



EdStart- Specialist Education Ltd.

Assessment Policy

Policy Reviewed	September 2025
Review date	September 2026

CONTENTS

1.	Rational and Aims
2.	Assessment, Recording and Reporting Practice
3.	Responsibilities and Duties
Appendix 1	Expectations of all teachers
Appendix 2	Target setting and assessment in the new GCSE
Appendix 3	Expected grades based on attainment at key stage 2
Appendix 4	Assessment for learning
Appendix 5	Bloom's Taxonomy
Appendix 6	Starting point for self and peer assessment
Appendix 7	Formative Feedback

1. RATIONAL AND AIMS

This policy takes into account the Equality Act (2010) which highlights actions and behaviours which are unlawful such as: direct/indirect discrimination, failing to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students or staff, harassment related to a protected characteristic, victimisation.

Rationale

EdStart is committed to providing an outstanding education for the students attending our learning centres. All adults delivering education in the school are committed to high standards in teaching, learning and assessment.

Following the introduction of the new national curriculum in 2014 and the Department for Education's decision to remove the use of national curriculum levels for statutory assessments, schools have been required to review their assessment policy and practice. EdStart has researched the flexibility in assessment offered by the removal of national curriculum levels and has been guided in writing this policy by the report of the Commission on Assessment without Levels.

"The overriding principle of good assessment is that it should be clearly tied to its intended purpose. There are three main forms of assessment: in-school formative assessment; in-school summative assessment; and nationally standardised summative assessment. Good formative assessment ranges from the probing question put to a student as they think something through; quick recap questions at the opening of a lesson; scrutiny of the natural work of students; right through to formal tests.

To use each form of assessment to best effect, it is important that teachers and school leaders understand their various purposes. Schools must be clear why students are being assessed, what the assessment is intended to achieve and how the assessment information will be used." - **Final report of the Commission on Assessment without Levels**

"Assessment is the judgement teachers make about a child's attainment, based on knowledge gained through techniques such as observation, questioning, marking and testing." - **OFSTED**

Our assessment policy has been written to drive improvements in standards for students and teachers, not just to measure them. The core purpose of assessment in our school is to move students on in their learning and is fundamental to the learning and teaching process. All assessment information should be used formatively. In this respect the policy builds on the well-established Assessment for Learning practices which have been used successfully across the school. We recognise that the quality of assessment has a significant impact on

learning and on attainment in school by stimulating and challenging students to work hard and by encouraging teachers to reflect on their practice and to focus on how they can improve the learning of individual students.

At EdStart students may have a range of complex social and emotional needs which act as barriers to making academic progress. We believe that a young person's social and emotional development is as important as their academic progress and that the principles described in this policy apply equally to both.

Aims

This policy has been written with the aim of:

- Placing assessment at the heart of teaching and learning
- Creating a dialogue between students and teachers/other adults to ensure all members of the school community share the core principles of assessment
- Ensuring continuity for the learner as they move through the school
- Signalling areas of achievement to the student, thereby motivating them to make further progress
- Identifying areas requiring further development to students and adults which will be used to inform future planning
- Raising the achievement and self-esteem of students by providing them with regular, high quality, diagnostic feedback about their work
- Highlighting what skills, knowledge and understanding a student needs to have developed, in order to be successful in planning their next steps in learning
- Supporting students to respond to diagnostic feedback, requiring students to adopt a 'growth mindset' which says "I can't do that – yet"
- Providing understandable information on progress to students, parents, school-based staff at all levels and to our partners
- Ensuring assessment is inclusive of all abilities and is free from bias. All students have the right to be successful and to achieve

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear framework within which consistent, meaningful, and fair assessment can take place.

2. ASSESSMENT, RECORDING AND RECORDING PRACTICE

Purposes of assessment

Assessment may be used in a variety of ways for a variety of purposes. At EdStart we believe that all assessment should be used formatively to support the student's understanding of their next steps in learning. True assessment, however, is neither wholly formative, nor wholly summative; it is embedded within classroom practice. Throughout this policy we will refer to the following forms of assessment:

Day-to-day formative assessment:

- Question and answer during class

- Marking of, and feedback on, students work
- Observational assessment
- Regular, short re-cap quizzes

This form of assessment requires the recording of what has been achieved, what needs to be done next and setting realistic, achievable learning goals to enable the students to reach their target grades.

In-school summative assessment:

- End of year exams
- Short end of topic or unit tests
- Reviews for students with SEND

This form of assessment is used to record a student's overall achievement.

