

St Mungo's High School

St Mungo's . . . helping create confident individuals,
responsible citizens, successful learners
and effective contributors.

This is one in a series of booklets on Learning and Teaching.
For other booklets please contact the school office.



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... where
everyone's
determined
to succeed



Falkirk Council
Education Services



Formative Assessment

What do teachers think?

A staff questionnaire revealed the following -

“specific comments often have a positive effect”

“improved the quality of response from pupils”

“helps pupils understand exactly what they need to do to succeed”

“pupils are more certain of what they need to do”

“pupils are more focused”

“pupils know what they need to do”

“helps pupils retain information”

What do pupils think?

A pupil questionnaire revealed the following -

“It’s a good idea to start the lesson being told what you are going to learn”

“Knowing the success criteria helps me focus”

“Comments from the teacher allowed me to improve my grade. I went from a general grade to a credit grade”

“Feedback from the teacher was a great help”

“It is good to know what I am doing right”

“Re-doing work after being given help meant I got full marks”

“Studies show that ...the practice of formative assessment produces significant, and often substantial learning gains”

“formative assessment helps the (so called) slow learners”



Formative Assessment

Formative Assessment is about pupils and teachers working together to ensure effective learning and teaching. Class teachers are able to monitor progress and provide feedback to pupils on how to improve performance which should help raise attainment.

The success of formative assessment is based on four key elements

- Pupils being informed about what it is they are expected to know (Learning Outcomes).
- Pupils knowing what they have to do to achieve a good grade (Success Criteria).
- Using appropriate questioning techniques that engage all pupils and forces them to think and helps to develop a deeper understanding of the topics they are studying.
- Giving pupils feedback that praises what they are doing well but also re-directs them and supports them to improve performance.



Pupils learn best when they :

- Clearly understand what is expected of them.
- Know the quality of work they need to produce to achieve the grade they are aiming for.
- are given feedback that highlights what they are doing well but what they need to do to make it even better.

The benefits . . .

- Improve pupils' understanding of the subject.
- Helps to raise attainment/achievement
- Because pupils are involved in their own learning it can reduce behaviour problems.
- The most noticeable improvement can be in the attainment of the less able pupils.

What Benefits will there be?

We expect to see a number of benefits to pupils after working in these ways. It may take a little time for us to notice some of them but others will be seen quite quickly.

Some of the benefits we will be looking for are:

- Increased pupil confidence
- Greater motivation to work
- Even better results in class work
- A quicker pace of learning
- Pupils learn more effectively
- Better understanding of work covered
- Improved contributions to group work
- Children having an understanding of how they learn.
- Teaching is more focused on the needs of individual pupils

All of these add up to an even better quality of education and a more enjoyable school experience.



Using Formative Assessment Strategies

Learning Outcomes

- Pupils should know what they will be learning – tell them! This is known as WALT – “What we Are Learning Today”.
- It is good practice to write these on the board at the beginning of every lesson and pupils copying them into their jotter.

Questioning

- Research has shown that most teachers wait only 2 seconds before asking for an answer!
- Wait time – all pupils should be given time to think of an answer.
- Pupils don't raise their hands – the teacher expects everyone to be able to volunteer an answer.
- Vary questions – open and closed.
- Closed questions have a correct answer and a good way of checking if pupils remember facts or dates eg when was the last general election.

- Providing a mark is not always necessary. Pupils who get a low mark can get de-motivated and ignore any advice. Those who do well may take comfort in a good grade but ignore comments that could make it an excellent grade. This could mean the difference between achieving a B in the exam or an A!
- Not all comments need to be written. Talking to pupils about their learning can assist the teacher to gauge the depth of pupil understanding and engages pupils in the learning process and allows them to focus on the learning process.
- Positive feedback can help boost self-confidence and provides useful encouragement to pupils.
- It is essential to link feedback to the learning outcomes and success criteria.
- Class teachers should ask pupils to record the support and advice in their Student Planner. This is a useful record and allows parents to see what areas of work a pupil has to work on.



- Open questions allow for discussion and pupils have the opportunity to express an opinion. This is a good way of judging depth of knowledge – pupils have to justify a particular point of view and be able to provide solid arguments to back up what they think eg why do lower social classes suffer more ill-health and have a lower life expectancy than middle classes?
- Think, pair and share – give pupils time to think of an answer, let them discuss it with a partner and then share it with the class. This can often generate a good debate.

Success criteria

- Pupils need to know the quality of work they need to produce to do well, in an essay or test for example. This is known as WILT – “What I am Looking For”.
- Success criteria can help give a focus to the work that pupils are asked to do during the lesson or for homework.
- A good strategy to use is to provide a model answer and ask pupils to correct it. Pupils have to consider the success criteria and also provide feedback which praises the good points but also advice on improving performance. This type of exercise can work really well with groups of pupils working together



- Traffic lighting.

Once a task has been set, pupils can be split into group - those who are unsure of the task (the red group), those who think they might cope with the work and produce good work (amber) and those who are confident about their ability to cope with the task set (green). The class teacher now knows how confident each group feels and can provide support. Appropriate questioning can help gauge how well the groups are coping with the work they have been asked to do.

Providing Feedback

Correcting pupil work is extremely important for a number of reasons –

- It should be given promptly.
- Pupils need to know what they are doing well. Positive comments boosts self-confidence and encourages pupils to continue to provide high quality work.
- Advice on how to improve performance is essential.
- Class teachers should expect pupils to act on support and advice given. Pupils could be asked to re-do a piece of work or be given a similar exercise that informs the teacher if the pupil has understood the support and advice.

