

LEVEL 3 CERTIFICATE IN SUPPORTING TEACHING & LEARNING **IN SCHOOLS**

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UNIT **09**



Course: Level 3 Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools (QCF)

Unit 09: Support Assessment for Learning

Unit Introduction

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This unit of Level 3 Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools introduces learners to the Assessment for Learning approach. It explains the different types of assessments that are used in schools to monitor pupil progress and evaluation, and guides the learner through a variety of assessment strategies to inform their practice.

Learning outcomes:

1

Understand the purpose and characteristics of assessment for learning

2

Be able to use assessment strategies to promote learning

3

Be able to support learners in reviewing their learning strategies and achievements

4

Be able to contribute to reviewing assessment for learning

1.1

Compare and contrast the roles of the teacher and the learning support practitioner in assessment of learners' achievements

When you are asked to compare and contrast two or more things - whether those are the roles that people in school do, or differing theories in a particular topic - you should try to identify specific areas of discussion and then pull out at least one point for each role or theory in each area to be discussed. Complete your answer with a conclusion that draws on the points you have made, that is relevant to the question that has been asked.

Teachers do not simply stand at the front of the class and tell pupils what they need to know. They also play a strong role when it comes to designing and implementing assessment. Likewise, the learning support assistant, or classroom assistant has a similar second string to their bow. Assessment is very much part of cementing pupils' learning, and in knowing the aims of the learning, why they need to learn it, where they are in terms of success around those aims, and how they can achieve the aims, pupils can be empowered to do better and better.



Roles of teachers and support practitioners.

Role of teacher in assessments

Planning lessons

The teacher plans assessments in line with national and local expectations, and delivers lessons that take the required assessments into account.

Setting learning objectives

The teacher has to set and then explain the learning aims and success criteria to pupils in a way that engages them; once this information has been passed on, the teacher also needs to check their understanding, so that all members of the class are on the same starting block.

Identify learning needs

Right at the start, and then in an on-going way throughout the lesson, the teacher has to identify the individual learning needs of the pupils, and may modify the materials to make them easier to use.

Help pupils understand when they have succeeded

By demonstrating the standards pupils need to achieve, the teacher ensures that the children in the class know explicitly what is expected of them. However, because the ways in which pupils will get to the right standards are many and varied, the teacher also needs to help them recognise and understand when they have reached the expected standard. The teacher does this by carrying out the learning activity with the children, pushing them in the right direction when they go off at a tangent, and encouraging them when they do in the expected way.

Monitor and assess achievement

Once the teacher has evaluated assessment results, it is necessary for them to deliver feedback to pupils on their results, both as a class, and to individual pupils where this is necessary or helpful. This means that pupils learn how they can improve on the work they have done, and where they deviated from requirements if they did.

Demonstrate high expectations

The demonstration of high expectations by the teacher helps to improve pupils' self-esteem. After all, if they think the teacher believes in them, they are more likely to believe in themselves. The teacher also makes it clear that he or she believes that all pupils can improve on their previous performances.

Deliver opportunities for reflection and improvement

Part of the teacher's role is in the provision of regular opportunities for children to reflect on performance, and to review their progress so that there is always an on-going commentary of pupils' work standards. The teacher also sets new targets so that pupils can continue to progress.

With the right kind of teaching with in-built reflective skills, learners can develop their own self-assessment skills so that they understand more easily by themselves what areas of their own work need to improve.

Teaching is very much a facilitation role in many ways. The material by itself may not be enough for children to learn from, but by facilitating the delivery of the material, with a mind towards the ways in which it will be assessed, teachers promote learning through a number of related techniques that lead children towards the results that they need to continue with a comprehensive learning plan.

Role of teaching assistant in assessments

Similarly to teachers, teaching and learning support assistants have a facilitation role when it comes to learning.

Providing feedback to teacher and learners

One aspect of assessment in which teaching assistants are particularly useful to the teacher is by observing and noting what individual pupils can do or what they can understand. As we learned in a previous unit, assessment is not just a blanket term for 'tests' or 'exams'. It is often an on-going process done subtly, through observations, rather than through standardised or formal tests.

Although the teacher also does a large amount of this type of observation, the presence of a classroom assistant means that it is easier to fairly assess large

numbers of pupils, and in discussing the results and observations, a wider picture can be gained from more than one opinion.

This observation has two roles: the first is that the teaching assistant can report what has been observed to the teacher, in terms of pupils' progress and their participation. The second is that the teaching assistant can provide feedback directly to the pupils.

Because teaching assistants tend to work amongst pupils, rather than from the front of the class, they are well placed to identify areas that individual pupils do well at, as well as those they find more difficult. Helping the teacher assess what each pupil knows is a very strong part of the classroom assistant's role.

Supporting peer and self-assessment

Helping pupils check their own work and matching it up to what the teacher has asked them is another area where teaching assistants can help. By noting pieces of work that are clearly on track and pointing out why, the teaching assistant helps pupils learn what is being looked for, and this better enables them to aim more powerfully towards where they need to be.

Guiding learning and helping pupils understand what is needed

Classroom assistants can also help individual pupils by talking to them in depth about what they will need to do in order to attain the things that have been asked them. They help them understand the learning aims and success criteria if they seem unsure, and are immediately on hand to discuss problems if and when they arise.

These points are not the only roles the teacher and classroom assistant play in assessment for learning, and you may be able to come up with others that fit the bill. In comparing them, you may find that the roles differ quite strongly in some areas, and are similar in others.

For example, the teacher plans lessons based on outcomes that pupils need to achieve, but although the learning support assistant does not plan lessons directly, they may input at the planning stage, using their experience and understanding of what is needed, and their knowledge of the individual pupils.

The role of the teaching assistant is to support and observe children, assess their progress, and give feedback, while the teacher uses the information gleaned from observation and feedback to set new targets.

1.2

Summarise the difference between formative and summative assessment

Assessments in school fall under one of two categories: formative assessment, and summative assessment.

The aims of formative and summative assessments

These two types of school assessment have two different aims and two different ways of achieving those goals:

Summative assessments

- Summative assessments aim to evaluate pupil learning. They tend to take place at the end of a unit of work, and are carried out by comparing the results produced by pupils against some standard or benchmark that has been either nationally or locally decided upon.

Summative assessments are often referred to as 'high-stakes' assessment, because their results tend to have impact on a pupil's progression to the next stage and will refer to some kind of points system that adds up to the measurable achievement attained by a pupil over the course of the year.

Summative assessment is based on evidence of learning, such as on standardised test results that essentially prove pupils' attainment levels.

Formative assessments

- Formative assessment aims to monitor pupil learning, in order to give on-going feedback to pupils that can be used by the teacher to improve delivery of lessons, and by pupils to improve how they learn.

Formative assessments also assist pupils in the identification of their own strengths and weaknesses, so they can target areas of learning that need further work.

Formative assessments also help teaching staff and support staff understand which areas individual pupils - and whole classes - find more difficult, and mean that staff can address any problems straight away. It means they do not have to wait for pupils to produce test results at the end of the year in order to be able to see how everyone is doing.

Formative assessments are usually referred to as 'low-stakes' assessment; they are not necessarily measurable in a standard way, and will not be affiliated with any kind of points system.

Formative assessment is differentiated, meaning that it looks at how pupils work in terms of their individual abilities, and adapts activities that they can do.

Digital Skills Challenge

Formative Assessment	Summative Assessment
Checks pupils' understanding	Shows knowledge
Guides next steps in learning	Evaluates pupil learning at the end of an instructional unit
Fed into a model of teaching that allows for responsiveness to pupils' needs	Results in grades

Differences between formative and summative assessments.

Types of summative assessment

Most people are familiar with the different forms of summative assessment. For example, GSCE exams, SATS, and even end-of-unit tests are summative assessments. High-stakes assessments have consequences for pupils and teachers. For example, they often come with grades attached to the results, and

those grades may mean that the pupil's progression may be directed towards the most appropriate way for them to learn.

Types of formative assessment

Formative assessments can be carried out in a variety of ways. One of the most important things to bear in mind when designing a formative assessment is that you must ensure the assessment is valid. Validity, when discussing assessment, is ensuring that the activities assess what is intended.

For example, asking pupils to tell you the details of the water cycle will tell you whether or not they understand what happens to rain and how the seas are maintained, but it will not tell you whether or not they can do long multiplication.

Some types of formative assessments might include checking pupils' understanding during an activity to ensure that they know why they are doing the task, not just following instructions. This could be done through asking them open questions, such as 'what's the water actually for, in this experiment?'