Nationally standardised summative assessment:

- National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2
- End of Key Stage 4 assessments e.g. GCSE, BTEC, Functional Skills and Entry Level.

Assessment, Recording and Reporting Practice

At EdStart we have developed a curriculum which aims to support students to grow into responsible, effective, citizens who have the skills to succeed in adult life. To allow us to achieve this we believe that our assessments must provide continuity across both Key Stages and that, up to the point of public exams, focuses on which specific elements of the curriculum an individual has deeply understood and which they have not. In this way students' progress will be defined in terms of the key skills, knowledge and understanding required for success in the new Key Stage 4 curriculum and beyond.

Formative assessment

The aim of formative assessment is to give students clear guidance about the ways in which they have been 'successful' and about how to improve their work. All work that is formally assessed must receive formative comments. This will usually be in writing. Where formative assessment is given orally it should be possible for the pupil, or a member of the centre staff, to record it in writing. Assessment for Learning strategies must be used to encourage all students to "learn to learn" and become independent learners (see Appendix 4 & 7).

Students should be required to respond to the feedback and opportunities must be given for students to demonstrate progress in their skills, knowledge or understanding as a result of the feedback. Departments will be required to review their medium-term planning and assessment practice to ensure that these opportunities are planned for systematically. This could be done through:

- A starter activity in a subsequent lesson
- Students setting their own curricular targets
- Discussion with the student

- A peer assessment activity
- Peer teaching
- Re-drafting a piece of work

A formative comment should:

- Be concise and accessible to students
- Highlight achievement, including areas where they have been successful and indicate how improvements can be made
- Be personal to the student
- Encourage and support the individual needs of the student in constructive ways
- Encourage students to take ownership of their own learning

Peer and self-assessment should take place regularly. The aim of self-assessment is to enable students to be actively involved in the assessment process and give them ownership of their learning, thus encouraging independent learning (see Appendix 6).

Assessment Practice - Recording

In response to the removal of National Curriculum levels as a means of recording the progress made by a student across Key Stage 3, and to allow a student's progress to be monitored towards the GCSE criteria, EdStart has adopted a system of assessment which matches the skills, knowledge and understanding required for success at GCSE to the current schemes of work at Key Stage 3. This will be adopted in phases to ensure that there is a meaningful transition between the current use of 'National Curriculum levels and old GCSE grades' to the new 9-1 grading system. Grades should be awarded according to clearly defined criteria which will be identified by each subject area. With the introduction of the revised GCSEs, and the move from a system of A*-G grades to a number based system of grades 9-1, it is important that departments are clear how the GCSE 9-1 scale compares to the A*-G system (See appendix 2).

To allow these assessment judgements to be effective in measuring a student's progress towards acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding at a particular level we will continue to use fine grades which are defined as follows:

Fine grade	Description
s	The student has secured the skills knowledge and understanding within this grade and is ready to move to the next stage
d	The student is developing an understanding of the work within this grade but is not yet ready to move on
e	The student is engaging with this level for the first time

Moderation - As our revised system of assessment is developed it will be vital that teachers in each subject area take the opportunity to moderate judgements made across all teachers, all year groups and all learning centres.

Frequency of recording - Progress reporting should be half termly and in line with any data submission cycle, so that data can be reported to schools, parents and carers, and used to inform interventions. Evidence to support this in-house summative assessment data should come from an aggregation of formal assessment activities and ongoing assessment from classwork and homework.

Use of recorded data – Whilst senior leaders will continue to use assessment data to monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum and to identify areas of the curriculum which need additional support, the main use of this assessment data will be by teachers in reviewing the impact of their teaching and adjusting their planning to match the individual needs of the students. In addition, all available student information will be used to support targeted intervention.

Assessment of class work and homework – Staff should record grades for all assessed pieces of class and homework so that individual progress can be monitored. With examination style questions, marks and grades can be given in line with exam boards' grade criteria. All written work should be marked and returned with promptness. The depth of marking should relate to the nature of the task. Notes should be checked for accuracy and support given to students with organisational difficulties. Students should make their own notes, with staff support as required. Where appropriate, marking should also indicate the level of support a student has received from the teacher or other adults.

Baselining – Due to the fact that students can arrive at the EdStart at any time in their school career it is vital that departments develop a robust baselining process which accurately reflects a student's current attainment. It is reasonable that this might be undertaken after a period of time which allows the student to establish themselves within the setting but, apart from in extreme circumstances, should be done within the first 4 weeks of the student arrival. To ensure a baseline accurately reflects a student's ability it should test as many strands of the subject's assessment criteria as possible and should not be based on a narrowly focused test or task.

