



ISAAC NEWTON ACADEMY

Assessment for Learning Policy

“Not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted.” Albert Einstein

“If I had to reduce all of educational psychology to just one principle, I would say this: the most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach him/her accordingly. “ David Ausubel

At Isaac Newton Academy our aim is to equip every student with the knowledge, learning power and character necessary for success at university and beyond. Assessment for learning is an integral part of the teaching and learning process and is key to supporting students to reach their potential. We have a published target of 90% of our cohort achieving 5+ A*-C/ 9-5 grades including English and Maths at GCSE, although we are aiming for all students to reach this benchmark and to achieve the top GCSE grades A*-B/9, 8 7 and 6. At KS5 our expectation is that students make outstanding progress and achieve grades in line with students who are performing within the top quartile nationally.

Effective assessment procedures:

- provide a clear and accurate picture of the skills and knowledge that a student has acquired, the progress they have made and a diagnostic indication of what they need to do next
- support teacher reflection on schemes of learning and inform future curriculum planning and development
- inform teaching by showing how future learning activities need to be differentiated for individuals in classes in order to raise attainment and maximise future progress
- allow for careful tracking of progress and ensure that no student gets overlooked or stuck in their learning
- enable us to assess the quality of teaching
- motivate and encourage students to put in the effort to continue improving
- encourage teachers by showing that their teaching is leading to student progress
- support effective learning dialogues between staff and students, staff and parents/carers and students and their parents/carers.

Assessment should always support student learning.

At Isaac Newton Academy assessment is aligned to the agreed Academy aims and goals, is adaptable and responsive to educational developments, is largely performance-based and provides accurate, reliable and technically-sound information to inform teaching and to support effective progress in learning.

It should always be remembered that ‘whatever is measured matters’. Carefully constructed assessment directly supports the learning process by incorporating principles of learning and cognition. A balanced and comprehensive assessment system exists at Isaac Newton Academy whereby a range of assessment methods ensure adequate measurement of the content, skills and characteristics valued at the academy, incorporating the INA BRIDGES dispositions and characteristics.

Types of Assessment

There are 2 main types of assessment – formative and summative.

Formative Assessment encompasses all the strategies used during a scheme of learning, such as verbal and written feedback from the teacher, peer marking and oral feedback, and self marking and assessment. By making learning goals explicit and involving students in self and peer assessment, formative assessment promotes students as agents in their own learning, increasing student motivation, autonomy and meta-cognition, as well as learning.

Formative assessment to track students’ knowledge and subject specific skills development:

In verbal dialogue and written marking, teachers at Isaac Newton Academy regularly feed back to students about performance (Not yet working towards expectations, working towards expectations, working at expectations, working beyond expectations) attitude to learning, progress indicator and what they need to master in order to progress. Subject teachers moderate student classwork and independent learning tasks to ensure that there is a consistency in the awarding of performance statements, progress indicator, attitude to learning statements, age related numbered grades (Y9-11), current attainment grades (Y12-13). Regular book looks also assist with this standardisation process.

(See the Isaac Newton Academy Marking Policy for evidence of the importance of effective feedback, expectations regarding written feedback and strategies for improving diagnostic marking. See the Isaac Newton Academy Language for Learning Policy for expectations and guidelines regarding effective oral feedback to students and growth mindset language. See the Isaac Newton Academy Monitoring, Self-Evaluation and Review Policy for details of ‘book looks’ to quality assure marking and written feedback to students.)

Formative assessment to track students’ learning dispositions and character trait development:

In tracking students’ learning dispositions or habits of mind at Isaac Newton Academy, we are looking at the ways in which the deployment of these behaviours is becoming more frequent, subtle and ‘second

nature'. Students who have developed learning power don't just show that they *can* use particular skills and tools, they spontaneously and intuitively use these skills and tools.

There are three distinct dimensions of progress in learning skills:

- **strength:** using a learning muscle without prompting or encouragement but independently and confidently
- **breadth:** displaying a learning muscle across a range of subject areas, translating the skill to new situations
- **depth:** growing in the sophistication or skilfulness of each learning muscle, for example asking more and more subtle questions

The BRIDGES wheel (appendix A) has been designed to support teachers and students in assessing learning power skills. In verbal dialogue and written marking, teachers at Isaac Newton Academy regularly feed back to students about their BRIDGES skills and character development. This supports students in assessing their ongoing progress in their weekly BRIDGES lessons at KS3.

Summative Assessment is the assessment that takes place at the end of schemes of learning. This is usually in the form of formal testing.

Tests are a valuable tool for gauging the level of a student's understanding and for tracking individuals' progress over time. They provide a benchmark of performance across a cohort if administered formally and moderated robustly.

However tests can serve to focus the content of schemes of learning. They can lead to the squeezing of content and skills that are not tested. Teachers tend to model the pedagogical approach reflected in tests. Tests can give relatively little attention to complex thinking and problem solving and often focus on lower levels of learning, which can lead to similar emphases in class teaching. Focusing on the test can encourage a one-time performance orientation and transmission-type teaching. Staff at Isaac Newton Academy are careful to guard against simply focusing on tests and exams at the expense of the underlying learning but also to ensure that for in-school designed assessments what is tested is what is truly valued. Summative assessments are designed collaboratively by all the teachers of a subject and early on in the planning process when Schemes of Learning are written. They are written with the Learning Focus and objectives clearly in mind.