Watching and listening to what pupils are saying as they do tasks, and seeing how they go about it, is another type of formative assessment, and you can either ask them questions, draw out discussion amongst the class, or just passively observe as they work.

Analysing results of activities, and marking work alongside children to help make any difficulties clearer and more approachable, is all part of the assessment for learning technique. Working in this way means that staff can then discuss with the children any difficulties or errors, and can assess their achievements against the outcomes as a benchmark.

1.3

Explain the characteristics of assessment for learning

The phrase 'assessment for learning' is not just a clever way to say 'exam', or 'evaluation'. It is the name of an approach used in teaching and education. Assessment for learning is the process of looking for, and interpreting evidence to be used by teachers and pupils to work out where the pupils are in their learning, where they need to be, and how best to get them there.

Assessment for learning has some particular characteristics or features that underpin its aims.

Problem Solving Challenge



Assessment for learning.

Assessment for learning characteristics

The most important thing to remember throughout any assessment or teaching practice is that every task and activity in teaching and learning should provide the opportunity for assessment.

Clarity of goals and success criteria

One of the main features of assessment for learning is that staff should be very clear about the goals of the activity or task, and they should clearly explain the success

criteria. Success criteria are the way in which pupils' learning will be judged, so it would be very unfair to set them off on a task without telling them how it will be marked. Part of that clarity is to do with using language that pupils understand. Talking over their heads, using jargon, unfamiliar acronyms, or any other language that makes it harder for them to understand is not acceptable and is patently a pointless exercise.

The right style of questioning

Questioning techniques, such as using open ended questions, and asking about what they know in a way that is designed to get relevant answers, are also key features of assessment for learning. The right types of questions will provide staff with assessment opportunities; the wrong kind will make it quite hard to work out what each child knows.

Constructive feedback that helps them

The constructive, highly specific feedback that comes with assessment for learning is also a very important feature. The feedback will help them improve, and should also motivate them, especially in showing them the way they need to go to get better.

Time to absorb learning

Part of assessment for learning is found in the opportunity to give them time to allow what they have learned to sink in. Absorption of learning is an important part of ensuring that it sticks in their minds, and if they are to retain the information, they need time to let that happen.

Reflection and self-monitoring

Reflection in education is as important for pupils as it is for staff. By encouraging pupils to reflect on the things they have learned, what they could do better, and why they did something wrong or right, especially through their own self-assessment, and occasionally through peer assessment, they will be better equipped to be self-

motivated. This becomes very important later on when they will be asked to carry out exams and other more standardised work.

All responses have value

One of the best characteristics of assessment for learning is in the way it demonstrates to pupils that every answer is valid; every response they give to a query about what they are doing, has value. Whether it is their opinion, or something they know, even mistakes are valued, because they are all teaching opportunities.

Promoting confidence

In encouraging pupils to explain their reasoning or explain the way that they have chosen to do an activity - in a safe environment where no one is going to tell them they have done it wrong - their self-esteem and confidence get a chance to grow and improve. The small steps-big results identification process, where they are shown what to do in order to make improvements to their own work, also helps to build confidence; people who know what to do are generally confident in their ability to do so.

1.4

Explain the importance and benefits of assessment for learning

Many people have had bad experiences at exam time, so it is easy to understand that the thought of assessment may put people off wanting to learn at all. The pressures to cram information into your brain, the stress that comes when you do not feel sure that you know enough; all these things add up to exams being a pretty difficult time of life.

However, assessment for learning has a very special effect, and that is one of the reasons it is now so widely used in primary schools and secondary learning. Assessment for learning techniques appear to assist with summative assessment results; they actually help pupils do better with graded exams.

In fact, most problems that are identified as being connected to assessment for learning has more often been attributed to unfavourable conditions, such as a lack of time or space; external constraints, such as health and safety rules or limits to what teachers can do with pupils in the given time; or simply a misapplication - or weak use - of the assessment for learning principles.



Benefits of assessment for learning for pupils.

Benefits of assessment for learning for pupils

Pupil attainment

Pupils achieve more through assessment for learning. Although the evidence for this is not entirely sound - improved attainment may be due to more factors than a change in the techniques around assessment - it appears that pupils not only attain and achieve more during the school year through assessment for learning, but older pupils in secondary schools appear to do better in summative assessments too.

Improved relationship with learning

Not only do children do better in their attainment of learning and knowledge through assessment for learning; they also become more active as learners, seeking out further knowledge, and finding out more information. Classroom interaction becomes more engaged, as children learn that they are in a safe environment where no one is going to laugh at them if they get the answer wrong; no answer needs to be 'wrong' - incorrect assumptions or opinions based on incorrect information can be included in the explanation of what is correct.

Confidence increases

Children in a safe environment, where they feel of worth, and where what they think is clearly valued, tend to increase in confidence. Increased confidence results in pupils who are prepared to find out more information, discuss ideas and concepts in class, and are more likely to be self-motivated when it comes to their learning. This is amplified with the use of self- and peer-assessment, which requires the full engagement of pupils in the classroom. Learning ceases to be a passive activity, and becomes something that pupils actively do.

Self-responsibility in learning

Because pupils are more active in their own education, they are empowered because they have a bigger awareness of what is expected of them and what they are supposed to achieve. With this knowledge, they stop comparing themselves to other students of different abilities, and obtain a better understanding of the way in which they learn, and how they are progressing. This is done through understanding the learning goals and success criteria. All of this improves their responsibility towards their own education, and they get to monitor and check their own progress through self-assessment.

Motivational improvements

Because there is a reduction in pupils being compared to each other and in competition in the classroom, children become more motivated to understand their own progress and to compete against themselves. Comparison has been shown to be a strong factor in undermining pupils who have a low attainment level, so assessment for learning tends to improve their confidence and self-esteem, which in turn improves their motivation for learning all round.

1.5

Explain how assessment for learning can contribute to planning for future learning carried out by:

- the teacher
- the learners
- the learning support practitioner

Assessment for learning is an on-going activity; children do not just take a test and then move on from that. The information obtained from assessment can therefore be used to plan for future learning, and this does not just refer to the planning that teachers do around lessons. Assessment involves the pupil, the teacher, and any support staff working with the class, and the contribution made by assessment to this process is slightly different for each role.



Learning to plan.

Teacher planning

Differentiated learning

One of the ways in which assessment for learning can help with the way in which the teacher plans for future learning is that in knowing where the pupils are up to at any given time, the teacher can include a variety of differentiated activities in the lesson plans. These ensure that all the pupils can achieve the outcomes, even if it is in different ways.

Identifying levels of learner responsibility

As pupils become more engaged in their own learning, and more empowered through regular, constructive feedback, they take on more and more responsibility for their own learning. Through assessment for learning, teachers are more able to identify when pupils are ready to take this responsibility, and to feed it by offering them more tasks that encourage this.

Setting realistic targets

In the same way that assessments and learning activities are differentiated, through assessment for learning, teachers become better able to identify realistic targets for individual children according to each child's stage of learning and development, and to their abilities.

Easier group working

Again, the differentiated aspects of assessment for learning mean that the teacher is able to identify which children have similar abilities, and can then plan for them to work together in groups, because they are more likely to work at a similar pace.

Learner planning

Understanding their own progress

As children learn how to self-assess and assess the work done by their peers, they quickly figure out if they have been able to meet the success criteria because they can match their own work to that of their peers. They can then take steps to practice or improve what they did not know.

Improving work

Because of the regular feedback from the teacher, the learning support assistant, and their peers, children quickly figure out how to approach their learning and what work in which areas will improve their attainment.

Asking for help when needed

Some children struggle to ask for help when they need it, and part of this is in not knowing when help is needed. The improved confidence of pupils linked with their clear understanding of the success criteria and learning outcomes means that they are better able to identify when they need help, and are less shy about asking for it.

Improved learning strategies

Again, because of the feedback they get from everyone around them at school, children are better placed to understand when their learning strategies are not working the way they should. They become more independent when they identify issues with the methods they have used to learn things, and can review and amend them so that they become more successful.

Did you know?

Since teaching assistants were introduced into schools in the early 2000s, teachers have been very positive about their presence. However, the effectiveness of teaching assistants is sometimes reduced due to the fragmentary way in which they can be deployed around schools, so it is thought that teaching assistants are best utilised as dedicated staff members working with one class consistently.

