What is ‘assessment for learning’

Guide for parents at
Bishops Down Primary School
Here at Bishops Down most of our teaching strategies are driven by ‘formative assessment’, also known as ‘assessment for learning’.
What research do Bishops Down base their ideas on?

We have used the work of:
* John Hattie, ‘visible learning’
* Shirley Clarke on assessment for learning
* Carol Dweck on fixed and growth mindsets
* Black and Wiliam, ‘Inside the black box’

We have used information that is freely available to put together this presentation from this work.

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Formative assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. It contributes to learning through providing feedback. It should indicate what is good about a piece of work and why this is good; it should also indicate what is not so good and how the work could be improved. Effective formative feedback will affect what the pupil and the teacher do next.

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Summative assessment is used to evaluate pupil learning at the end of a unit of work or period of time by comparing it against some kind of standard or benchmark.

Examples of summative assessments include:
- A mid term test
- A final project
- A National Curriculum SAT test or task
- GCSE exams

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Assessment for Learning will:

* raise attainment in schools as children become better learners;
* provide an ongoing record-keeping system measured against learning intentions;
* motivate and encourage all children by helping them to identify strengths and successes;
* provide information that informs future teaching and learning;
* support a learning environment where it is safe to fail and where children can learn by their mistakes.
* provide children with opportunities to reflect upon their own learning and become aware of their future needs.

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John Hattie has carried out exhaustive research on what has the most impact on pupil learning, bringing together the outcomes of thousands of studies. He looked at the things that had the most impact on learning. They included:

- Assessment literate pupils
- Providing formative evaluation
- Feedback
- Cooperative learning

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Shirley Clarke’s work focusses on the importance of assessment including;

• Effective questioning by teachers
• Feedback including self evaluation, peer feedback and teacher feedback
• Effective teacher planning which captures the interest of pupils, have clear learning objectives and clear success criteria

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Carol Dweck has focussed her research on the importance of developing a growth mindset in pupils as illustrated on the next slide.

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Dweck noted that our language tells children what we believe and what we value. For example,

* ‘Well done – you’re learning to …’
* ‘Good – it’s making you think – that’s how your brain is growing!’
* ‘Every time you practise, you’re making connections in your brain stronger.’
* ‘You’re good at things you like because you work at them.’

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Dweck suggested that teachers talk to children about learning that they say they find difficult?

- ‘Have you put in as much effort as you can?’
- ‘You can choose to get cleverer and better at this?’
- ‘How much time do you need for this, are you giving yourself enough time.’
- ‘Picture the nerve cells in your brain growing when you practise.’
- ‘Do you feel worried about how well you are going to do this task?’
- ‘If you get discouraged, think about how much more clever you are now than a year ago.’

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So what strategies do Bishops Down teachers use as a result?

- Active involvement of pupils in their own learning including ‘Talk partners’ or ‘brain buddies’
- Effective feedback to pupils, including marking in books and verbal feedback during a lesson
- Adjusting teaching as a result of assessment and planning effectively for the next lesson or topic
- Valuing the need for pupils to be able to assess themselves and understand how to improve by sharing goals

'Discovering and Learning Together'
What is active learning?

- “Tell me and I’ll forget; show me and I may remember; let me do it and I’ll understand.”
  Chinese proverb

- “You can teach a child a lesson for a day; but if you can teach him to learn by creating curiosity, he will continue the learning process as long as he lives.”
  Clay P. Bedford

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What are the benefits of active learning?

Children...

- build on what they already know
- are more likely to find meaningful problem solving solutions or interpretations.
- are likely to receive more frequent and more immediate feedback which is more memorable.
- retrieve information from memory rather than simply recognising a correct statement of fact or truth and test things out.

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What are the benefits of active learning?

- An increase in children’s self-confidence, self-esteem and independence.
- Children are more motivated being active rather than passive.
- Children’s conceptions of knowledge change, which in turn has implications for cognitive development.
- Children learn strategies for learning itself by observing others.

'Discerning and Learning Together'
Why use ‘Talk Partners’?

* Pupil talk is central to active learning. Using Talk Partners ensures quality talk in the classroom.
* It is often the same few children who are always first with their hands up and do most of the answering of questions. Most of the class opt out of listening and thinking as a consequence.
* Some children feel more confident when using talk partners as they are part of a paired response and there is time to discuss together.
* Children begin to give more detailed answers and gradually develop better quality talk.

‘Discovering and Learning Together’
How do ‘talk partners’ work?

Children are provided with an opportunity to think about a question or task and discuss it with a partner. The results of the discussion are shared in either groups or a whole class situation.
What difference do ‘talk partners’ make?

