

2008–2009

Creating a Curriculum for Excellence

Part 4: Assessment for Learning – Supporting and Improving Learning Through Assessment 3–18



**PERTH &
KINROSS
COUNCIL**

Education &
Children's Services

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**Originates from LTS as a resource to support AifL*

Introduction

1

This paper is the fourth in a series of 5 papers which, when taken together, outline Education & Children's Services framework and guidance for the development and implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence* in Perth and Kinross. It outlines the Perth and Kinross strategy for supporting and improving learning through effective assessment.

Rationale

2

In Perth and Kinross we are committed to the promotion of lifelong learning. Learning how to learn is important and we provide experiences for our pupils from 3-18 which show them how to learn. We support and improve learning by fully involving pupils in the assessment process and enabling them to take increasing responsibility for progress in their learning.

2.1 Assessment is for Learning National Project

Following on from the highly successful *Assessment is for Learning* (AifL) national initiative, Circular 02 (*Scottish Executive Education Department 2005*) committed all schools to introducing AifL by 2007. It stated that 'Staff, children and parents will participate in **internal** assessment both **formative** (the continuous process of gathering evidence of learning, providing timely feedback about strengths and development needs and planning next steps) and **summative** (arriving at a judgement at a particular point in time about the extent and quality of learning). Local authorities, HM Inspectors of Education and the Scottish Executive will also gather and use information from **external** assessment to inform judgements about the quality of learning and planning for improvement.' (ref Appendix A)

2.2 Curriculum for Excellence

In Perth and Kinross, we endorse the advice given about assessment within 'Building the Curriculum 3: A Framework for Learning and Teaching':

'A young person's progress should be assessed in ways and at times appropriate to that person's learning needs. Judgements made about this learning should be based on evidence from a broad range of sources, both in and out of school and by reference to a learner's progress over time, across a range of activities. The approaches to assessment developed through Assessment is for Learning provide a sound platform to support this planning. Learning, teaching and assessment should be designed in ways that reflect the way different learners progress to motivate and encourage their learning. To support this, all learners should be involved in planning and reflecting on their own learning, through formative assessment, self and peer evaluation and personal learning planning.'

In recent years much research has been undertaken in assessment and its impact on learning. Insights from research have informed the national AifL initiative, and teachers are increasingly interested in the practical application of research

in formative assessment, particularly the work of *Black and Wiliam*. This will be particularly helpful as we strive to put into practice the aims of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

In Perth and Kinross we believe that through the implementation of effective assessment techniques all learners can improve their capacity to learn.

The purpose of assessment is to provide pupils, parents, teachers and other professionals with the feedback they need to support and improve learning. It is fundamental to effective learning and teaching.

2.3 Key Principles

The following key principles underpin effective assessment:

- ❑ *Learners should be fully engaged in the process of learning.*
- ❑ *Teachers should work with learners to identify learning intentions and criteria for success.*
- ❑ *Teachers should challenge pupils to think about their learning through high quality interaction with them.*
- ❑ *Teachers should work with the learner closely and take action to modify teaching to meet the needs of individual learners.*
- ❑ *Teachers should provide good quality verbal and written feedback.*
- ❑ *Learners should understand, and be confident about, what to do to improve.*
- ❑ *Learners should know how to assess their own work and to co-operate with others in the learning process.*
- ❑ *Learners should be encouraged to take more responsibility for planning and improving their own learning.*
- ❑ *Learners should display confidence in the learning process and moving towards their next steps.*
- ❑ *Teachers should have opportunities to moderate their assessments within and across schools to ensure that standards are applied consistently.*
- ❑ *Evidence from assessment should be used to reflect on, evaluate and improve learning and teaching and the curriculum.*
- ❑ *Parents and carers should have opportunities to contribute to the assessment process.*
- ❑ *A range of assessment evidence relevant to the work in progress should be gathered. For the purpose of reporting, such evidence is drawn together at given times. Assessment information is used to provide a summary of an individual's progress in learning.*

'Assessment will be an integral part of learning and teaching, helping to provide an emerging picture of a young person's learning and achievements as he or she develops across the four capacities.'