Learning support assistant planning

Improved styles of feedback

The feedback uncovered by the learning support assistant enables not just the teacher and pupils, but also informs the assistant's way of working. It makes it easier to see when questioning techniques are not so useful or effective, and means that the assistant is able to work out better styles of questioning that work for the different learning styles and abilities found in the classroom.

Better strategies for problem solving

Through understanding the different learning styles and abilities of pupils, the classroom assistant can show pupils different strategies and approaches for the same problem, so that it doesn't matter what type of learner each child is, what matters is that they are able to grasp the concepts and information in a way that works for them.

Making time

Because assessment for learning shows staff which pupils are less able and which can forge onwards, it means that learning support assistants can plan more time into certain activities, or particular parts of an activity, to give less able children a chance to go back over key points of the lesson.

2.1

Obtain the information required to support assessment for learning

Before you use any kind of strategies to support assessment for learning in your class, there are some specific pieces of information you will need in order to be effective.

You will need:

- The learning objectives at the core of each activity.
- The learning goals specific to each child; that is, the personalised learning goals.
- The success criteria for each activity.
- The assessment opportunities and any strategies that are relevant to your role during the learning activities.



Support assessment for learning.

This information supplies you with all the information you need to be able to assess the different children in your class.

Knowing the learning objectives means that you understand the point of the exercise, what the children are supposed to learn, and you are able to guide children if they become unsure as to what is expected of them.

Understanding the personalised learning goals for individuals means that you can make the most out of each learning activity and ensure that they achieve their goals even when the activity does not directly and specifically aim to produce these.

Knowing the success criteria is essential because then you can communicate to the children when they have completed the exercise or activity, and you can signpost children who have become uncertain about what they are doing.

Understanding how the assessment will happen, and what you will be doing for it means that you will be able to make valid observations that tie in with the activity and the children's learning progression in a relevant way.

For example, say you have a class of 6-year-olds, and they do a lesson of sums and maths problems. Perhaps one of the children has a personalised goal to learn how to form his numbers more carefully, but the main exercise is to do a series of simple sums, adding and subtracting.

The learning goals are that pupils should be able to add and subtract single-digit numbers. They need to learn this, so that they can do more complicated sums with bigger numbers, and using other mathematical operators.

The success criteria are that children understand the difference between adding and subtracting, that they recognise the two maths 'signs' of + and -, and that they understand the concepts of adding and subtracting.

Assessment opportunities come as you and the teacher check the work of each child as you go. While you do that, you are also able to check the work of the child who is learning how to form his/her numbers better.

There will doubtless be many different ways in which you can assess children's work, and the teacher will usually have a good idea at the planning stage of the way in which these opportunities will take place. If, however, you have a different strategy for assessing their work, you should discuss this at the planning stage, so that during the lesson you and the teacher both work together fluidly.

2.2

Use clear language and examples to discuss and clarify personalised learning goals and criteria for assessing progress with learners

Personalised learning goals may sound like a complicated addition to the general teaching and support of any class, but in fact they place each pupil at the centre of his or her education, and ensure that the things children are taught address gaps in their knowledge and understanding, as well as teaching them new information

Personalised learning goals basically reflect the learning goals of activities, while taking into account each child's past attainment, as well as their current learning needs.

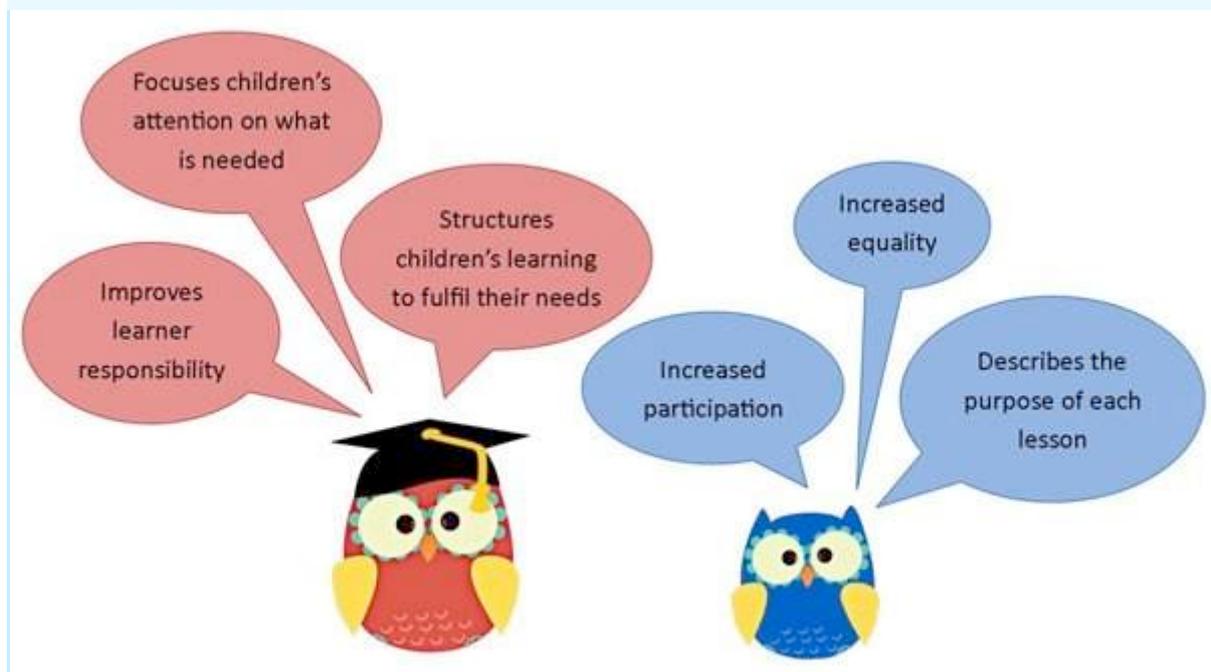
The idea behind personalised learning goals is to ensure that the successes of children, and their chances, are not limited by their socio-economic backgrounds, their disabilities, genders, or ethnicity. Rather than teaching all children in the same way, regardless of these things, personalised learning takes into account that all children are different; have different abilities and experiences of the world, and that some are more advantaged than others.

Most schools will either write out or print out each child's personalised learning goals, so that they can easily refer to them during lessons. When they have easy access to reminders as to what they know they need to learn, they are able to take more responsibility at the time for their learning.

'Quality first teaching' is a concept used by the present government to describe the teaching that stems from this personalised learning approach. In its development, schools tend to use the strategies of questioning, modelling, and explaining.

As simple strategies for clarifying personalised learning goals, these work very well. The teacher and teaching assistants can check children's understanding around what they are doing and lead them further as they work things out for themselves, through questioning, and discuss with them the ways in which each activity stimulates their own learning objectives. They can then model what is needed in

order to show each child what they need to do. They can also explain it, in the kind of language that children of that age understand.



The point of personalised learning goals.

Modelling

More than just a demonstration of what needs to be done, modelling is effectively a case for the teacher (and assistant) thinking out loud. By talking and walking them through what needs to be done, the teacher helps children understand the underlying structures, processes and conventions of what is being taught.

Questioning

Questioning can take place at different times in the process, and can enable the teacher to see how well the children understand the concepts, as well as leading them on further, asking them to think around the topic and discover things themselves, just by thinking in a more structured and even logical way.

Explaining

When pupils are being asked to learn abstract concepts, or things that are not within their present experiences of life, they need good explanations that use the type of language they can easily understand.

In discussing, explaining, modelling, and questioning the pupils, they are encouraged to engage and participate in their own learning. This builds ownership, provides them with starting points, and enables them to move onwards and progress with their learning in a guided, but self-initiated way.

