next year of study. Their progress towards these end of year outcomes is checked in a variety of ways. Children have met these outcomes when they demonstrate that each objective has been mastered.
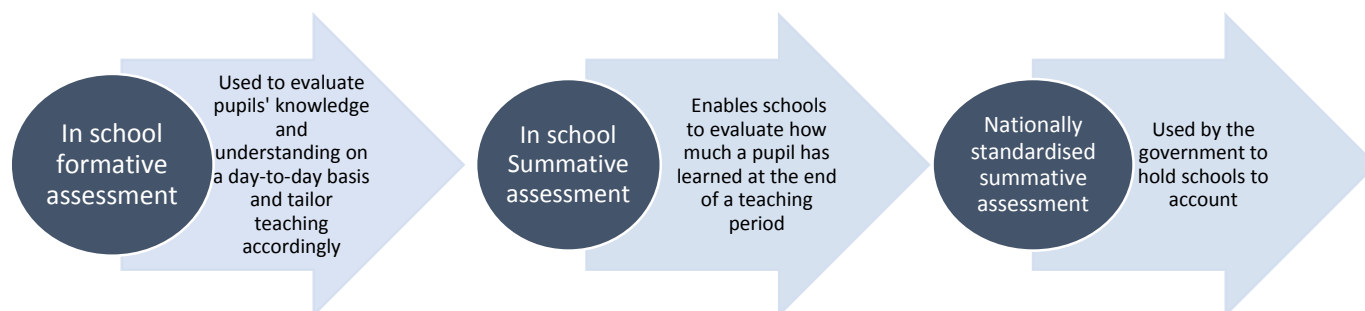
We recognise that children are making the small steps towards each objective during the year. This is best formally recorded at the end of the year.

Our approach to assessment aims to:

- Ensure no learning is left behind.
- Enable all children to know their strengths and areas for development.
- Ensure that children progress in and across lessons.
- Ensure that in planning learning lessons are amended to ensure that teaching and learning is responsive to the needs of all children.
- Gather information about the progress and attainment of individual pupils, groups and cohorts, which is used to set specific targets, and identify strengths and areas for development in learning.
- Inform parents of their children's progress on a regular basis (for more information see the parents' toolkit in the appendix).

- Monitor and record the attainment and progress of individuals, groups and cohorts.
- Inform key stakeholders and the Governing Body about progress and attainment.
- Support teachers in their continuing review of learning on a consistent basis in order to identify gaps and misconceptions.

7b. The Three Aspects of Assessment

In school formative assessment — Used to evaluate pupils' knowledge and understanding on a day-to-day basis and tailor teaching accordingly

In school Summative assessment — Enables schools to evaluate how much a pupil has learned at the end of a teaching period

Nationally standardised summative assessment — Used by the government to hold schools to account

7c. In School Formative Assessment

In school formative assessment is used to evaluate pupils' knowledge and understanding on a day-to-day basis and to tailor teaching accordingly.

- Formative assessment is used daily to assess knowledge, skills and understanding, and to identify gaps and misconceptions.
- A range of methods are used to evaluate pupil understanding and enable teachers to be responsive to the needs of the pupils.
- Pupils across our schools play a pivotal role in the assessment process, providing a useful insight into their own understanding through peer and self-assessment processes.
- The model for assessment ensures pupils with SEN and disabilities are assessed appropriately and effectively in line with the purposes and principles of inclusive assessment.

Ongoing assessment makes up part of the teachers' repertoire of pedagogical strategies:

Formative assessment strategy	Purpose
Planning	Identifies valid learning and assessment objectives to ensure progression in the delivery of the curriculum. Next steps identified in lessons feeds into short term planning and focus groups are planned for (see teaching toolkit)
Sharing learning intentions and success criteria	Pupils and teachers are clear about the learning. Success criteria provide a structure to assess learning within each lesson (see teaching toolkit)
Feedback	Feedback is meaningful and can be verbal or written. It is diagnostic and informs pupils of successes and next steps providing clear strategies for improvement (see marking and feedback toolkit)
Peer and self-assessment	Pupils are taught how to evaluate their own learning and the learning of others. They identify opportunities to extend, consolidate or improve their learning (see marking and feedback toolkit)

Questioning	Questioning promotes thoughtful, purposeful and focused dialogue. It can be used to assess pupils' understanding. We use talk partners and mini whiteboards to give opportunities for the whole class to feedback. This is used as a checkpoint to assess learning (see marking and feedback toolkit)
Prove its: Check its Think its Beat its	Teachers use a range of mini assessments to provide ongoing opportunities for children to apply their learning. We know that just because we have taught it doesn't mean children have learnt it. As a result, us a range of 'prove its' to check that the learning has 'stuck' (see assessment toolkit).

7d. In School Summative Assessment

In school summative assessment enables our schools to evaluate how much a pupil has learned at the end of a teaching period.

- All summative data is recorded centrally using our online assessment tracker. It is used alongside teacher assessment to identify strengths and gaps in learning.
- Summative assessment is targeted and appropriate for informing our teaching and learning.
- Standardised commercial tests used within each school have been validated and are administered in line with test protocols. The information provided is then used by teachers to feed into next steps for children. This is done as part of a moderation process and is well grounded, ethical and supportive of our approaches to teaching and learning.
- We are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to assessment and as a result deploy a range of strategies to support teachers to make judgements. Standardised tests are used to support the accuracy of teacher assessment.