Target setting – An essential part of improving achievement is to agree targets with each student that are aspirational. Targets and progress being made towards them will be discussed regularly with students and parents. Curricular targets should be derived directly from formative assessment which is undertaken as an ongoing part of the teaching and learning process. Target grades must be recorded centrally and in teacher's mark books/spreadsheets to inform discussion (particularly where underachievement is a concern). Teachers need to ensure that current and target grades are recorded and used to inform discussion of under achievement and exceptional performance. The target setting rationale is described in appendix 3. This appendix includes descriptions of the expected end of year grades and how they relate to 'old' Key Stage 2 levels.

Assessment Practice - Reporting

To allow parents and our partner schools to take an active role in supporting students, it is important that they have accurate, up-to-date information which includes both formative and summative assessments.

Interim summative reports – Parents and schools will be invited to attend half-termly reviews where there will be an opportunity to discuss the academic progress made by a student and how they are progressing towards the targets set in their Individualised Learning Plan (ILP). Where information is available these may include formative assessment information.

A full formative report – A full, formative report will be provided to parents and schools at least twice per year. These reports will provide detail of how a student is progressing against the assessment criteria for each subject.

Management summary reports – Reports on whole school and cohort progress will be made to the Governing Body and the QA Partner each term. This will include the publication and analysis of performance in nationally standardised summative assessments (GCSEs etc).

3. RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES

The Governing Body will:

- support the school to deliver all aspects of the Policy
- ensure that the Assessment Policy is regularly reviewed and updated
- set realistic targets for achievement at Key Stage 4

The Leadership Group will:

- undertake a regular review of the Policy
- support and monitor the different staff teams in the implementation of assessment, recording and reporting practices
- be responsible for the maintenance of the SIMS Assessment Manager and its database
- ensure that there is a coherent strategy for the effective management of performance data
- set evidence-based progress targets which are agreed for all students in all subjects. These targets will be reviewed annually
- monitor progress towards their targets
- ensure staff receive training on the interpretation and use of data to inform their planning
- periodically measure the 'value added' of individual students and groups in order to recommend whole school targets for achievement to the Governing Body.

Subject Teachers will:

- gain the necessary expertise and knowledge about data analysis through training
- ensure that students have a clear understanding of the assessment criteria
- regularly assess and mark students' work employing a range of assessment styles
- use the results of all assessments to monitor progress and plan future learning tasks which match each student's capabilities
- motivate students by giving them a clear picture of their level of performance, what they have done well and what they need to do better next time

- contribute to the assessment of cross-curricular themes e.g. SMSC, PSED and citizenship

Centre Managers will:

- ensure that student files are kept up-to-date
- undertake mentoring interviews following the school's guidelines
- be responsible for ensuring that the different types of report for their students are correctly completed
- monitor progress on a regular basis
- report on the personal, social and emotional development of students
- develop specific interventions for identified pupils to support their progress in a range of dimensions
- coordinate all aspects of the half-termly student reviews

Students will:

- regularly review their work and negotiate learning targets with their subject teachers
- ensure that targets are recorded in their exercise books as appropriate
- seek advice about what to do to improve
- act upon the advice given by their teachers

Parents will:

- be involved in regular communication with the school in order to understand the learning needs of their son/daughter
- assist their son/daughter in achieving the learning targets
- attend all progress meetings arranged for their son/daughter

Appendix 1: **Expectations of all teachers**

EdStart expects that all teachers must:

1. Take full account of the Characteristics of a Successful Lesson document found in the Teaching and Learning Policy and build these into their lessons.
2. Plan lessons to take account of the different learning needs of the students, using prior attainment data and assessment for learning information.
3. Display the intended learning outcomes/success criteria throughout the lesson, communicate them clearly to the class in language that they understand and refer to them as the lesson progresses to develop understanding and reinforce learning.
4. Ensure that the learning outcomes are not tasks but outline what the students are expected to learn in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding.
5. Mark work regularly with constructive comments that tell the students what they need to do to improve their work and reach their targets.
6. Aim to involve the students actively in their learning through using a range of questioning techniques which support students to develop different ways of working.
7. Differentiate activities to meet the different abilities of the class, drawing on the full range of available methods.
8. Keep whole class, teacher directed learning to a minimum and rarely ask students to undertake mundane tasks such as copying or dictation.
9. Use the plenary and mini plenaries to encourage the students to reflect on their learning. Crucially, the plenary should also enable the teacher to assess how the students have progressed during the lesson, to inform their planning.
10. Work closely with other adult support in classes to share concerns, assessment and planning.

