

DOWN HIGH SCHOOL

ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING (AfL) POLICY

The range of strategies highlighted in ‘Assessment for Learning for KS3’ (CCEA 2007) are not new to Down High School. They have been in use as an integral part of classroom practice to varying degrees by teachers for some time.

Collectively they form a tool for improving the learning of pupils by focussing on the learning process itself rather than outcomes alone, helping them to gain a better understanding of themselves as learners and to become more confident, motivated and independent in their studies and it is for this reason that they have been grouped together under the umbrella term of ‘Assessment for Learning’. The particular emphasis placed on AfL at Key Stage 3 in the past few years has begun to produce some encouraging indications amongst junior pupils in the school.

This document seeks to build on these early successes. It aims to ensure that a shared understanding of AfL strategies and their potential benefits exists amongst staff and to promote and guide the effective, consistent use of AfL by all teachers in their lessons throughout the school.

It is envisaged that subject teachers will strive to develop their expertise in the use of AfL as part of their day-to-day teaching on an ongoing basis, referring to guidance materials on the CCEA and ‘www.nicurriculum.org.uk’ websites and seeking support from their Heads of Department when necessary.

Heads of Department will:

- Ensure that effective use of AfL is being made within their Department and that colleagues teaching their subject(s) are sufficiently equipped and supported.
- From September 2009 include, as part of the ‘Teaching and Learning’ section of their Departmental Development Plan, an overview of how AfL is being employed in their subject (using the ‘Departmental overview of AfL use’ table in the ‘Departmental Development Plan’ folder of ‘Private 5’) and an evaluation of its use and impact in the previous academic year. This should include examples of Year groups with which frequent use of AfL has been made and an outline of planned future development in areas where AfL strategies have been employed to a lesser degree.

- Ensure that appropriate AfL strategies for each topic/lesson in schemes of work for Years 8 and 9 are highlighted and in the coming year (2008-09) that the Y10 schemes are similarly adapted.
- Review and update their departmental AfL policies as practice evolves within their subject area(s).

AfL STRATEGIES

Learning as an activity is underpinned by skills which are broadly independent of lesson content and therefore common to all subject areas. The core strategies of AfL which aim to develop these transferable skills in pupils are outlined briefly below:

AfL STRATEGY	MAIN CHARACTERISTICS/FEATURES
Learning intentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written into schemes of work and communicated at the beginning and end of each lesson. • Related transferable skill(s) highlighted at beginning and end of each lesson without reference to specific lesson content.
Success criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared with pupils. • Arrived at with reference to pupil input ('negotiated'). • Linked to classroom tasks, assessment, homeworks.
Formative feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not include scores or grades. • Positive, encouraging. • Specific. • Offering clear advice on how to improve.
Questioning techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of types of questioning. • Time for pupils to think. • All pupils involved. • Open ended.
Peer assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils can see examples of work of various standards. • Promotes open, sharing, collective approach to learning. • Clear ground rules – 'safe' activity to build rather than damage self-esteem.
Self assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages pupils to reflect on their own learning. • Pupils gain deeper understanding of themselves as learners.