

**Saint John Houghton Catholic Voluntary Academy**

**Assessment Policy for the year 2016-2017**

**Last reviewed: October 2016**

**This policy will be reviewed annually during Term 6**

**Overall the purpose of assessment is to improve standards, not merely to measure them  
(Ofsted 1998)**

**The quality of assessment has a significant impact on attitudes to learning and on attainment in schools by stimulating and challenging students to work hard and by encouraging teachers to focus on how to improve the learning of individual students  
(Ofsted: Good assessment in secondary schools 2003)**

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## Section 1 Introduction

1.1 Assessment is the range of activities through which we come to know about the abilities and achievements of our students and the extent of the knowledge, skills and understanding that they have developed. It is the vehicle by which we can advise students (and others) of their progress, their targets and how to close the gap that might exist between their targets and level of attainment. It is an integral part of effective learning and teaching. This policy, which sets out the rationale for assessment arrangements in our Academy, has been based on consideration of statutory responsibilities placed on schools, current practice and evidence from research that is commonly accepted. This policy applies across both Key Stages 3 and 4.

### 1.2 Related Documents

- Guidance on Monitoring Student Progress and Reporting to Parents (Appendix 1)
- Subject Schemes of Work
- Guidance on Controlled Assignments
- Homework Policy
- Learning and Teaching Policy
- Literacy Policy and Strategies to Support Assessment for Learning

1.3 Positive feedback and the use of praise: Underlying this assessment policy is the school's belief that praise and a positive approach to the students is one of the major factors in helping them to make progress. It is expected that teachers implement the school's Positive Behaviour Policy in their classrooms at all times as well as finding other ways to praise and reward the students who work hard. It is only from this perspective that critical comments can be usefully made.

## Section 2 Rationale

2.1 Assessment serves three fundamental purposes: -

1. To help students learn
2. To help teachers teach more effectively and to adopt a more personalised approach to the needs of their students
3. To provide relevant and accurate information about attainment for students, parents, teachers and others (e.g., to decide on student groupings or provide relevant careers advice).

2.2 It is more helpful to regard the nature of assessment in two ways:-

- Assessment **for** learning (formative assessment, serving purposes 1 and 2): this involves the continuous use of classroom assessments to improve learning
- Assessment **of** learning (summative assessment, serving purpose 3): measures what learners know or can do at a particular point in time

**We recognise the great importance that formative assessment has on motivation, self-esteem and learning.**

2.3 This Policy provides the framework for all school assessment practice, whilst recognising that different assessment strategies will be appropriate at different times in various areas of the curriculum. Each subject area will develop assessment policies and practices, which are consistent with school policy. Schemes of Work for each subject will specify appropriate assessment opportunities and methods.

### **Section 3: Assessment for Learning**

3.1 The details of how and when formative assessment will take place are specified in all published schemes of work. Lesson planning will identify opportunities for mini-reviews during individual lessons.

3.2 To ensure that assessment is used to help students learn effectively, the following features will be evident in classroom practice.

#### **3.2.1 Involving students in their learning**

Teachers will:

- Inform students of their targets based upon the KS2 entry levels and Y7 Cognitive Ability Tests (CATs)
- Explain the reasons for the lesson or activity and share the learning objectives and learning outcomes
- Share the specific assessment criteria with students and, as appropriate, parents; making sure that these criteria can be easily understood by all.
- Relate achievement in the lesson to specific targets and expected levels of progress.
- Help students to understand what they have done well and what they need to develop
- Show students how to use assessment criteria to assess their own work
- Provide regular opportunities for self and peer assessment
- Use effective questioning techniques involving all pupils, which give the teacher feedback on the current level of understanding

#### **3.2.2 Modelling quality**

Teachers will:

- Share examples of work with students so that they can see the standards they are aiming for
- Use examples of work to highlight the ways that assessment criteria are met
- Encourage students to review examples of work that do not meet the assessment criteria
- Include in their teaching activities designed to model the necessary skills

#### **3.2.3 Giving feedback to students on their work**

This is an essential element in assessment for learning. Teachers will give regular, effective feedback to students that:

- Focuses on the task and learning objective
- Indicates what is good and which aspects need further improvement
- Relates the achievement in the task to subject targets and expectations
- Suggests the next steps students could take to improve their work
- Helps students to find alternative solutions
- Takes every opportunity to teach literacy and numeracy

Teachers will give students oral feedback, maybe involving a discussion whenever possible, since it this can be as effective as written feedback.