Appendix 2: Target setting and assessment in the New GCSE

From September 2015 new GCSEs have been introduced in English and maths. Other subjects have followed in 2016, 2017 and 2018. These are no longer graded with the letters A*- G as previous GCSEs have been. Instead, students will receive a numerical grade from 1-9. The table below shows the information we have received to date from the Department for Education as to how the new grading system equates to the A*- G scale.

GCSE 9-1 Scale	Previous GCSE A*-G Scale
9 (The top 20% of the students who get grade 7 or above)	A**
8	A*
7	A
6	
5	High C/Low B
4	
3	D
2	
1	G
U	U

Students in Year 7-9 are unlikely to hit the higher 1-9 grades until they are in Year 10 and 11. Appendix 3 shows where they should be at the end of each year, depending on the Key Stage 2 level they join the school at. From 2016, KS2 outcomes will no longer be reported in National Curriculum levels.

Appendix 3: Expected Grades based on attainment at Key Stage 2

This section is the school's first attempt at describing the expected progression of a student from Key Stage 2 in mathematics and English. For other subjects where there is no direct Key Stage 2 information, departments should use their baseline information along with these expected progression pathways.

As some of our students join us with assessed attainment below that of a GCSE grade G, it is reasonable that we will have to consider supplementing a grade 1-9 system with an Emerging (Em) grade which is below a grade 1 in the new system.

Key Stage 2 Level	End of Year 7	End of Year 8	End of Year 9	End of Year 10	End of Year 11
B/1	Em	Em	1d	2e	2s
N/2	Em	1e	1s	2d	3e
3c	1e	1d	2e	2s	3d
3b	1e	1s	2d	3e	3s
3a	1d	2e	2s	3d	4e
4c	1s	2d	3e	3s	4d
4b	2e	2s	3d	4e	4s
4a	2d	3e	3s	4d	5e
5c	2s	3d	4e	4s	5d
5b	3e	3s	4d	5e	6e
5a	3d	4e	4s	5d	6d
6c	3s	4d	5e	5s	7
6b	4e	4s	5d	6e	7/8
6a	4d	5e	5s	6s	7/8/9

It should be noted that the implication of this is that students who achieved a L6 at KS2 should be being assessed as the equivalent of a GCSE grade C by the end of Y7 (i.e. a grade 4 in the new grading system) and should make progress towards a grade of 7/8/9 by the end of Year 11. This table will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the expected progress provides appropriate challenge for our students.

Appendix 4: **Assessment for Learning**

Assessment for learning is effective when students:

- show changes in their attitudes to learning and in their motivation, self-esteem, independence, initiative and confidence
- show changes in their responses to questions, in contributions to plenary sessions, and in explanations and descriptions
- improve their attainment
- ask relevant questions
- are actively involved in formative assessment processes, e.g. setting targets, peer or self-assessment, recognising progress in their written work, skills, knowledge and understanding

To effectively use assessment for learning all teachers should:

- know their students well, know why students make mistakes, and be able to make judgements about next steps or interventions
- share learning intentions with students and use them to mark work or give feedback or rewards
- build in review time for themselves and their students
- encourage students to take responsibility for their learning by providing opportunities for students to describe their response to learning intentions or targets, the strategies they use and the judgements they make in relation to their progress
- give students examples of a variety of skills, attitudes, standards and qualities to aim for
- analyse students' performance in tests and use the information for future learning plans
- feel confident and secure in classroom practice

In addition, teachers should produce plans with:

- emphasis on learning intentions and on sharing them with students and other adults in the classroom
- assessment criteria for feedback and marking, peer and self-assessment
- differentiated classroom groups
- built-in review time and flexibility
- notes of students who need additional or consolidation work
- time for guided group sessions for explicit formative assessment opportunities
- adjustments highlighted or crossed out: what did or did not work and why.

To effectively use assessment for learning our school will continue to develop an ethos that:

- values positive attitudes to learning and promotes trusting relationships
- encourages and builds self-esteem
- believes that all students can improve and measures individuals against their own previous attainment instead of against other students
- uses data to inform planning
- provides support, guidance and appropriate training for teachers
- encourages review and self-evaluation at individual, subject and school level.

Appendix 5: Bloom's Taxonomy

Benjamin Bloom created this taxonomy for categorising level of abstraction of questions that commonly occur in classrooms. The taxonomy provides a useful structure in which to categorise questions.

