

ASSESSMENT POLICY
(Assessment for Learning)

Who is this policy for?	All staff and therapists working in the nursery, school and/or Mechina
Policy date:	Feb 2026
Date of next review:	Feb 2028
Who is responsible for monitoring and evaluating this policy?	Headteacher, Nursery Manager, Senior teachers
Signed off Date: Governing Body	Jan 2026

Please read this policy in conjunction with the following policies: Curriculum (Early Years, Complex Needs, Semi-Formal), English as a Second Language, Equal Opportunities and Diversity, Homework, Literacy, PSHE and RSE, Special Educational Needs Policy, Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils, Teaching and Learning and 14-19.

Assessment at Side by Side (SBS) is not seen as an end in itself; its main purpose is to support teaching and learning by identifying what pupils already know and what they can do, and what their next steps should be. Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning and should be evident in every lesson. SBS follow an Assessment for Learning approach (see appendix 2 for more details).

As part of the assessment process and the schools' planning cycle (medium and short term), the teachers will clearly identify what they want to assess and how this should be recorded in a systematic way that will support the pupils' future learning needs and further informs the teachers whilst planning their sessions during the term.

The senior management team will ensure staff are suitably trained in and supported with implementing the objectives of this policy, as well as making sure the availability of the appropriate resources to do so.

By assessing pupils accurately, consistently and recording key information we will:

- Enable teachers and support staff to make accurate and effective judgements about their pupils' attainment and the progress they are making to inform future planning.
- Build a clear picture of each pupil's skills, knowledge, understanding and approaches to learning.
- Identify each pupil's strengths, and priority areas for future learning
- Identify an appropriate curriculum for each pupil
- Identify 'next steps' for each pupil and express these as clear learning objectives
- Identify the progress made in individual lessons or series of lessons
- Evaluate the progress that each pupil is making over time

- Evaluate and improve the teaching strategies used with each pupil
- Support pupils, where appropriate, to monitor their own learning
- Identify, celebrate and share achievement.
- Use the information gathered to inform the pupil's Assessment of Learning review.
- Provide parents and professionals (incl. external) with accurate information about their pupil's attainment and progress.

Assessment Resources

Regular Whole Organisation Monitoring – Systems used to record data

- EYFS – B-Squared Connecting Steps
- School – B-Squared Connecting Steps/Evisense

Updated Annually – reviewed through the year through the Annual Review Cycle

Teacher Monitoring

Early Years

- Nursery (All) – Observations, Wow moment, Informal assessment
- Teacher Plans
- Nursery (SEN) – MDT Assessment and Baseline and monitoring

School

- RWI Assessments – termly assessments for phonics
- Teacher Curriculum Planning
- PSP and Therapy Target monitoring
- Formal Assessments as required – SLT, OT, PT
- Accredited Programmes (14 – 19) – e.g. Pearson's, ASDAN
- Evisense (Complex Needs Classes, weekly)

Assessment Techniques

The teaching staff will vary the assessment methods to reflect the pupils' wide range of abilities and learning styles. These could include observational, dynamic, questioning, photographic, incidental observations etc.

For pupils with significant medical needs, degenerative conditions and/or challenging behaviour where assessment is more difficult, the teacher will identify different ways to measure progress e.g. effective ways to elicit responses, the behaviour systems in place to enable the pupil to access learning etc. We also use the Engagement Steps framework within B-Squared, a tool targeted towards assessing students with complex needs.

Pupil participation in their own learning

- Pupil friendly learning objectives displayed whole class or individually
- Where appropriate, pupil self-assess against learning objective.

Marking – As part of the assessment of the pupils learning it is the responsibility of the class teacher and supported by the teaching assistants/key workers to mark the pupils' work or their photographic evidence.

- All work should be dated
- Assessment should link to the key learning objective of the activity
- Level of support required to achieve the outcome (see guidance below)
- Where appropriate, the teacher will identify, together with the pupil their Next Steps. This might be to make the work more challenging, review previous work to consolidate, or to break down current learning objectives into smaller steps to enable success.

Guidance:

Completing task independently

It is very important that all staff are working in a consistent manner in terms of evaluating pupil progress and particularly in how as a school how we define when a pupil has completed a task independently.

For a pupil to be able to **complete a task independently** they should not require any verbal, visual or physical prompts. Although positive encouragement to help motivate them where no direct support for the completion of the activity can still be defined as completing the task independently.