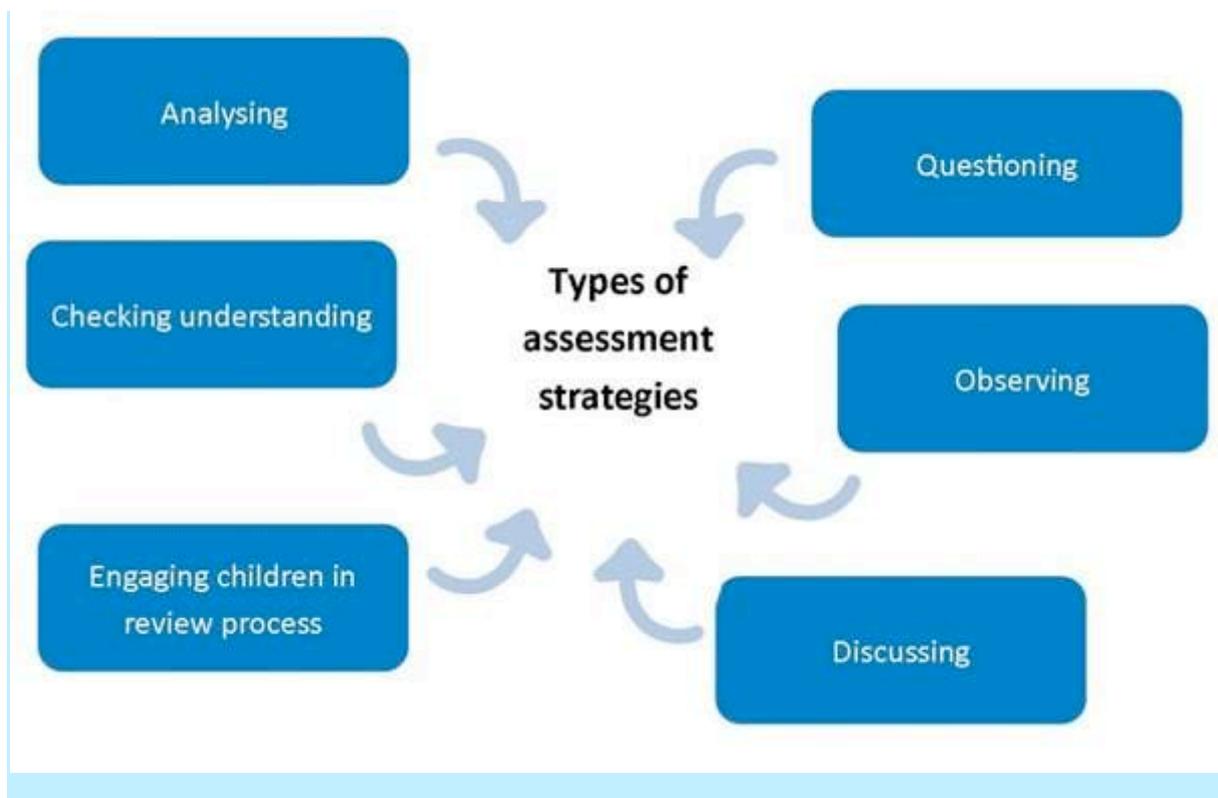
2.3

Use assessment opportunities and strategies to gain information and make judgements about how well learners are participating in activities and the progress they are making

Assessment opportunities and strategies are ways in which we draw out information that tells us how well pupils are learning.

Assessment strategies fall under about six different categories:

- Questioning
- Observing
- Discussing
- Analysing
- Checking children's understanding
- Engaging children in reviewing progress



Assessment strategies.

Questioning

In order to be able to work out the starting points of children's understanding around a topic, it is necessary to question them. This type of thing can take place at a class level, where the whole group can be involved in a discussion about the topic.

Later in the process, questioning can draw out understanding by asking children how or where they might apply the thing they have learned. It can ask them to analyse their learning, for example to show you evidence for something they have learned. Questioning also helps to synthesise their learning, by asking them to use what they have just learned to solve a problem, or to design something functional around it.

Questioning also aids their abilities to evaluate what they have learned. One question and answer can easily lead to another question, and so they are led down a particular path of understanding, in a natural way.

Observing

Watching the children in a class, and listening to their discoveries and observations helps you figure out what they know in an organic way. You can also use observation to assess individual children so that you can further support them as needed.

Discussing

Impromptu discussions, particularly when something surprising has happened during a lesson, can be very useful for cementing what they have learned. Discussion is also a good way to check their understanding, because it makes for a safe environment where the teacher or assistant can lead the discussion, guide wrong answers in the right direction, and can diagnose and mitigate misunderstandings.

Analysing

By marking children's work with them, it is possible to bring them with you on their own journey of learning, showing them the right way to answer questions they get wrong, and keeping the feedback immediate and easy to understand for them. Discussions -both group, and individually - can also help with analysis, and enable you to build a picture of their understanding, as well as correcting mistakes immediately.

Analysis also helps you encourage pupils to keep their learning goals in mind, and allows them to assess their own progress. When they focus their comments and observations on their own personalised learning goals, they should be praised, because that is the kind of thinking that this style of teaching attempts to draw out.

Checking children's understanding

There are many ways to check children's understanding; through discussion and questioning, but also through pop quizzes, or spontaneous questions that enable you to assess the speed of pupils' recall.

Engaging children in the reviewing process

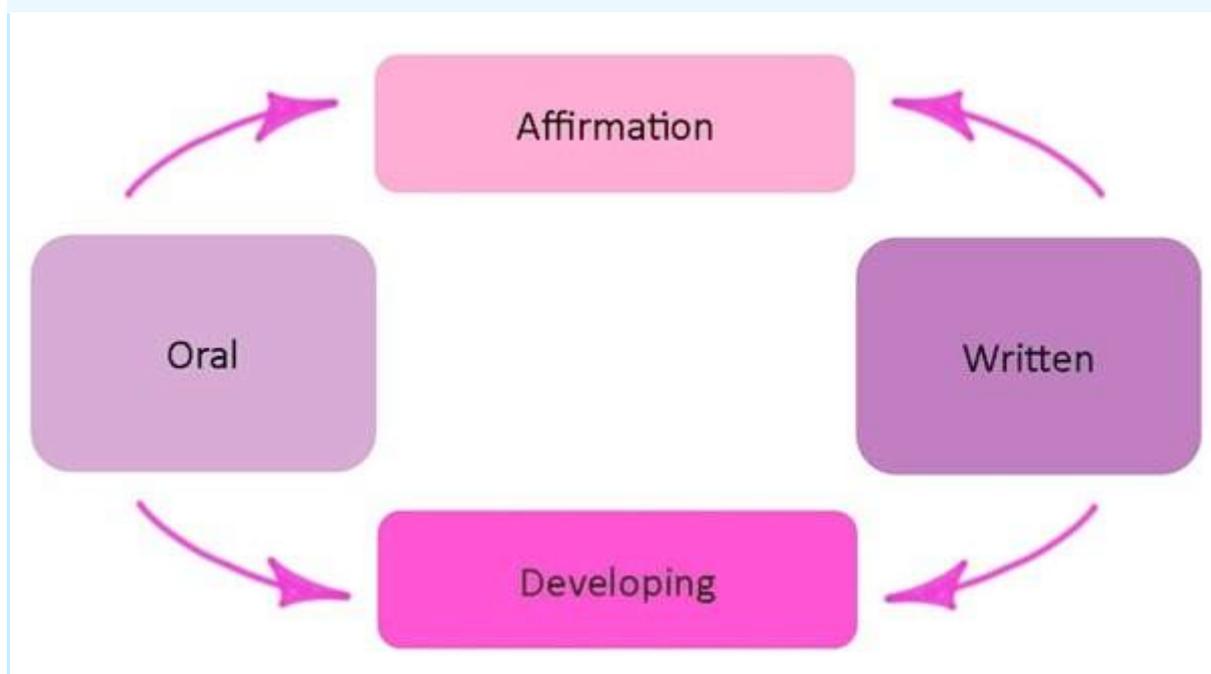
Supporting self- and peer-assessment is an important assessment strategy, because the more you empower children to direct their own participation and learning, the more able they become to take ownership and responsibility for it. Helping them identify their own successes and progress is one aspect of this.

One strategy around this is to encourage pupils to review and check their own work before handing it in. This way, if they discover for themselves that they have taken a 'wrong turn', the lesson will be better embedded for next time. Discussing their work with you or with the teacher is also a good way of encouraging them to be involved in the review process.

2.4

Provide constructive feedback to learners to help them understand what they have done well and what they need to develop

In order to understand what they have achieved, and what they still need to work on, children need constructive feedback. 'Constructive' means having a useful, or beneficial purpose. Therefore, the intent behind the feedback delivered in schools is to help children improve their learning and achieve the outcomes.



Learner feedback.

Types of feedback

Most feedback in schools falls under either oral or written feedback. These can both take the form of either affirmation feedback or developmental feedback. Affirmation feedback is where praise is delivered right away. Development feedback is where the teacher or support staff explains what to do next time in order to improve.

Oral feedback

Oral feedback can be delivered one-on-one, or to the class or group as a whole. Shared marking sessions are a good vehicle for this type of feedback, because the discussion, modelling, and analysis approaches can be used all at once, engaging the children, and delivering affirmation and development feedback together.

Written feedback

Written feedback should usually focus on one or two areas for improvement, rather than covering a child's work in comments. Most children do not take the time to read all the commentary, and in many cases they will either not understand it, or they may even be unable to read it. Giving children time to take in written feedback is good practice, and should need no more than 10 minutes or so during class time.