### **3.2.4 Marking Books**

- Students' books should be marked by the teacher every 8-10 lessons. This takes account of the differing number of lessons per week across subjects. Whilst not every piece of work has to be closely marked (for example, class notes or rough work) it should be clear that the teacher has seen the work.
- There should also be evidence of reflection on the part of the student arising from the marking – 'corrections', a small section of the work re-done in the light of the teacher's comments, a question attempted for a second time.
- Work-especially extended writing- should also be marked for literacy in line with the Literacy policy.
- At GCSE level, controlled assessment and exam practice questions should be marked and annotated in line with the exam board's instructions and grade level descriptors. Other work should be marked with a comment an 'improvement' comment and there should be evidence of reflection.
- Where online work is used, there should still be some discussion of areas for improvement with the student.
- The presentation of work is important in so far as the student's book should be a developing and readable resource which they can use for revision and more importantly to document their progress.

### **3.2.5 Self-assessment**

Students will be given opportunities on a routine basis to learn by assessing their own work. Students will be encouraged to:

- Reflect on their own work
- Identify the standard they are trying to achieve
- Have high aspirations
- Think about how to bridge the gap between aspiration and achievement
- Admit problems without the risk of losing self-esteem
- Take time to work problems out for themselves
- Consider a number of possible solutions before deciding on a course of action

Teachers are important in this process as opportunities need to be planned into Schemes of Work and assessment criteria shared with students in a suitable format. However, peers can be effective in taking on the role of critical friend and will inevitably enhance their own understanding as a result of this practice.

### **3.2.6 Peer assessment**

Students will be given opportunities on a routine basis to learn by assessing the work of their peers, both within the classroom and beyond.

- Within the classroom students will be encouraged to work co-operatively with their peers in assessing their work.
- There could be whole class peer assessment activity guided by the teacher to explain how marks / levels have been awarded.

- There should also be opportunities for wider peer assessment, with the use of exemplar material from exam boards.

Teachers should reflect on the seating arrangements in their classrooms to ensure that peer assessment is carried out in a reflective rather than self-congratulatory or over-critical manner.

## **Section 4: Assessment of Learning**

### **4.1 Assessment Opportunities**

The School will create formal summative assessment opportunities, such as internal examinations, at appropriate times of the year. These are outlined on the assessment calendar. Other summative assessments will be identified in subject schemes of work. The attainment data will be used as the basis for monitoring student progress via the school's Go4 Schools data system which informs line management reports, reviewing of student targets and reporting to parents. There should be a significant milestone task which provides the evidence for each progress check and allows standardisation across the Subject Area. Students should be aware of their target before each piece of work and understand how they have met, or failed to meet, this level.

### **4.2 Methods**

A range of assessments will be used by subject teachers, which will fit the purpose of the assessment and provide data which is valid, precise and reliable: e.g. past questions used at GCSE should be marked using the relevant mark schemes and moderation of some of these tasks at subject level will ensure rigour. All work completed by other year groups should also be moderated within departments during the year.

### **4.3 Levels**

Attainment will be assessed using the Saint John Houghton points system which will broadly correlate with the new GCSE grades 1-9. In Year 11, attainment will refer to GCSE grades in most cases, although there are separate systems in some vocational subjects. These marks convert into points at the end of the course. It is important that students have the opportunity to develop their understanding of the different levels and marks, so that they know how to make progress.

### **4.4 Records**

The School will keep a record of progress of each student, including a record of prior attainment from previous schools. Individual teachers will keep their own records of student achievement in their classes on Go4 Schools. Examples of assessed work should also be kept in departments.

### **4.5 Monitoring and Reporting Progress**

All staff will follow the School system of assessment (Go4 Schools), recording and reporting progress to parents. All staff are required to take an active role in tracking student attainment against targets and in taking necessary and appropriate intervention. Heads of departments and subjects should have an overview of the intervention strategies taking place within their area.

## 4.6 Calendar

All arrangements for assessment, recording and reporting will be agreed by the Senior Leadership Team in consultation with teaching staff. It will be published in the School Calendar at the start of each academic year. Details of key assessment points are also shared with parents.