(Building the Curriculum 3: A Framework for Learning and Teaching)

It is the responsibility of all staff and other professionals to implement both formative and summative assessment. The role of formative and summative assessment is defined within three key areas (ref Appendix B):

- ❑ *Assessment **for** learning (formative assessment)*
- ❑ *Assessment **as** learning (personal learning planning)*
- ❑ *Assessment **of** learning (local moderation)*

3.1 Assessment for learning (formative assessment) is integral to the learning process, improves learning, and should be a key feature of learning and teaching in every classroom. Through formative assessment, teachers will gather a body of evidence which enables them to make accurate and well-informed judgements about pupils' progress. Formative assessment is not about measuring and comparing pupils' work against others.

Key features of assessment **for** learning are:

- ❑ *Pupils, staff and parents are clear about what is to be learned and what success will look like.*
- ❑ *Pupils and staff are given timely feedback about the quality of their work and how to make it better.*
- ❑ *Pupils and staff are fully involved in deciding next steps in learning and identifying who can help.*
- ❑ *Classroom assessment involves high quality interactions, based on thoughtful questions, careful listening and reflective responses.*

3.2 Assessment as learning (personal learning planning) builds on formative assessment. When formative assessment is embedded in classroom practice, pupils become increasingly confident in their learning and are clear about how well they are achieving their learning goals. The next part of the process is personal learning planning, which involves the pupil and the teacher in a dialogue to review the learning and to decide next steps. This can be undertaken with individuals or groups of pupils.

Key features of assessment **as** learning are:

- Pupils and staff identify and reflect on their own evidence of learning.*
- Pupils and staff help to set their own learning goals.*
- Pupils and staff practice self and peer assessment.*

It should be noted that personal learning planning is one part of a process, and does not necessarily require discrete personal plans. Personal learning planning is based on dialogue between teachers and learners. Key outcomes of such dialogue will be evident throughout the assessment process, for example:

- Learning intentions for groups of pupils or individuals are recorded in teachers' plans and evaluations.*
- Learning intentions and success criteria are written in pupils' jotters, learning logs, black/whiteboards and displays of work.*
- Feedback to pupils is evident in their work. Examples of success and areas for improvement in relation to learning goals are highlighted. Written comments are specific about what to do to improve.*
- Self and peer assessment is evident in classroom activities eg pupils work with learning partners to assess the quality of their work against given criteria or even to devise their own criteria for assessment.*
- Learners demonstrate skill in talking about how well they are learning.*
- Reports to parents indicate progress towards goals.*

3.3 Assessment of learning (local moderation)

As part of the ongoing process of working with pupils, teachers will collect a body of evidence from, for example, talking with pupils about their learning, challenging and extending their thinking, providing oral and written feedback and talking with them about their next steps. Together with evidence from summative assessments, teachers will be able to make informed summaries of pupils' progress in learning.

It is important that judgements are reliable and consistent across schools and sectors. Teachers within schools and local management groups should have opportunities to share and discuss samples of work and to agree the standards which they apply to assessing pupils' work.

In some circumstances, specific assessments for diagnostic purposes will be used to identify next steps in learning. For some pupils with additional support needs, targets from individualised education plans or co-ordinated support plans will be in place. These will be taken into account by all staff involved with such pupils.

As a result of these activities, staff within schools and departments will have robust information about the quality and quantity of learning with which to evaluate their provision and plan for improvement.

Key features of assessment **of** learning are:

- ❑ *Staff use a range of evidence from day-to-day activities to check on pupils' progress.*
- ❑ *Staff talk and work together to share standards in and across schools.*
- ❑ *Staff use assessment information to monitor their establishment's provision and progress, and to plan for improvement.*

Planning Learning

4

'To support curriculum planning, and to ensure that all learners have access to an active, enterprising learning environment, a coherent approach to planning learning, teaching and assessment information about progress and achievements is needed.'

(Building the Curriculum 3: A Framework for Learning and Teaching)

As schools review the curriculum in relation to *Curriculum for Excellence* they will identify learning outcomes, experiences and learning and teaching approaches necessary to deliver these.

It is essential that at that point teachers ask “How will we know that key outcomes have been achieved, and how well have they been achieved?” and build assessment activities at key points into the planned curriculum. Put simply, it means:

- ❑ *What key outcomes for pupils' learning have we planned?*
- ❑ *What are the key activities which pupils will experience?*
- ❑ *What key assessment activities will we plan so that we know how much and how well they have learned?*

Planning for effective learning should take account of the curricular advice set out in the Perth and Kinross '*Creating a Curriculum for Excellence Part 1: 3-18 Curriculum Framework*'.