How to deliver constructive feedback

Feedback is not just delivered through writing or through oral means. There are subtle aspects of feedback that children also pick up on. For example, the way you stand, how attentive and engaged you are, and the language you use to deliver the feedback are all aspects of feedback delivery.

For example, if you talk about difficulty with learning in the type of language that suggests a child cannot learn by themselves, e.g. "I can see you're struggling with that. Don't worry about it, Sally will help you," you run the risk of implying that they will never get there by themselves. However, with the right guidance, enough time spent, and the employment of some useful strategies, all children can get there by themselves.

Better language to use might be things like: "It's okay, most learning happens through making mistakes. If everything was easy there would be no point in you being here to learn." The ethos that builds up around this type of language means that children experience increased self-esteem and are less worried about getting things wrong.

When giving constructive feedback, therefore, you should always employ good communication skills, and active listening as you interact with the child.

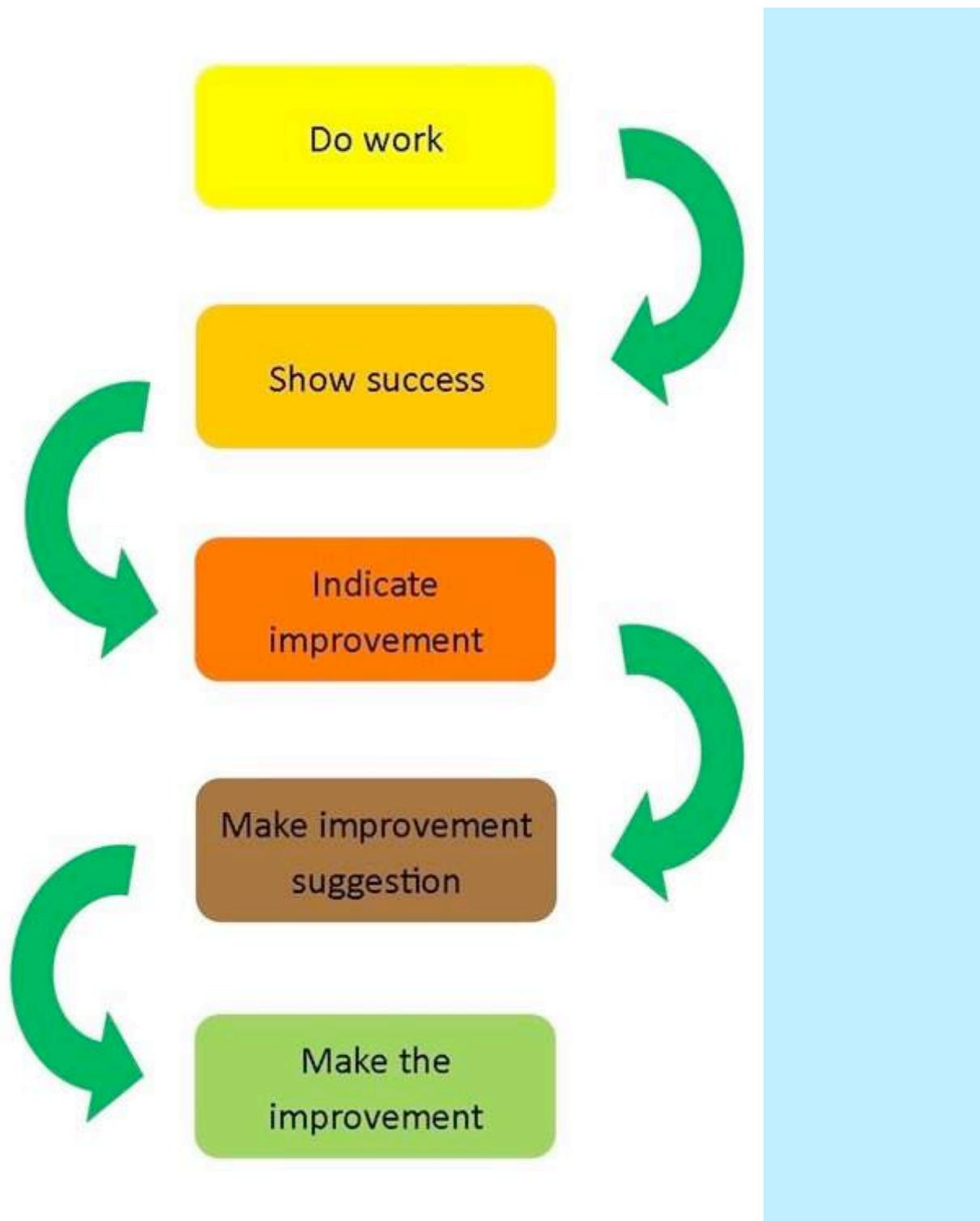
2.5

Provide opportunities and encouragement for learners to improve upon their work

When feedback is delivered to a class, either through marking and written forms, or through oral forms or discussion, opportunities and encouragement should be built in, so that children can actively improve their own work.

One way in which this can be done is to follow a model of feedback that focuses on improvement and success.

- Show success.
- Indicate improvement needs.
- Make an improvement suggestion.
- Make the improvement.



Feedback model.

Success

Success can be shown through ticks and smiley faces on written work, or brief comments like 'well done!' When delivered orally, the teacher or support assistant

can nod, smile, and tell the child directly 'you've really got this now'.

It is important to remain non-judgemental, so even if a child has repeatedly missed the learning objectives, there must be no suggestion that there is some factor involved over which the child has no control, for example, their intelligence.

Indicate improvement needs

By showing on written feedback, using highlighting or arrows or circles, the teacher can easily point out to a child where they need to improve their work.

When it comes to oral feedback, a discussion may help the child realise where the improvement is needed, without the teacher leading them directly to the issue. For some, however, it may be more successful to be explicit.

Focusing on the strengths that individual children have is an important part of encouraging them to improve. When they are sure that the teacher and support staff believe in them and understand them, they are more likely to try hard, because their self-esteem is likely to be increased too.

Did you know?

Assessment for learning was developed with a mind to improving the ethos of learning in schools. The idea is to demonstrate that all learning is valued and celebrated, and to develop learners who are prepared to ask for help and access support when they need it. It has also been aimed to develop self-esteem in children around learning, so that they become more confident and engaged young people.

Make an improvement suggestion

Improvement prompts are useful because they are simple ways in which staff can help and encourage a child to improve their work. Improvement suggestions can be reminders, where a child is reminded about the learning objective and what they are supposed to learn. They can also be scaffolded into the learning, where the child is given examples of what they need to do in order to achieve the outcomes. Finally, they can be given simple examples to copy down or to work from that explicitly tell them or show them what they need to do.

All of these types of prompts can be used both orally and as written feedback.

Make the improvement

Children do need to be given class time to read their feedback and make suggested improvements to their work. By taking the time to do this, the teacher ensures that the feedback is looked at and worked on by children, and staff are there to assist if necessary. During that time, support staff can also take the time to ensure that individual children get extra help to understand their feedback and make their improvements.