Fairness is fundamentally important. All assessments are designed to enable the broadest possible population of students to show what they know and can do, without being unfairly hampered by characteristics that are irrelevant to what is being assessed, for example students who are not proficient in the language of the test finding it difficult to demonstrate their mathematical ability. Tests must also be valid for purpose and generate information that can be acted upon and provides productive and useable feedback for all intended users.

Baseline assessments at Isaac Newton Academy

Year 7 students are assessed prior to/on entry, using ARK reading, writing, maths and science tests and a commercial reading test. These tests produce a reading age and data that is directly comparable to previous cohorts (still correct). In addition, students arrive in Year 7 with KS2 scaled scores.

The data from the ARK tests are used to inform grouping arrangements for Maths/Science and English/Humanities. The KS2 scaled scores are used to form a base line from which RAISE online calculates value added/Progress 8 for the Academy.

At KS5 students' average GCSE scores will be used to form the baseline from which ALPS targets will be set.

Target setting from baseline assessments

At Isaac Newton Academy our target setting is based on the following principles:

- with outstanding teaching, well-targeted intervention and hard, focused work and practice, all students should be capable of making higher than national expected progress over KS3, 4 and 5
- the Ark network expects students to make a minimum of 1 age related GCSE level progress over KS3 and 4
- Students need to be at a minimum of a 5 in Maths and English by the end of KS4 which is predicted to be required for university places.
- At KS5 students should attain at a level which would involve progressing at a rate that would be in line with **at least** the top quarter of students with a comparable base average GCSE points score.

Based on the KS2 descriptors, students are set an end of year 11 target age related level in all subjects. This is usually 1 age related GCSE level higher than their entry level and a minimum of 5. Targets are negotiable between HODs and SLT in year 7. Where a student has a cognitive Special Educational need, the expected sub levels of progress may be agreed at less than 1 age related level and a minimum of a 5.

At KS5 students will be set an ALPs target that is at the 75th percentile. Should this involve split grades, the student will automatically be set their target at the higher of the two grades.

All students have a sticker inside the front cover of each of their exercise books stating their baseline data in that subject and their target performance descriptor for the end of the year. This information is also communicated to parents/carers and discussed with them at a parents/carers evening in the autumn term. End of year targets are challenging targets but the language used to communicate them to parents and students is important in that these stretch targets should not be seen as a ceiling on expectation – exceeding targets is possible and to be encouraged! If a student reaches his/her end of year target level during the year, the target level is moved up a performance level and the student overrides the original level by hand on the sticker in their exercise book (remembering to transpose the adjustment if they start a new book with a new sticker).

Student Progress Tracking and summative assessments

Student performance is tracked closely and regularly. Each curriculum area has agreed assessment times/tests/ tasks/controlled assessments. These are devised involving all teachers of the subject. Marking of these assessments is moderated and reviewed. Key assessments are carried out regularly, usually half termly in core subjects & termly in non-core at KS3. Often, the penultimate week of the term or half term will be used for summative testing (and marking of the tests), with feedback given in the last week. The last week of term is an opportunity for class teachers to revisit any skills or concepts with their classes that the testing shows needs further reinforcement.

Students need to be clear about their 'working at' performance descriptor and their end of year target. At Isaac Newton Academy the culture is to be straight and transparent with students about their performance. Even when a student is being given feedback that their performance is not strong in comparison to their peers'; as long as students are supported in developing a growth mindset this is a positive thing. A student with a fixed mindset could well be demoralised and de-motivated by a relatively poor test score: they might feel they are not intelligent after all or that there is no point in working hard any more. Research shows that students with a fixed mindset often give up and do not bounce back after a setback. In contrast, those with a growth mindset are not afraid of failure as they believe that with continued practice they will improve. In fact they are comfortable taking on a new challenge. Indeed, students with a growth mindset find setbacks motivating. They're informative. They're a wake-up call. As long as students know that the support is there to guide them towards better performance, honest 'bad news' feedback is nothing to fear. After all, test scores only tell you where a student is currently, not where they have the potential to end up (See INA Language for Learning Policy).

Termly Reporting

At the end of each term, every student receives a report with key pieces of data for each subject area – including attitude to learning, their performance statement, and progress indicator.

Rank Order Reports

At the end of each term, the Academy produces rank order reports for each year group and tutor group:

The first ranks students in order by attitude to learning using a formula which double weights Maths, English and Science. At KS5 each subject is given equal weighting.

The second ranks students in order of their attainment in age related grades, again double weighting Maths, English and Science. At KS5 each subject is given equal weighting.