Summative assessment strategies are used to support teacher judgements:

Summative assessment strategy	Purpose
Weekly assessment	Each week we assess children's skills and understanding through a range of short tests or 'Prove its'. Spelling tests and times tables tests take place regularly. Story tests and fluency tests take place in reading and this informs planning
End of unit tests	We use a combination of published unit tests and teachers' self-made tests (tests its) to assess the learning at the end of each unit of work
Phonics assessment	Each half term children are assessed on their letters and sounds. This enables children to be placed in the appropriate groups to support and challenge the acquisition of synthetic phonics
Running reading records	Teachers carry out running reading records on a half termly basis to assess the fluency and comprehension of pupils and to ensure they are reading texts at an age appropriate level
Writing samples	Each half term children carry out an independent piece of extended writing for teachers to assess children's acquisition of skills
Commercial test papers	We use a range of commercial tests to assess children's learning at key points throughout the year. Teachers then carry out a gap analysis and use their findings to back up their teacher judgements

"An assessment is formative to the extent that information from the assessment is fed back within the system and actually used to improve the performance of the system in some way" (Wiliam & Leahy, 2007, p. 31).

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In this light, we would consider the summative examples above to in fact be formative. Although they enable us to make a judgement of learning at a key point in time, when used effectively, they also help improve future performance.

7e. National statutory testing
National standardised summative assessment is used by the government to hold schools to account.

- At the end of year 1 pupils will be assessed through the phonics screening check. Pupils will be scored against a national standard. Pupils who do not meet the required standard in year 1 will be re-checked in year 2.
- At the end of KS1 and KS2 pupils will be assessed in reading, writing, maths and grammar, spelling and punctuation. They will be given a scaled score and a 'performance descriptor' against the expected standard.

Our approach to teaching, learning and assessment is designed to ensure all children leave our schools with the attributes and capabilities to be life-long learners. At Primary Advantage we believe that improved outcomes equate to improved life chances for our pupils.

7f. Assessing across the curriculum
The Fundamentals approach covers all phases and the whole curriculum. The EYFS curriculum is assessed through 'The Foundations' based on the Fundamentals approach.
In the KS1 and KS2 foundation subjects, assessments are made against key learning statements for each unit of work. Details of our assessment approaches can be found in the Assessment Toolkit.

7g. Tracking attainment and progress
The Primary Fundamentals Tracker is a comprehensive online tracking tool and is used for tracking The Fundamentals in the core subjects . The tracker is used to support both formative and summative assessment.

We recognise pupils make small steps towards each outcome throughout the year and that learning does not take place in convenient termly 'chunks'. We therefore, formally record the Fundamentals outcomes at 2 points in the year called **checkpoints**:

Checkpoint 1: is used to examine the fundamentals achieved by pupils at a mid-point in the year and assesses whether pupils are 'on track' to achieve the end of year outcomes.

Checkpoint 2: is used to formally record whether a child has achieved the Fundamentals for their chronological age.

A bespoke approach is used for students with complex special needs and for pupils accessing learning below their chronological age.

In the foundation subjects, assessments are undertaken at the end of each learning unit and used to inform the assessment of learning outcomes at the end of each year. A formal evaluation of learning, including analysis of cohorts, groups and subjects is undertaken at the end of each phase (EYFS, KS1 and KS2). This information is used internally by class teachers, subject leaders and senior leaders.

8. The Leaders of Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Leadership

Our leadership structure aims to make the most of our shared resources, maintain high expectations and secure high standards.

We build leadership sustainability by spotting talent and creating opportunities for staff at all levels to receive high quality training and leadership experiences.

We recognise the importance of individuality, spontaneity and creativity in developing innovation.

We seek to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of each school by capitalising on centralised services and sharing systems and procedures.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- **Governing Body**: Monitor whole school and Federation attainment and progress data and provide support and challenge.
- **Headteacher:** Hold teaching staff to account for pupil attainment and progress through the monitoring of assessment data and performance management targets.
- **Assessment Leader:** Use pupil progress meetings and data analysis effectively to monitor the performance of individuals, groups and cohorts.
- **Teachers:** Carry out regular, accurate assessment of pupils, provide high-quality feedback and use assessment information to inform planning and communicate with parents and carers.
- **Support staff:** support assessment processes, provide support to children with their learning as directed by class teachers and provide feedback on children's learning.

We have created a leadership toolkit and a parent toolkit to support the effective promotion of high quality teaching and learning both at school and at home.

How we improve teaching and learning

- Providing regular and focused evaluation of teaching and learning to identify areas for improvement or further development
- Involving teaching staff and engaging them in reflective processes.
- Providing high quality focussed CPD, precise systems which declutter and demystify teaching
- Enabling and empowering teachers to make great decisions which lead to highly effective learning.
- Establishing a culture of innovation which promotes continuous development

9. Toolkits for Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Leaders and teachers at Primary Advantage have collaborated to develop a series of toolkits to further support teaching, learning and assessment in our classrooms:

Teaching toolkit
Assessment toolkit
Parents' toolkit
Leaders' toolkit

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These can be found as appendices to this policy and are underpinned by high quality CPD that supports in their implementation and on-going delivery.

Policy written	
Adopted by Governing Body	
Review date	

We would like to acknowledge the work of other colleagues in drafting this policy. We have drawn on a range of sources including policies from other schools, good practice guides, published schemes and LA and statutory guidelines where appropriate. Quotes from Black and Wiliam are taken from <u>Inside the Black Box Black and Wiliam BERA short final draft Nov 6 2001</u>.