3.1

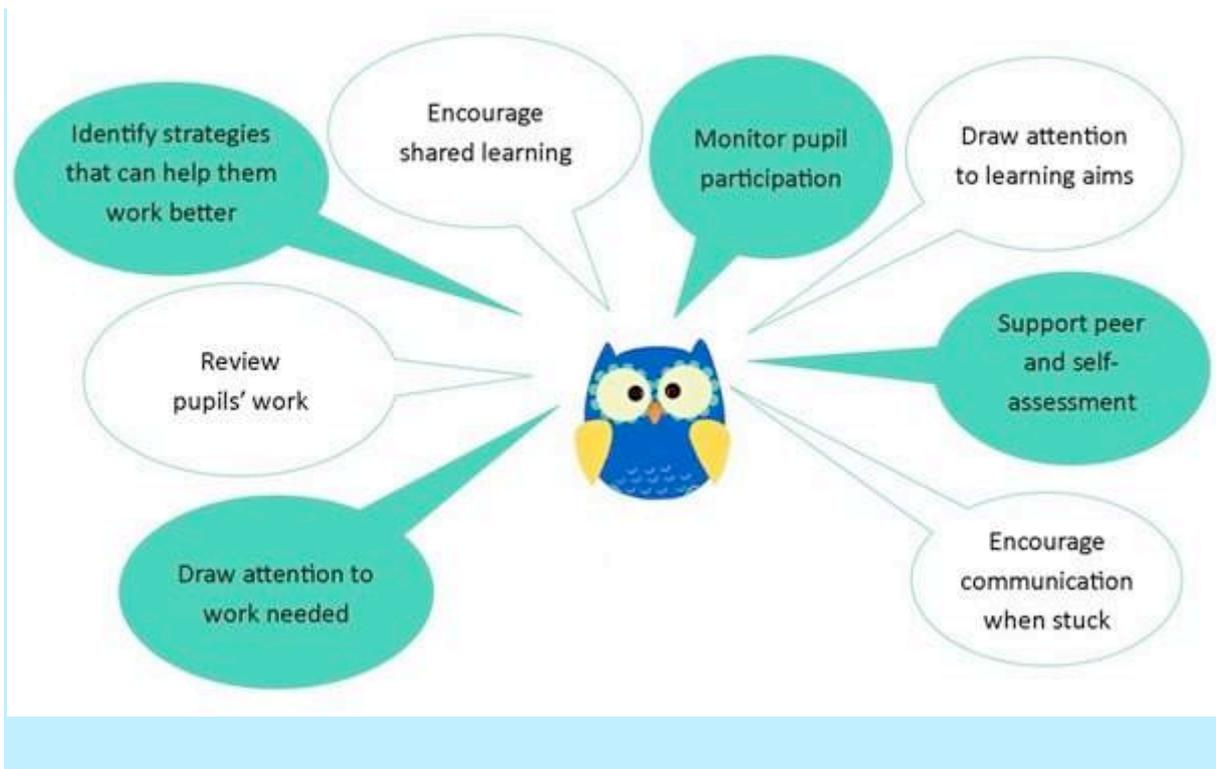
Use information gained from monitoring learner participation and progress to help learners to review their learning strategies, achievements and future learning needs

As you work with the children in your class, you will quickly be able to identify which children are engaged with learning in general, which pupils do not like particular topics or subjects, and where individuals need extra support in order to achieve the learning outcomes.

Monitoring participation and progress

This is one-way assessment, in some senses, because it tells you information about them, but does not tell them what they need to know to improve. Part of your role is to draw their attention to the areas that need work, in a positive, constructive way that is designed to elicit the improvement from them.

If you have any knowledge of learning styles, you may be able to observe and note which children you think have particular styles of learning. This can help you when it comes to the review stage of their work, because strategies that you can suggest to them that will help them improve can then be tailored to the style of learning that suits each individual child.



Support pupils in reviewing learning strategies.

Reviewing pupils' work

Reviewing pupils' work, and helping them match their work with the learning outcomes is useful, so that they can get the most possible out of each lesson, and this needs a strategic approach. There may be a number of ways in which your school utilises strategies that aid with reviewing learning and learning strategies.

These may range from asking each child in the class to share with everyone a single thing they have learned (that is connected to the learning objectives), to getting them to talk to a partner at the end of the session about what they both thought about the work, what they thought needed improvement, and so on.

It is important that children share when they do not understand the information being given them. This way the activity can be modified so that they can better understand it, or it can be explained in a way that makes it clearer to them. Strategies that are used in some schools to enable this include giving them time to write down something in the lesson that they are not clear about, or providing young children with flash cards that show a smiley face and a sad face - they can lift the sad face if

there is something they do not understand.

Self-assessment and peer assessment are also good ways to encourage children to review their work and make improvements. Encouraging them to notice - and say - when they have made a mistake, and guiding them towards seeing what improvements need to be made, are integral parts of their review and learning processes.

At all times throughout activities, it helps to draw pupils' attention to the learning objectives, reminding them that the work they are involved with is supposed to lead directly to those. Where they have deviated, it is useful for them to know how to approach it in the future. This may require them to learn the topic in a different way; for example, instead of building a story by writing one sentence followed by another and so on, they could build the story through drawing a brief picture of each of the scenes in the story, and then construct their writing around those drawings.

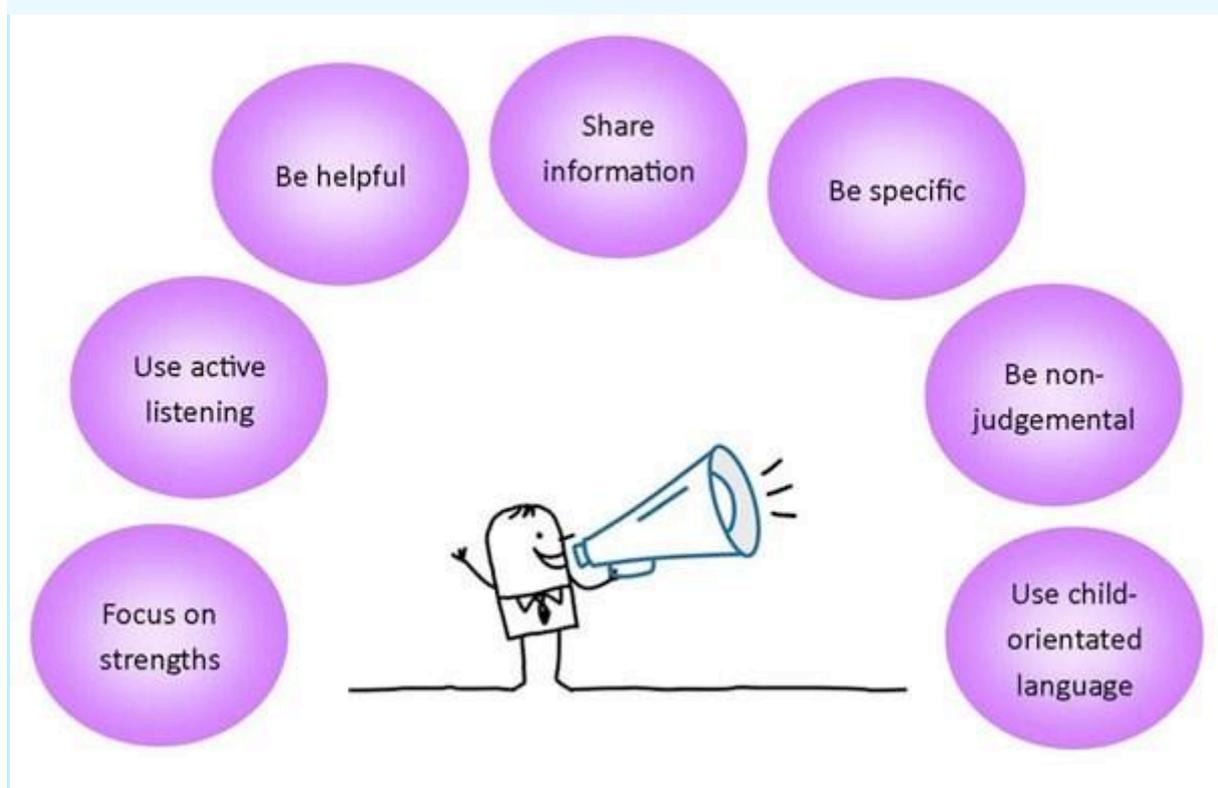
3.2

Listen carefully to learners and positively encourage them to communicate their needs and ideas for future learning

The key to children engaging and participating fully in class is the expression of non-judgemental, strength-building feedback. Children who are prepared to interact with staff during a lesson are those with greater self-esteem, and less fear of making mistakes.

Those who are more shy, less confident in their learning, and who are worried about being made fun of, or of getting things wrong, are less likely to communicate their needs and ideas for future learning.

By utilising your active listening skills and sharing information about learning strategies and the things they need to do to improve their work, you can help provide a safe environment for children to grow in confidence.



Feedback principles.

Two-way feedback

Although feedback mainly comes from staff to children, with suggestions for improvement, and guidance as to the best way this can be attained, it is also

important to encourage children to feed back about their learning.

This is another way of helping them see the point of what they are learning, and is part of drawing links between the learning objectives of a lesson, and the activities they do during the lesson.

There are lots of ways that children can feed back, not just during a discussion as in the example above, but at the beginning, middle, and end of a learning session. These can be done through writing a few sentences about the topic at the end, talking to other children in a small group or with a partner, or writing on the board something that they have learned.

The same or similar techniques can be used to elicit what they do not understand about the lesson. Feedback to these things can then be immediately delivered by the teacher or support staff, and pupils can then be guided to understand the information better, or to produce work that matches up to the learning outcomes more clearly.

