

# Assessment

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## Principles of assessment and feedback

Thornden School recognises that effective feedback and ongoing assessment make a large contribution to the development of learning and understanding, and enable students to achieve their full potential. Effective feedback and assessment allows students to know where they are and how they have done well. It also identifies areas for improvement. Assessment provides teachers with the information they need to adjust their teaching, taking account of the identified gaps and how students learn. Assessment should be regular, appropriate, fair and accurate. All assessment should be sensitive to the individual needs of students. Assessment of a students' overall performance should draw on as wide a range of evidence as possible using a variety of assessment activities.

Assessment processes at Thornden School include both formative and summative assessment. Formative and Summative assessment are both essential in raising standards, although they have different purposes:

**Formative assessment** (sometimes referred to as AfL – assessment for learning) helps to identify the next steps and targets needed to make progress. It takes account of students' strengths as well as weaknesses. Often, the student is active in the process and assessment may be completed through guided peer or self-assessment. Formative assessment tasks may focus on developing and fine-tuning some of the skills and knowledge, rather than assessing all aspects of a course or unit of work. These assessments usually come during a unit of work and are part of a feedback loop to next steps. Formative assessment is used extensively in every lesson to check understanding and inform next steps.

**Summative assessment** sums up how well a student has performed on a course or a unit overall. It is associated with grades and steps, and links to school and national performance indicators. These assessments usually come at the end of a unit or course. GCSE exams are an example of summative assessment that marks the end of a course. Summative assessments might also include an end of unit test. This style of assessment will also be used formatively to identify targets and next steps.

## Assessment approaches

At Thornden School, we see assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning, and it is inextricably linked to our curriculum. Assessment and feedback features as a core part of the Thornden Teaching and Learning DNA.

We use 3 broad overarching forms of assessment: day-to-day in-school formative assessment, in-school summative assessment and nationally standardised summative assessment.

### 2.1 In-school formative assessment

As defined in part 1, 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/goals, and identify areas in which they need to improve
- **Parents/carers** to gain a broad picture of where their child's strengths and weaknesses lie, and what they need to do to improve

Formative assessment is integrated into Schemes of Work and involves strategies that identify gaps and misconceptions, such as:

- Use of mini-whiteboards with cold-calling questioning;
- Regular short recap quizzes;
- Retrieval practice 'do-nows' at the start of lessons;
- Use of the visualiser for live marking;
- Guided self and peer-assessment of a piece of written or practical work with a key set of criteria;
- Diagnostic questioning.

Formative assessment should actively involve students in their own learning and encourage them to take responsibility through methods such as guided self and peer-assessment.

## Feedback

Effective formative assessment will include feedback and devoted time to work on the target areas, in order to close the identified gaps. The methods used for this will look different in different subject areas and departments specify how they do this in their department 'Feedback and Assessment' policies. Feedback may come in the form of:

- Verbal feedback (especially in practical subject areas);
- Whole-class feedback;
- SMART targets (identified by either the teacher, student or peers);
- Use of the visualiser to model how to improve;
- DIRT (Directed Improvement and Reflection Time) tasks.

## 2.2 In-school summative assessment

Effective in-school summative assessment enables:

- **School 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 evaluate learning at the end of a unit or period, and the impact of their own teaching.
- **Students** to understand how well they have learned and understood a topic or unit of work taught over a period of time. It should be used to provide feedback on how they can improve.
- **Parents/carers** to stay informed about the achievement, progress and wider outcomes of their child across a period.

In department 'Feedback and Assessment' policies, departments should specify how they use summative assessments e.g. end of unit tests, and how they moderate.

## 2.3 Nationally standardised summative assessment

Nationally standardised summative assessment enables:

- **School 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 they are performing in comparison with students nationally.

Nationally standardised summative assessments take the form of GCSEs, BTECs and vocational qualifications at the end of Key Stage 4.

## Roles and responsibilities

### 3.1 Senior Leadership Team

The Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team are responsible for:

- Ensuring this policy is adhered to.
- Liaising with departments in producing subject-specific Feedback and Assessment Policies.
- Making sure arrangements are in place so teachers can conduct assessment, marking and feedback competently and confidently, including training and moderation opportunities.
- Promoting and sharing best practice in assessment and appropriate staff development.
- Analysing student progress and attainment, including individual students and specific groups.
- Prioritising key actions to address under-achievement.
- Reporting to governors on all key aspects of student progress and attainment, including current standards and trends over previous years.

### 3.2 Heads of Department

The Heads of Department are responsible for

- Checking and amending the department Assessment Policy on an annual basis. This should then be reviewed with the SLT Line Manager.
- Monitoring the consistent application of the department Assessment Policy.
- Creating and sharing clear mark schemes for the purposes of moderation.
- Facilitating an effective, consistent approach: e.g. through work scrutiny, moderation, departmental meetings, performance reviews.
- Analysing data to identify groups at risk of underachievement and focusing intervention on underachieving groups.
- Using assessment information to inform the self-evaluation process and the Department Improvement Plan by identifying training needs.
- Ensuring standardisation within teaching teams.
- Keeping parents/carers informed and involved as necessary.

### 3.3 Teachers

Teachers are responsible for:

- Following the assessment procedures outlined in this policy.
- Being familiar with the standards for the subjects they teach.
- Keeping up to date with developments in assessment practice.
- Explaining their assessment and department assessment processes to students.

- Monitoring the completion of tasks and meeting of deadlines by individual students.
- Providing regular and frequent feedback aimed at improving student performance and understanding.
- Keeping up to date department and individual records of student performance and assessment, with grades and steps, when appropriate.
- Assessing student work in line with school and National standards.
- Providing realistic estimates of expected student exam performance, when requested, based on formative and summative assessments.
- Consulting and use the school's academic monitoring and SEND information to inform their approach to individual children.
- Setting SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time limited) targets for student as a response to formative assessments.

## Inclusion

The principles of this assessment policy apply to all students, including those with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).

Assessment will be used diagnostically to contribute to the early and accurate identification of students' special educational needs and any requirements for support and intervention.

We will use meaningful ways of measuring all aspects of progress, and we will have the same high expectations of all students.

## Artificial intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are now widespread and easy to access. Staff, students and parents/carers may be familiar with generative chatbots such as ChatGPT and Google Gemini. Thornden School recognises that AI has many uses to help students learn, but may also lend itself to cheating and plagiarism.

Students **may not** use AI tools:

- During assessments, including internal and external assessments, and coursework.
- To write their homework or class assignments, where AI-generated text is presented as their own work.

Students **may** use AI tools:

- As a research tool to help them find out about new topics and ideas.
- When specifically studying and discussing AI in schoolwork, for example in IT lessons or art homework about AI-generated images. All AI-generated content must be properly attributed.

## Monitoring

Assessment and Feedback remains a core part of the Thornden Teaching and Learning DNA and so features in all school-wide monitoring activities. The effectiveness of assessment practices across the school are monitored as follows:

- Annual departmental reviews conducted by SLT, including interviews with students, lesson observations and book scrutiny.
- Head of Department Learning Walks with a focus on Assessment and Feedback.
- Assessment questions on Head of Department line-management agendas.
- Questions on assessment at Student Voice panels.

- Regular scrutiny of summative assessment data by both heads of Department, Heads of Year and the Senior Leadership Team at key points during the year.

## **Links with other policies**

This assessment policy is linked to our:

- Home learning policy
- Exam policy