Some positive outcomes of using the talk partners approach are that:

∗ It provides more opportunities for quality speaking and listening
∗ Teachers have more time to listen to children to gauge the level of understanding and address any misconceptions, leading to immediate feedback
∗ Pupils have greater engagement and less passive listening
∗ Children think more clearly about what they are doing and children write more as a consequence
∗ It enables participation by children who might not be as confident
What difference do ‘talk partners’ make?

- It enables children to learn from each other, a skill which we all use.
- It develops a better ethos in the classroom and respect for all.
- It keeps learning fresh. Children get excited at the prospect at changing partners!
- Teachers have found that opportunities for paired talk help children focus on what they have achieved during the lesson.
- Children have to be taught how to evaluate and analyse their work, if this to have a positive effect on learning.

‘Discovering and Learning Together’
‘Brain buddies are very good because when you don’t know the answer to a question they can help you and explain the question.’

‘I like brain buddies because they help me with my work if I’m stuck on a question sometimes and I like helping other people improve their work.’
Every lesson must have a clear focus so that children know what they are learning about, we call these lesson objectives.

We break down the objective into small steps so that children are clear what they have to do to achieve the objective. We call these success criteria.

The success criteria are usually broken down into 3 steps that become more challenging. These are often referred to as ‘mild, spicy and hot (chillies)’ or ‘walk, jog run’.

Often teachers add a chilli challenge as an extra.

In this way children of all abilities can be challenged appropriately.

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Example success criteria

This is an example from a Year 2 Maths lesson

- Mild – Add a one digit number to a two digit number using beaded number lines.
- Hot - Add 1 digit to a 2 digit number using a hundred square.
- Spicy – Add a 2 digit to a 2 digit number using a number line or a hundred square

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What do our children say about it?

‘I like walk, jog and run because you will be better at whatever you do because you can challenge yourself at your work.’

‘Walk, jog and run I think is good because I can challenge myself and it is good because I know which one I should be on, so I go on a higher stage.’

‘I like walk jog run because if you are not very confident you do an easier one.’

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What is effective feedback?

* Teachers spend a great deal of time marking children’s work. Marking and feedback are essential tools for ensuring that children learn more effectively.
* Children understand what they are aiming for, and they can provide strategies for success and ways to move forward.
* Effective marking and feedback to children is one of the key factors for improving learning through assessment. Children need to understand the purpose of the learning, how to make improvements, and be given specific time to respond to comments or feedback.

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What is the difference between marking & feedback?

- **Marking** is the annotating of a piece of written work, using words, symbols and grades. It is usually in a written form, but can be verbal, especially for young children. Children need acknowledgement that their work has been looked at, but ‘in depth feedback’ is given when appropriate. Less detailed marking is often supported by oral feedback.

- **Feedback** may consist of a dialogue between teacher and child, a group or a class, and will provide pupils with information about how they performed in relation to the learning intention/objective(s), and the next steps necessary to improve the work.

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Feedback is effective when...

* expectations are shared with the whole class so they know what they have to achieve. Therefore feedback is measured against learning intentions
* examples of expected outcomes and models of good work are given regularly to show what is expected
* feedback is given during the learning activity to guide learning
* children are involved in reflective dialogue and discussion

*‘Discovering and Learning Together’*
Feedback to a group of children within a class is effective when...

* there are differentiated learning intentions/objectives e.g. where there are ability groups, the teacher will have expectations of group outcomes and different success criteria will be applied
* the group is aware of the steps needed to improve their work
* children are involved in peer assessment
* there is an understanding that some common rules may apply to every piece of work, e.g. joined script, presentation and appropriate to the genre.

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Feedback to an individual child will be effective when...

- verbal and written language is clearly understood
- specific feedback about the work is provided
- advice is given about how to improved
- strategies provide support for further progress

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What impact do marking and feedback have?

They can;

* help children become better learners by giving a clear picture of what they have done, and what they need to develop
* give recognition and praise for achievement
* provide suggestions for the next learning task
* enable parents to understand their child’s strengths and weaknesses
* identify targets for individuals or groups of children
* ensure regular dialogue between teacher and child
* suggest individual strategies for improvement

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What are learning to learn skills?

- Manage distractions
- Break things down
- Plan and think it through
- Draw diagrams, jot down thoughts or things which help you think
- Ask for help
- ‘Magpie’ other peoples ideas
- Persevere - Don’t Give Up!
- Be-cooperative!
- Use your imagination!

‘Discovering and Learning Together’
The questions that teachers ask are very important

Shirley Clarke said, ‘We need to plan questions which are worthwhile – questions which develop and deepen children’s understanding.’
What sort of questions do teachers use in class?

The questions or statements below are designed to make children think.

* **Open questions** – e.g. tell me about... or how do you know?
* **Statements** – e.g. Exercise leads to a healthy lifestyle.
* **Start from the end** – e.g. The Romans invaded Britain. Why?
* **The opposing standpoint** – e.g. was Guy Fawkes justified?
* **True or False** – e.g. To move these things you will need a heavy force. True or false?