Future learning ideas

Discussing children's ideas for future learning can be interesting and eye-opening in some cases! Even if their ideas are too complicated to carry out fully, it is a good self-esteem-raiser for them to be able to see that their ideas have been taken into account, and if they are incorporated into the lesson the next time it is run, this is even better.

Paying attention to what they are interested in, what makes them want to learn more, and how they prefer to learn things, can be really important to encourage their participation and engagement, and can give you useful tips on how to approach learning strategies with individual pupils going forward.

This all sounds very complicated, but can be carried out in quite simple ways. For example, you could ask them what they enjoyed most about the lesson, what they didn't like about it, and then ask them what they think they could do with the same lesson the next time.

3.3

Support learners in using peer assessment and self-assessment to evaluate their learning achievements

Peer and self-assessment are important forms of assessment that should take place in addition to teacher marking and other techniques. Because they encourage children to be independent and self-critical, they provide an extra dimension to learning that can fill out their understanding of the topic.

By involving all the children in a class in the constructive criticism and careful analysis of their own work, they can learn to understand their own progress and what the next steps should be.

Self-assessment and peer assessment activities need to have a very simple and clear core to them. The learning objectives must be straightforward and easily identifiable, and the purpose of the learning objectives must also be made clear. They need assessment criteria that they understand and that they can assess their work against; and their understanding needs to be checked regularly, to ensure that they know what they are looking for.

Peer assessments are usually considered to be a good starting point for self-assessment, because it tunes children into what they should be looking for in their own work.



Supporting peer and self-assessment.

Making assessment criteria accessible

By splitting down the learning objectives and what the children need to know in order to achieve the outcomes, the assessment criteria can be made simple enough for them to follow. In most cases one or two criteria should be the maximum for any single piece of peer or self-assessed work. They should be very specific so that the children can easily understand them, and the purpose of the task should be clarified to ensure understanding.

Promoting collaboration and partnership in peer assessment

One of the most important things to remember about assessment in general, and particularly about peer assessment, is that there should be no comparison between pupils. How successful one child is against another can be due to many external and personal factors, and is not helpful information.

In addition, comparing more able children with less able children usually has the result of reducing the less able child's enthusiasm for learning, and disengagement is soon to follow.

In order for children to adequately assess each other's work, they must be able to look at the work and identify whether or not it fulfils the assessment criteria. They can also look at how the work relates otherwise to the assessment criteria, discussing the activities or exercises they have done, and how those link in with the assessment criteria.

How peer assessment and self-assessment helps learning

Children who understand what is needed to achieve a particular learning outcome are more able to attain it. Peer and self-assessments mean that pupils become more used to looking at their work from the point of view of the teacher and support staff, and this de-fogs the process and makes the purpose and point of the work more obvious.

3.4

Support learners to:

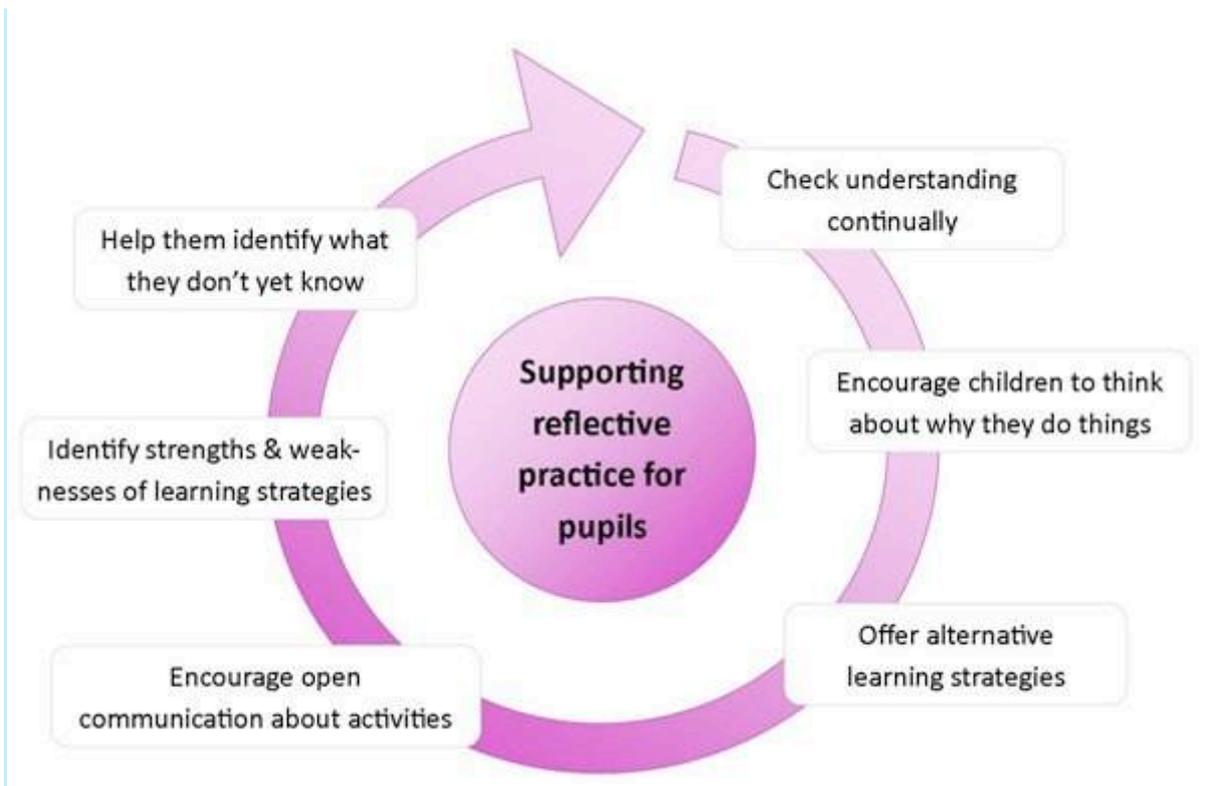
- a) reflect on their learning
- b) identify the progress they have made
- c) identify their emerging learning needs
- d) identify the strengths and weaknesses of their learning strategies and plan how to improve them

Reflecting on their own learning

You may now be quite well-up on reflective practice, and familiar with the learning process that stems from reflecting on your daily work. Reflective practice, however, is something that can be applied in almost any situation, any job, and any role, even that of a pupil.

Children are better able to learn in the future if they are encouraged to reflect on their work and their learning immediately after they have completed their work.

The simplest way to encourage reflection is to ask them questions about it, and check their understanding, during the lesson as well as at the end. For example, you could ask them what they think they should be doing, and why that is important. This means that if they are working towards something other than the agreed learning objectives, they still have time to change and alter what they are doing so that it fits the outcomes better.



Reflective practice.

Identifying their own progress

Again, learners can identify their own progress through self-assessment and peer assessment, but you can also help them do this through asking them questions. Progress can be elicited through questions about what they have learned, what they were stuck on or unsure about, and through encouraging them to ask if they want to know something extra about the exercise underway.

Identifying their emerging learning needs

'Emerging learning needs' is a fancy way of saying 'things they don't yet know', and this can be a difficult area for children to deal with, because so much of their childhoods are spent trying to get things 'right'. Learning needs stem from things they have not got right, and obviously it is important that they should know what those things are so that they can work specifically to improve those areas.

Identifying strengths and weaknesses of learning strategies

One really inclusive way to work with them on their emerging learning needs this is to follow in the style of the popular game show comedy TV programme, QI. The game show uses popular misconceptions to stimulate discussion amongst its guests, and this works very well in a classroom environment too. Because pupils are less afraid of 'getting it wrong', they are able to talk about why they thought it was right and how they worked that out. They can then be gently steered down the right track, and encouraged to continue to analyse what they are doing against the given criteria. Where they have been using a strategy that did not work well for them - and have not achieved the expected outcomes as a result - an alternative strategy can be offered to them so that they will be better equipped next time.

Did you know?

Bringing learning objectives directly into the classroom has been an eye-opening experience for many people working in education. Prior to 2002, there were few teachers who shared the learning objectives with the pupils; however, the more this has become good practice, the more engaged learners in schools have become, so including it in the assessment for learning approach makes a great deal of useful sense.

