



## **ASSESSMENT WITHIN SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY**

### **Assessing progress of pupils with SEND**

There have been significant changes to assessment over the last few years, and one of the challenges schools have faced is ensuring their approach to assessment is inclusive.

When the Rochford Review was published in 2016, its recommendations were based on the guiding principle that 'every pupil should be able to demonstrate his or her attainment and progress.' Although the review focuses on end of key stage statutory assessment, the principle applies equally to all types of assessment.

However, the issue of assessing and showing progress for some pupils who may make very small steps in their learning can often be a challenge.

### **Using assessment to inform teaching and learning**

Effective assessment within school starts with everyone having a clear understanding of the purpose and being confident to use a range of assessment types. Day-to-day formative assessment through observation, questioning and marking enables the teacher to ask, 'given what we know about this individual child, what are the next steps for learning and development and how do I adapt my teaching as a result?'

At St. Mary's, the SENCO and leaders support colleagues to use a range of formative strategies to help

- considering the full range of evidence to use for formative assessment, including photo, video and audio evidence
- giving appropriate verbal feedback to pupils who may struggle with language
- considering the most effective way to 'mark' work where a pupil is unable to read written comments
- teaching pupils with SEND the skills of self and peer assessment
- providing opportunities for pupils to share their thoughts, ideas and views through their preferred form of communication e.g. sign, symbols.

For many pupils with SEND, the effort applied to learning is significant and any assessment should recognise this, along with the level of independence, whilst maintaining high aspirations and expectations.

## Showing progress though summative assessment

Schools assess pupils against end of year objectives or age-related expectations (ARE). Unfortunately, some pupils with cognitive difficulties will spend their entire educational life 'working-towards' end of year objectives and may never reach ARE, yet will make exceptional progress over time. At St. Mary's Catholic Primary School, we recognize this.

We ensure our tracking system determines pupil progress, enabling teachers to track the progress of all pupils from their individual starting points, no matter what stage they are working at.

When teachers are setting any summative assessments or nationally standardised assessments are approaching, it is important to consider the following for pupils with identified needs.

- Is it appropriate for the pupil to be given this assessment?
- What reasonable adjustments can be put in place to support the pupil e.g. extra time?
- Do formal arrangements need to be made through the SENCO so the pupil can access the assessment?
- Do they require modified papers or a reader, for example?
- How do we communicate the needs / access arrangement requirements to the pupil and their parents?

For end of key stage statutory assessment, the Rochford Review recommendations and outcomes of the DfE consultation have led to the development of permanent and extended pre-key stage standards for teachers to use to assess pupils engaged in subject specific learning but working below the standard of national curriculum tests.

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School's assessment approach focuses on pupils' abilities in specific areas like awareness, curiosity and anticipation. This assessment approach will enable progress made by pupils with complex needs to be identified and measured effectively.

## Using assessment to identify needs

On-going formative assessment will also support teachers to identify concerns and individual needs as part of the initial stage of the SEND identification process and the graduated approach. Initially, the graduated approach involves teachers using information from their formative and summative assessments and making judgements about the progress a pupil is making. In addition, more detailed diagnostic assessment can also be used in order to inform the SEN identification process further and to explore the precise gaps in pupils' learning. Examples include:

- standardised reading, spelling or mathematics tests
- cognitive abilities
- profiling tools e.g. for speech, language and communication needs
- small steps assessments aligned with the national curriculum
- specific learning difficulties screeners
- pupil attitude questionnaires
- social and emotional questionnaires.

Many of these can also be used to show impact of interventions where a pre-and post- intervention assessment is carried out on the pupils.

### **Holistic approaches**

A truly inclusive approach to assessment is one that includes all aspects of progress that are important for an individual child. We have a good understanding of what the areas of need might be for our pupils with SEND, we establish a baseline and carry out appropriate assessment for pupils to demonstrate what they can do across the full range of skills. This might include:

- communication skills
- social skills
- mental health
- physical development
- independence and resilience.

It is particularly important for pupils who have an EHC plan to ensure that they are able to demonstrate progress in the outcomes identified in their plan. This will include long-term outcomes such as higher education, employment and independent living.

### **Celebrating achievement**

St. Mary's systems and approaches to assess pupils with SEND are appropriate and meaningful – not only to the teacher, but most importantly to the parents and to the pupils themselves.

One of the most important purposes of assessment is to celebrate progress and to share the successes with the child and their parents. Inclusive schools consider how effectively they are involving families in the assessment process, and how clear the information is that is being shared.

Person-centred reviews, for example, provide a great opportunity for a whole range of assessment information to be brought together to tell the story of the pupil. Here, the child, family and professionals all contribute to the process of celebrating what has gone well and identifying next steps, whilst being able to show a full rounded picture of the child and continuing to maintain high expectations.