Parents

We aim to involve parents in their children's learning and share together the successes and progress they make over the school year. There should be regular contact with parents through the home/school link book, touch base meetings, parents' evening, parent coffee meetings, annual reviews, PSP meetings, Wellbeing meetings etc.

The information parents share with us with regards to significant milestones their child may reach at home is an important source of information to measure progress. It is also important that parents are involved in planning their child's next steps, goals and targets, as this will help them support their children to generalise the skills they learn in school, at home and other contexts out of school.

Pupils

We involve pupils in recognising and assessing their progress in ways that reflect their level of understanding. This varies from sharing in the celebration of achievement at the end of a lesson to identifying (with support) what they have achieved in a lesson and finally to discussing and reviewing learning objectives. Some pupils are able to understand their IEP goals and targets and the objectives set for each lesson.

Classroom staff will help them to understand the progress they are making and what they need to do next to continue learning. Some pupils are able to recognise when they have done well during a lesson, either from the outcome or because they know that staff are pleased with them. Some are able to respond to a structured system of rewards that in time will enable them to understand the desired outcome.

Pupils should be given specific, honest feedback (e.g. 'You looked at your book' rather than 'good boy').

Notes:

Assessment for Learning provides the information and data to the Headteacher, SMT and trustees to inform the school development plan, strategic and resource priorities.

Annual reviews occur throughout the school year. This is a key event with regards to monitoring pupils' progress across all areas of learning and communication with parents.

Appendix 1

Assessment for Learning Cycle

We continuously ensure parents are informed on how our provision has a positive impact, and the outcomes are good for all our pupils. We do this through a variety of ways, including:

- **Link books**-For non-verbal pupils/pupils with specific needs that requires daily updates, a link book is written daily by key worker to parents informing them of all their child took part in during their day at the setting. For pupils developing their communication and speech, link books are written with the pupil's voice - pupils draw a picture of something they worked on during the day and staff comment on any thing important e.g. toileting or eating patterns.
- **Newsletter**-Keeping parent fully informed about what we do each week in our friendly weekly Newsletter, including details of key activities and lots of photographs of pupils in action.
- **Assessments-**

EY-

Once a term key workers get to 'stop and think'- plot where the pupil is on for in all areas of development, using the B-Squared assessment tool, during the pupil's Assessment week. This in turn leads to pupil's focus week where weekly plans include activities individually planned for the pupil and the targets he/she is working towards. The staff make systematic observations of each pupil's achievements, interests, and learning styles. These are then used to identify learning priorities and plan the next stages in the pupil's learning and experiences. Termly assessments are sent home, and parents are asked to give us their feedback on it.

School-

Regular teacher and LSA's meetings ensure pupils progress is reviewed, including progress against their PSP and general learning targets. Therapy targets, which often relate to social and other classroom skills are reviewed 2-3 times a year, as necessary. Levelling for Kodesh and Secular is done at the end of each school year, and will include reference to National curriculum /pre National Curriculum (NC/pre-NC) levels.

Complex Needs Classes -

Photographic and Video evidence are taken during the sessions. The photos are used in order to inform the Activity books of students (also known as scrapbooks) along with the assessment labels. Since September 2024, Side by Side has implemented Evisense - part of the B Squared assessment system - as the primary tool for formative assessment within our Complex Needs classes. This platform enables

staff to capture and record pupils' progress through annotated observations, photographs, and video evidence, aligned to individual assessment levels.

- **'Wow moments'**

EY-

are collected and collated in the pupil's personal scrap book and often copied and sent home. 'Ask me about' stickers go home regularly to encourage pupils to communicate at home about some special parts of their day at the nursery.

School-

Pupil achievement is celebrated through reward systems, stickers, feedback to home etc.