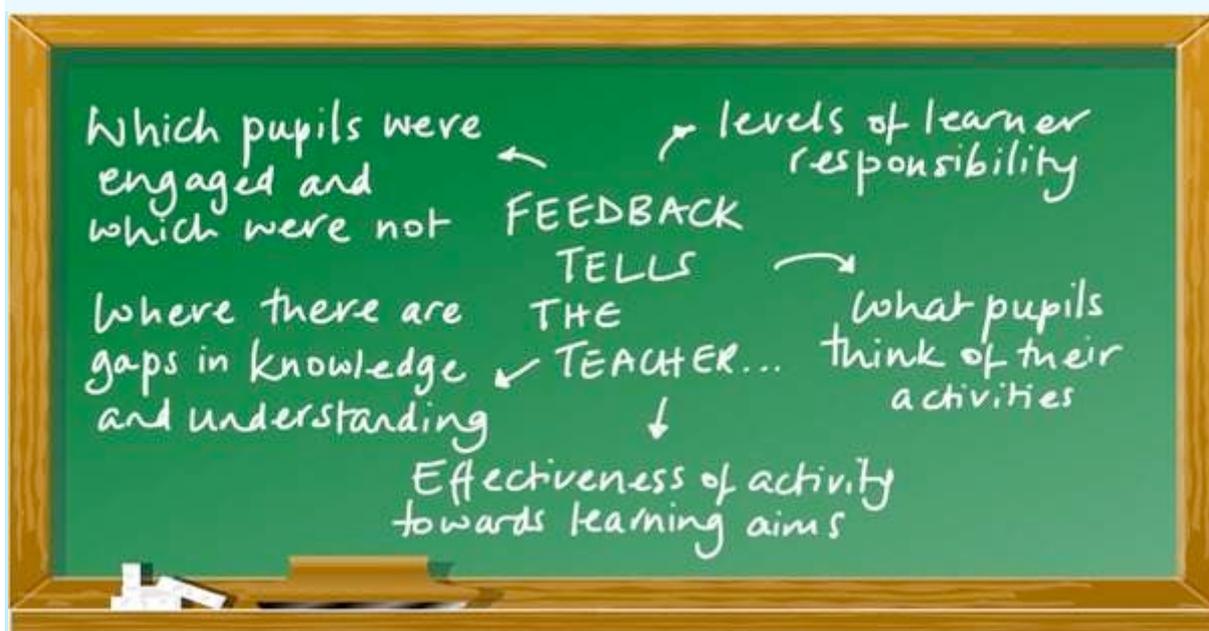
4.1

Provide feedback to the teacher on:

- a) learner participation and progress in the learning activities
- b) learners' engagement in and response to assessment for learning
- c) learners' progress in taking responsibility for their own learning

Assessment for learning requires collaboration between the teacher and support staff so that children are given the best and most suitable opportunities for their own learning. How the activities were engaged with, how the children responded to them, and which approaches worked best, are all useful pieces of information that will help the teacher plan assessments better next time around.

The main areas where your feedback is important to the teacher are in learner participation, learner engagement, and how learner responsibility has progressed.



The value of feedback.

Learner participation and progress in learning activities

How much the children were engaged with the learning activities themselves will tell the teacher how interested the pupils were in the activity. Any areas of difficulty need to be addressed in future classes, and if there are apparently gaps in knowledge that

make the activity less accessible to children, in the future these need to be filled prior to the activity.

You should be able to take notes throughout lessons that enable your ability to feed back to the teacher. This can be in a tabular form, or it could just be informal notes in an exercise pad, to act as memory prompts.

Learner engagement and response to assessment for learning

If a child was engaged, but did not complete the activity, or if they seemed to find the exercise difficult at one or more stages, this may denote an issue with the child's learning progression; however, if several children of differing abilities appeared to have difficulty understanding one or more areas of the exercise, this may mean that the activity itself was too complicated or at a level that was too high.

Asking children how they feel about the exercise, as well as how well they thought they did at it can be helpful with being able to feed back to the teacher. Again, you could take notes, or this type of question and answer session could become a regular feature at the end of learning sessions.

Learner progress in taking responsibility for own learning

When it comes to pupils taking responsibility for their own learning, much of this will be tied in with how engaged they are with the assessment process. Where there is a lack of engagement or interest in the topic or activity, this may indicate an issue in the way it has been presented, or there may be specific learning objectives that need to be further fulfilled by the pupil.

You could feed this type of information back to the teacher in a discussion at the end of the day, or in the form of notes on each pupil. In order to make your feedback as useful and effective as possible, it is sensible to organise it in a logical way; this makes it more accessible and easier to understand from the teacher's point of view.

4.2

Use the outcomes of assessment for learning to reflect on and improve own contribution to supporting learning

Your support to children and the teacher during assessment for learning is crucial to the system working well. How you evaluate your own approaches and successes must link in with the successes attained by the pupils, and by reflecting on your own contribution and the outcomes of the assessments in class, you can make improvements to your work in a way that enables it to be more effective in the future.

One way in which you can reflect on the events from class time is to write in your reflective journal. Some of the areas you might find useful to think about include whether or not the children seemed engaged; what problems were encountered and how you guided them to understand things better; how successful your questioning techniques were and whether or not you could have asked more effective questions; how you gave feedback to children and how they responded to it; and what you did to support their self-assessment and peer assessment.



Assessments to reflect on and improve learning.

How to improve your support

If you find during your reflection that some of the children were not as responsive as others to your questions, or that the answers that were given indicated that they did not understand fully what they were supposed to be doing, you will need to think about how you presented the ideas, assessment criteria, or other information to them, and how better to do it going forward. Sometimes children of differing abilities need slightly differentiated ways to approach the same topic.

There is no need to feel that you have done something 'wrong' if a strategy you

attempted did not elicit the responses you wanted. Rather, it may be more constructive to research new strategies, talk to teachers and other support staff, and find out better ways to do these things. You can then input these new ideas into the lesson plans in the future, and ensure that you will be able to improve things for the children next time around. Just like with school pupils, there is little or no benefit in lingering on what went wrong; the benefit lies in knowing what to do to improve.

Flexible approaches

During your work, and afterwards, during reflection, you will find that your ability to be flexible is extremely useful. It means that when you see that an approach is not working for a particular child, or for a group of pupils, you can alter it slightly to make it more accessible for them. It also means that afterwards, when you are reflecting on the work done and you find that part of it was not as successful as the rest, you will be able to build in failsafe extras, or additional strategies that you can fall back on in future.

As long as you are prepared to develop and grow as much as the children you support are willing to do so, you will find that reflection on your own practice will help and enable your effectiveness as you amend and alter the way you work. The more effective you are at this, the more supportive the pupils will find you.

Did you know?

There has been a lot of controversy around the use of teaching assistants in schools, where they have been touted as being 'cheap teaching staff' and similar. However, the evidence suggests that teaching assistants should be used to add value to what teachers do, that they should be utilised in working one-on-one and in small teaching groups, and that the interventions they use should be carefully structured, in order to make the most of their presence in classrooms.

Case Study

Francis is helping with an art lesson in Year 5. They are making papier-mâché pig money boxes out of balloons, and the learning objectives are centred on the use of appropriate materials, responsible use of glue and other chemicals, and the use of colour.

Children have been given a variety of paper and card-based materials to work with, and Francis is engaged with supporting one particular child, Ewan, who has some coordination difficulties. The same child has some communication issues, but is always very cheerful and optimistic about life, and is a popular pupil in the class.

Some of the paper materials are not suitable for papier-mâché, and have been supplied to the children because they have been asked to identify what is the best material out of which to make their pigs. Ewan keeps picking up some pieces of thick, corrugated card, and Francis keeps removing the card from his desk and returning it to the pile.

Francis wants Ewan to do well at this task, because he believes the child is quite practical and will be able to find an area of school that really suits him, with the right kind of encouragement. Ewan finds maths and reading quite hard and he also struggles to hold a pen correctly, although he has almost overcome this problem in the last year or so.

Francis is briefly called away to look at someone else's work, and when he comes back, Ewan has stuck card pieces on his papier-mâché pig. Francis leans forward and starts to remove the pieces which are still quite wet from the paste, but as he does so, the layers of paper that had dried underneath seem to tear, and he hears a hissing sound from the inside of the model, and realises that he has burst the balloon. The model sinks into itself, to Ewan's horror, and as the child's eyes fill with tears, Francis can see that he has made a mistake. He calls the teacher over and explains the situation, including the fact that he had been trying to stop Ewan from putting the corrugated cardboard on the pig.

Assessor Notes

- Francis overstepped the mark, because this type of behaviour is not at all connected to the principles of assessment for learning.
- Francis could have talked to Ewan about why the corrugated cardboard was not the correct material, but instead just did things without communicating about it.
- Ewan is an able enough child in many ways, and would have benefitted from a discussion; his self-esteem may be affected adversely if people always try to do things for him instead of showing and explaining what he needs to do for himself.