Competence	Skills Demonstrated
Knowledge	• observation and recall of information. • knowledge of dates, events, places. • knowledge of major ideas. • mastery of subject matter. <i>Question Cues:</i> list, define, tell, describe, identify, show, label, collect, examine, tabulate, quote, name, who, when, where, etc.
Comprehension	• understanding information. • grasp meaning. • translate knowledge into new context. • interpret facts, compare and contrast. • order, group and infer causes. • predict consequences. <i>Question Cues:</i> Summarise, describe, interpret, contrast, predict, associate, distinguish, estimate, differentiate, discuss, extend.
Application	• use information • use methods, concepts, theories in new situations. • solve problems using required skills or knowledge. <i>Questions Cues:</i> Apply, demonstrate, calculate, complete, illustrate, show, solve, examine, modify, relate, change, classify, experiment, discover.

Analysis	• seeing patterns. • organisation of parts. • recognition of hidden meanings. • identification of components. <i>Question Cues:</i> analyse, separate, order, explain, connect, classify, arrange, divide, compare, select, explain, infer.
Synthesis	• use old ideas to create new ones. • generalise from given facts. • relate knowledge from several areas. • predict, draw conclusions. <i>Question Cues:</i> Combine, integrate, modify, rearrange, substitute, plan, create, design, invent, what if?, compose, formulate, prepare, generalise, rewrite.
Evaluation	• compare and discriminate between ideas. • assess value of theories, presentations. • make choices based on reasoned argument. • verify value of evidence. • recognise subjectivity. <i>Question Cues</i> assess, decide, rank, grade, test, measure, recommend, convince, select, judge, explain, discriminate, support, conclude, compare, summarise.

Appendix 6: **Starting point for self and peer assessment**

1. Clear criteria should be shared and discussed with students. This could also be created by the students themselves.
2. Assessment criteria given to each student before they undertake the assessment. The criteria can be divided into:

- how to achieve an 7+ grade;
- how to achieve a 4 grade;
- how to achieve an 2 grade;

or any other subdivisions which are available to departments

3. Models and examples of previous work at a variety of different levels can be shown and discussed with students.
4. Establish expectations for feedback. Need to create a supportive atmosphere for all students. Teacher could model example comments e.g.
I like the way X did... 'I think it would be better if...' ' ... but you need to ... You can do this by ...'
5. Scaffolds or frameworks for assessment provided. 'I am proud of...' 'If I did this again I would...'
6. Ask students to sign their peer assessment in order to ensure there is accountability.

Strategies for Peer and Self-Assessment

1. **Use of Student Seating**
 - Groups with equal balance of able and less able students. Able and less able work together;
 - Students sat in groups of equal ability. Example of work a grade above their working level provided. Students identify what they need to do to move their work to the next grade;
 - Whole class activity where answers are shared by all students in a discussion chaired by the teacher;
2. **Use of Mark Schemes**
 - Students create their own mark schemes based on the criteria given at the beginning of the task.
 - Students write a specific mark scheme for different levels or grade boundaries;
 - Use of official exam or grade criteria with older students;

3. **Feedback and Target Setting**

- Students create and complete feedback sheet for other students or themselves and focus on areas for improvement;

Appendix 7: **Formative Feedback**

Characteristics of Effective Feedback

- feedback is more effective if it focuses on the task, is given regularly and while still relevant;
- feedback is most effective when it confirms that students are on the right track and when it stimulates correction of errors or improvement of a piece of work;
- suggestions for improvement should act as “scaffolding” i.e. students should be given as much help as they need to use their knowledge;
- students should be helped to find alternative solutions if simply repeating an explanation continues to lead to difficulties;
- opportunities need to be provided for students to improve on earlier efforts;
- feedback on progress over a number of attempts is more effective than feedback on performance treated in isolation;
- the quality of dialogue in feedback is important;
- students need to have the skills to ask for help and the ethos of the school should encourage them to do so;
- grades, marks, scores and ticks have little effect on subsequent performance.

Examples of Written Formative Feedback

- comments should refer to previous set criteria;
- start with a positive comment; advice on how to achieve targets should be given: e.g. ‘You need to ...’ ‘You can do this by ...’;
- teacher menu of comments displayed on board or OHP. Students record comments relevant to them;
- stars and wishes (positive comments and target);
- WWW and EBI (what went well and even better if);
- What’s hot and what’s not;

Examples of Oral Formative Feedback

- teacher-student interviews, especially valuable with coursework drafts. Students record two targets from discussion;
- student-student discussion. Students record two targets from discussion;
- teacher menu delivered verbally. Students record two points for development in their work;
- Use phrases such as ‘I really liked... but have you thought about...’;