The progress rank list is openly shared with students and staff and used as a tool to motivate students. To improve students' progress from one end of term assessment point to the next, each student's progress is shown in bands according to the number of units (2 is expected the expected progress at INA, 1 is the national expected progress, 0 is an insufficient amount of progress) of progress attained. The full rank list is displayed at the end of each term on the side of the dining hall so that students can study it from the courtyard. Where a student has made minimal or no progress a decision as to the

inclusion on an openly displayed list is made by SLT in consultation with ELT. This is to ensure the progress rank is motivational and does not damage student self-esteem.

The attainment rank list is produced at the end of each term, based on the end of term attainment. It is shared with teaching staff only.

At the end of each academic year, the student with the highest progress and attainment in each year group receives a book from the Chair of Governors in recognition of this outstanding achievement.

Group Changes

Following the autumn, spring and summer end of term assessments, consideration will be given as to whether any students should be moved from one group to another in subject areas where students are grouped according to their current attainment level. Any recommendations for group changes should come from the Head of Subject (according to a clearly-communicated timeline), via their Line Manager to the SLT for consideration and approval. The criteria used in decision making must be performance related. Once agreement has been reached, the HOD will meet with those students to inform them of the group change. He/she will also phone the parents/carers to inform them and send a letter home, placing a copy on the student's school file. At Isaac Newton Academy there is an expectation that any student who moves up to a higher performing group should not be in danger of moving down again following a subsequent assessment. Successive upwards moves are, of course, possible and continual progress to be celebrated. Consideration of group moves other than immediately following an end of term assessment cycle would only be in exceptional circumstances.

Using the data with staff

All members of staff are accountable for the attainment and progress of all the students in their teaching groups. Each member of teaching staff has a performance management target relating to student progress (see INA Performance Management Policy). After each termly (half termly for core) summative assessment, the Head of subject and each class teacher is provided with the data on their classes/subject by the data manager. They carry out analysis according to guidelines, looking at progress and performance of individuals & different groups. The Head of subject meets with each subject teacher to discuss their findings and agree & minute actions. Minutes of these meetings go to the SLT line manager and are discussed by the Leadership Team.

At the end of each academic year, teachers whose classes have consistently exceeded target levels receive a book from the Chair of Governors in recognition of this outstanding success.

The Virtual Strategy Room

At Isaac Newton Academy we have a virtual Strategy Room, a PowerPoint that is emailed to SLT/Hods and disseminated by Hods to subject teams. The purpose of the virtual Strategy Room is to electronically display and remind staff of the current attainment profile of cohorts: those students performing well and those at risk of underperformance. It informs staff and focuses their minds on strategies for improvement. It is updated termly and is a source of data to lead to effective interventions. The central aim of the virtual Strategy Room is to support the tracking of student progress through the use of accurate data to identify key groups and underperformance.

The virtual Strategy Room is for the use of internal INA staff only. The data displayed within it is sensitive and confidential. At no time should ~~any student be permitted to enter the Strategy Room nor should~~ the information displayed be discussed with parties not granted access to the data.

Roles and Responsibilities:

MCG ensures that the data is accurate and current.

SLT interrogate the data through Line Management meetings as applicable.

Hods ensure that the data is disseminated to their teams

Teaching staff ensure they have accessed the data and are using appropriate strategies.

~~Administration staff (as directed by ES) produce resources and mount displays as directed by ES in consultation with MCG.~~

End of Year exams

At the end of each year, students sit formal examinations in each subject. The examinations are written as a collaborative process involving all teachers of the subject. They are designed to test the full range of content, knowledge and skills covered during the course of the year. They are designed to be as similar in nature to the end of KS4 examinations but of a shorter duration. Heads of subject complete an exam analysis which is discussed with their line manager and the Principal as part of a formal evaluation of the year.

~~Internal baselines for Year 8 and 9 are usually based on the Year 7 and 8 end of year summative assessments in 2016-17 but for 2017-18 will use the progress descriptors.~~ Students with cognitive Special Needs may have targets that represent less progress than other students.

BRIDGES mentoring

Each student is seen by his/her form tutor or co-tutor or BRIDGES mentor twice a year for an in-depth appointment to discuss performance, progress and action targets to improve. As part of this conversation, the students and his/her mentor discuss the progress that he/she is making in developing

the BRIDGES habits of mind and learning dispositions. The student writes a summary of their BRIDGES development in preparation for this meeting and submits it to the tutor/co-tutor/BRIDGES mentor. They in turn add to what the student has written and this piece of writing stands as a record of the conversation and an assessment of where the student is with his/her BRIDGES development. Parents/carers receive a copy of this form and students are expected to repeat the presentation they gave to their coach to their parent/carer.

At the end of the year, all students evaluate their progress in developing the BRIDGES characteristics again with their form tutor/co-tutor/BRIDGES mentor. They review evidence of development of the learning muscles. They prepare another written summary. KS4 BRIDGES reviews have a careers/work experience focus to prepare for University and beyond.

Each student's end of year Attainment/Progress report is accompanied by a **tutor comment**, written by the form tutor, outlining the progress that the student is making in developing their character traits & learning dispositions as outlined in the BRIDGES framework and summarising their personal and social development and overall contribution to the life of the academy.

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