5–14 National Assessments

5

“Staff will need to have a clear understanding of how their own pupils are progressing in relation to others in their establishment, authority and different parts of the country, against the outcomes and experiences at different levels. They will need to share broader local and national expectations. Regular, planned opportunities for dialogue will be required within and across establishments to help staff share and consistently apply standards.”

(Building the Curriculum 3: A Framework for Learning and Teaching)

Teachers currently select materials from nationally available resources to confirm teachers' judgements in reading, writing and mathematics. When assessment of learning throughout a local management group has been agreed and is reliable and robust, schools may decide not to use the national assessment materials. In deciding to record progress using teachers' judgements only, local management groups should ensure that:

- ❑ *teachers' judgements are based on a range of sound evidence for each pupil;*
- ❑ *criteria for each stage of learning/assessment are applied consistently across all schools in the local management group.*

National Qualifications

6

'Every child and young person should have the benefits of an assessment system that supports the curriculum rather than leads it and ensures that their transition into qualifications is smooth.'

(Building the Curriculum 3: A Framework for Learning and Teaching)

National qualifications are important to pupils in opening up pathways for future learning and employment. Where certification is the end point, the required assessments will be predominantly summative. Formative assessment, as part the process of effective learning and teaching, will prepare pupils for these end points.

Assessment Across the Curriculum

7

In creating a curriculum for excellence, the curriculum will be designed to include interdisciplinary courses and programmes. Staff involved in planning such work should ensure that all those who will implement the courses and programmes are aware of the planned learning outcomes and key assessment activities.

As part of Curriculum for Excellence, all teachers will have responsibility for learning and teaching in certain areas of the curriculum such as literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. In planning such work, it will be important for schools to identify learning outcomes and assessment activities for groups and individuals, and to ensure that all relevant staff are aware of these.

National Surveys of Achievement

8

In Perth and Kinross we are committed to taking part in national surveys of achievement such as the Scottish Survey of Achievement (SSA). The SSA is a sample survey which monitors how well pupils in Scotland are learning. Each year the SSA focuses on a different aspect of the curriculum and surveys attainment in P3, P5, P7 and S2. The survey collects a range of information, including teachers' professional judgements and the views of teachers and pupils.

Each year schools in Perth and Kinross will take part in the SSA. Information is reported at national and local authority level, which is useful in identifying strengths and weaknesses of pupils' performance in a subject and can help to shape future learning and teaching. The information provided will raise questions for schools, local management groups and the authority about attainment and provision in their own schools and provide an opportunity to discuss and plan improvement.

Parents

9

Parents have an important role to play in supporting and improving their children's learning through assessment. Schools and early years centres should involve parents through, for example:

- ❑ *Parent workshops about AifL*
- ❑ *Sharing their children's learning goals*
- ❑ *Encouraging them to discuss feedback*
- ❑ *Sharing next steps*
- ❑ *Taking account of parents' views about their children's learning*
- ❑ *Discussing the overall picture of achievement with the Parent Council*

The diagram in Appendix B illustrates ways in which parents may be involved at each stage of the assessment process.

Partners

10

A range of partners external to schools or early years centres are involved in working with learners. It is important that they have an understanding of how assessment supports and improves attainment and that they are clear about their role in working with schools and early years centres. Partners should ensure that they, for example:

- ❑ *regularly review their assessment practices and the impact these are having in schools and classrooms;*
- ❑ *are fully involved in deciding priorities for development on the basis of assessment evidence and identifying sources of support;*
- ❑ *talk and work together to share expectations and standards in learning and achievement, within and across local authorities and across Scotland as a whole;*
- ❑ *understand the strengths, limitations and validity of different types of assessment information and use this knowledge to plan learning.*