- **Touch Base/Parent Evenings**-in the Early Years, parents are called in once a term for a Touch Base meeting/parents evening, to discuss the work we are doing with their child. This is also a wonderful opportunity for parents to share areas they would like us to focus on and include in the child's targets. Across the school, parents evening occurs annually. There are also other opportunities to meet with parents/speak to them over the phone, to discuss pupils progress. This will include during Therapy Weeks where the therapists will make contact with parents.
- **Annual reviews**- in addition to assessments, reviews and monitoring, Pupils with EHCP's have Annual Reviews where parents meet with anyone involved in their child's care during a round table discussion of their child's progress.
- **PSPs**- PSPs are written and updated once a term in the EY and twice a year in the school, and intervention is reviewed on a needs basis. Input from LSA's, class teacher and SENCO's are sought, as well as our in-house EP and/or other external professionals, where necessary. Parents are also given the opportunity to contribute to the new targets. PSPs are also sent home to parents who are encouraged to work on the same targets at home.
- **Annual Reports**-At the end of each school year a detailed report is sent home to parents on all areas of learning, including kodesh and relevant therapy progress. The report includes a brief comment on each area of development. The pupil's strengths and areas for development.
- **Parents Access** -We believe in the importance of listening to parents and regular communication, and we value their views. Our staff are happy to share and give parents access to their child's records/PSP at any time.

Appendix 2

Assessment for Learning (Staff Guidance)

It is key that teachers understand the meaning and purpose of AfL and so understand how to make best use of it to the benefit of learners. Presently there appears to be some confusion about the difference between AfL and Assessment of Learning.

Assessment **for** Learning (AfL) aims at improving learning

Assessment **of** Learning aims at ensuring accountability (of schools and teachers)

AfL uses formative assessment to help understand and plan to meet the individual needs of learners.

'Formative assessment describes all those processes by which teachers and learners use information about student's achievement to improve their achievements. So it's about using information to adapt your teaching, to adapt the work of your pupils to put the learning back on track ... to make sure the learning is proceeding in the right direction and to support that learning. So it's what happens when you don't just lecture students and rattle through the material and then ask them if they understood OK.' Dylan Wiliam, Nov 2006

Key questions relating to the pupil

How well are you doing?

What progress has s/he made?

What does s/he need to do now?

Formative Assessment: -

- Tends to be forward looking and part of the learning process which is ongoing and continuous. The information is used as an aid to further the pupils' progress.
- Mainly used to diagnose needs, to provide feedback to help learners learn and to help teachers improve teaching.
- Casts teacher in the role of facilitator.
- Favours the use of classroom assessment planned as part of the lesson.

- Tends to take more time, is relative to individual pupils and is less easily generalised and more subjective.

Summative Assessment is mainly about accountability

Key questions relating to the pupil

How good are you?

Is s/he at level 'X' yet?

Can he do his 6 times table?

Summative Assessment:

- Tends to be backward looking helping staff when they come to an end of a learning process, it indicates present or past achievements.
- Mainly used to provide information to others about how much learners have learned for certification and accountability.
- Casts teacher in the role of judge.
- Favours the use of formal standardised tests, usually devised and sometimes scored by someone other than the teacher. These are short, cheap and easy to score, but usually lack validity, especially when used for accountability purposes.

It is important for teachers to recognise that feedback is a give and take process between staff and learners, not only do teachers and support staff need to find the most appropriate and effective ways of giving feedback they must also accept feedback from their learners. In a special school the feedback from learners may be less apparent and it is usually not as simple as asking learners if they understand, have learned something or a question to test knowledge. Feedback may be by a smile, showing interest, engagement in the activity, asking a question, pointing, showing excitement etc. but all can be most helpful in AfL and essential parts of good teaching.

Staff (teaching and support) should be encouraged to consider.

- The way that they ask questions
- The way that they respond to learners
- Classroom routines
- The type and range of tasks and activities that learners undertake.

Some suggestions to assist AfL in the classroom.

- Leave more 'wait time' after asking a question – remember the 6 second rule!

- Allow and enable learners to revisit and ask questions or even give answers at a later time
- Do not just correct incorrect answers, give other learners opportunities to try (but never embarrass the pupil who tried but got it 'wrong')
- Occasionally changing the 'hands up before answering' rule to 'hands up only to ask a question'
- Ask the class for a display of thumbs up or down to check for understanding after an explanation;
- Use collaborative learning techniques such as pairing, sharing; learning together
- Self-assessment e.g.: choosing smiley face (happy; straight mouth; sad); thumbs up/down; telling what they learnt (using own method of communication) etc to assess how well they think they did
- Peer assessment using similar techniques as for self-assessment, this also aids social interaction and learning to give messages in a kindly manner

Areas for Consideration

- Use AfL knowledge to build more individualised learning experiences and so more teaching of individuals rather than whole classes undertaking the same task/activity
- Information sharing time for teachers and support staff which could increase joint planning and so develop delivery