## Section 5: Good Practice

5.1 In marking students' work, we will be guided by the following good practice:

- The purpose of marking can be formative, summative or both, but **it will be used primarily as part of assessment for learning**
- Emphasis will be placed on the **quality of feedback** given in written comments, which will be specific in indicating:
  - what is good (in relation to the assessment criteria)
  - what needs correction or what aspects need further improvement
  - (briefly) how improvements can be made
  - one or two action points (short-term targets) for next time
- Teachers will ensure that prompt and regular marking and appropriate feedback occurs in all classes and all subjects
- Marking may be carried out by teachers, peers or self; teachers will decide on an appropriate balance
- Written comments must be readable by the student
- Marking must convey that a student's work is valued and must not "deface" it

5.2 As good practice in **assessment for learning**, teachers will:

- Have confidence that every student can improve; it is good practice to set aspirational targets as well as minimum targets for some students. (See 3.2)
- Decide how and when to assess students' attainment at the same time as they plan the work
- Relate assessment to learning objectives which are shared with students
- Develop students' understanding of success criteria within each subject area
- Use a range of assessment techniques in the classroom, including observation and the use of appropriate questioning (see 3.2 and Learning and Teaching Policy).
- Put the emphasis on feedback (both oral and written) rather than grading work
- Give students the confidence and opportunities to take the action needed to improve
- Record the progress of individual students
- Adjust teaching to take account of the results of assessment
- Involve students in developing the skills required for peer and self-assessment
- Allow time for the student to improve on marked work

### 5.3 Literacy

All teachers have a responsibility to develop students' literacy skills as outlined in the school's Literacy Policy.

### Section 6: Monitoring and Evaluation

6.1 Each student has a responsibility to:

- Record their targets for each subject
- Read and take note of feedback given by teachers
- To address the suggestions for improvement
- To ask for clarification where necessary
- To participate in self-evaluation: this includes noting down any instructions / guidance given

6.2 Parents and carers have a responsibility to:

- Discuss targets with their son/daughter
- Ask for support for their son/daughter as necessary
- Keep the school informed if there are any particular reasons why their son/ daughter is finding tasks difficult

6.3 Each subject teacher has a responsibility to:

- Keep clear records. All mark books (either electronic or paper based) will contain prior achievement data for students and will include those who are in receipt of the Pupil Premium. Further group data is available on SIMS and through SISRA to all teaching staff. Records in line with the school's Behaviour Policy are also required.
- Use the data to set challenging learning targets for each student according to the school's assessment calendar
- Contribute to the subject area's systems for tracking student progress against targets, including taking appropriate action to implement intervention strategies within the classroom
- Use the data to plan for the different needs of the students they teach
- Share learning objectives for every lesson in a language that is accessible for students
- Use plenary sessions (and mini-reviews during lessons) to enable students to know what they have learnt and what they need to do next
- Ensure that students are aware of the criteria for assessment and to help students to develop the necessary skills to review their performance in their subject
- Mark and return work normally within 2 working weeks of completion.
- Make oral and / or written comments which should help students identify the strengths of their responses and show how the work could have been improved to achieve the criteria for a higher level. (See Appendix 2 Notation System)
- Participate in the standardisation of assessment and work scrutinies within the Subject Area
- Base the assessment of current working levels on identified milestone tasks
- Praise students who are meeting or exceeding their target
- Refer a student whose work continues to be unsatisfactory and are felt to be under-performing to their Subject Leader, and to implement intervention strategies within the classroom context to help address the situation (if necessary in conjunction with other colleagues), and to inform parents

#### **6.4 Subject Leaders**

Subject leaders have a responsibility to:

- Provide a Scheme of Work which clearly illustrates the range of assessment opportunities and allows students to develop a critical approach to their own learning in line with ECM
- Making sure that departmental policy is clearly stated and is contained in the departmental handbook
- Monitor the implementation of the assessment policy by subject teachers by checking data is in all mark books
- Monitoring the regular marking of work
- Ensuring that data is used to differentiate work for each class
- Monitor the policy through classroom observation, work scrutinies and student questionnaires
- Record their findings and action points on the Subject SEF
- Provide training and support for staff in assessment, recording and reporting practices which affect their particular area
- Ensure standardisation of tasks across the Subject team.
- Produce student friendly levels and grades and develop systems for sharing these with students and parents
- Develop assessment for learning strategies which are embedded in the good practice of their area and to disseminate these across the school
- Evaluate assessment tasks and strategies across their Subject area on a regular basis

#### **6.5 Leadership and Management Team**

LMT has a responsibility to:

- Maintain an overview of the assessment policy via work scrutinies, line management meetings and subject reviews
- Evaluate and review the assessment policy in line with the schedule for policy review
- Support the development of assessment for learning strategies through the Continuing Professional Development programme
- Ensure that the assessment policy is consistent with good practice and with other policies
- Produce an annual calendar of key assessment and reporting points for staff