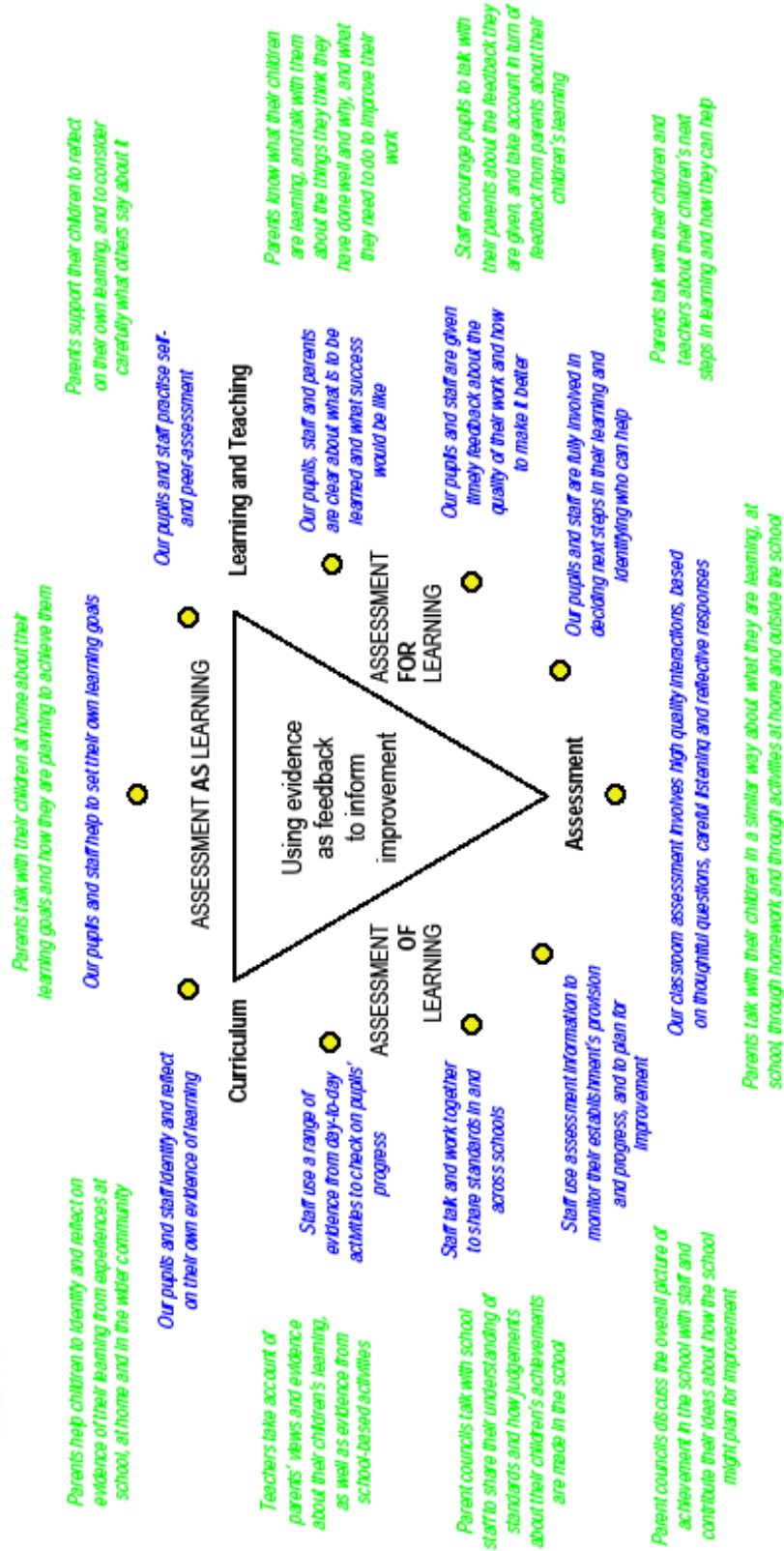
The diagram in Appendix C illustrates ways in which partners may be involved at each stage of the assessment process.

Support for practitioners in delivering ‘*Supporting and Improving Learning Through Assessment*’ is provided by schools, centrally based staff and external agencies. The following are key sources of support:

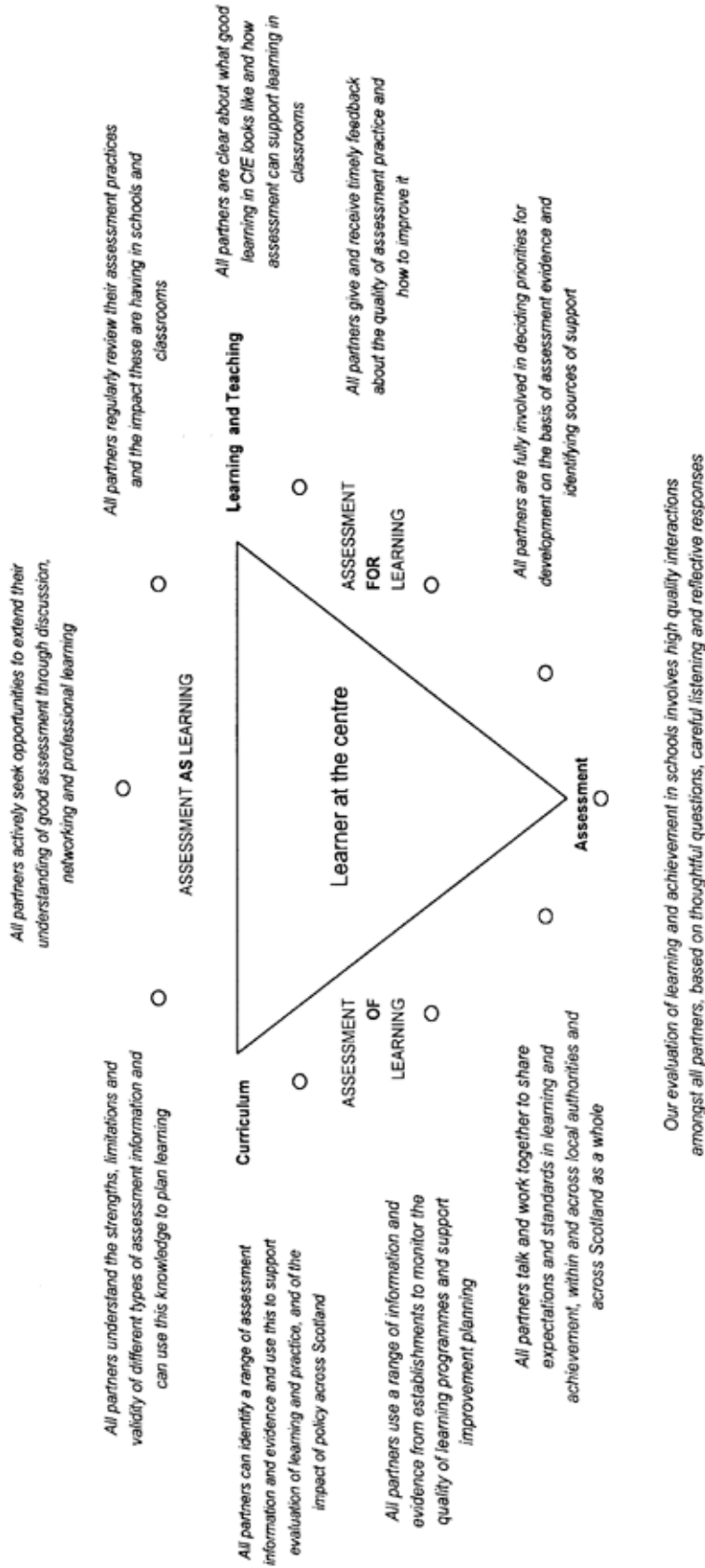
- ❑ *‘Training the Trainer’ courses and materials, provided by the authority*
- ❑ *A list of teachers who have previously undergone the authority training and who can support teachers in schools (available on authority Curriculum for Excellence wiki space)*
- ❑ *Assessment for Learning: A practical guide for secondary teachers (provided for all secondary departments)*
- ❑ *Learning and Teaching Scotland website (www.ltscotland.org.uk) including self-assessment toolkits, examples of good practice, research evidence and a discussion forum*
- ❑ *Authority wiki space including case studies and examples of good practice*
- ❑ *Journey to Excellence Part 5*
- ❑ *How Good Is Our School 3? (HMle)*

Appendix A – Circular 02 (SEED 2005)

Formative	
Internal	External
<p>Formative assessment</p> <p>Personal learning planning</p> <p>Involving learners, and parents and other adults, in the learning process</p>	<p>Local authority collection and analysis of information to inform provision and improvement</p> <p>HMIE inspection feedback and Subject/quality/improving reports</p> <p>Follow-through inspection activities</p>
<p>Teachers' judgements and reports, with local moderation and National Assessments as part of understanding and sharing standards</p>	<p>Scottish Survey of Achievement P3, P5, P7, S2</p> <p>National Qualifications (SQA)</p> <p>International studies</p> <p>HMIE inspections and reports on authorities and schools</p>
Summative	



Appendix C – Key Features of Assessment for External Partners



Further Information

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