

ANTRIM GRAMMAR SCHOOL

ASSESSMENT, HOMEWORK AND REPORTING POLICY

March 2007

This policy covers key aspects of formal and informal assessment within the curriculum, the marking of pupils' work, the recording of pupils' progress and achievements, and the means by which such progress and achievement are reported. This policy takes into account all the relevant statutory requirements. It also provides guidelines which encourage assessment for learning and target-setting. Homework and independent learning also form essential components of learning beyond the classroom; the assessment and monitoring of which is vital.

THE AIMS OF ASSESSMENT WITHIN ANTRIM GRAMMAR SCHOOL

- To help each individual pupil work towards achieving his/her potential.
- To provide realistic and systematic judgements on the achievement and progress of individual pupils, set against agreed assessment objectives and criteria.
- To monitor the progress of each pupil against a professional judgement of his/her capability and potential; and to reward sustained application.
- To keep parents informed about their child's progress and achievement.
- To assist all pupils to take on appropriate and increasing responsibility for assessing aspects of their own achievement and learning.
- To provide information on actual and potential academic and other achievements to inform pupils' subject choices, and to support their moves to higher education and employment.
- To use the outcomes of assessment to help teachers enhance their teaching and planning to best meet the needs of individuals and groups of pupils.
- To encourage consistent, relevant, comprehensible and helpful marking, grading and annotation, so that assessment is an integral part of the Learning Cycle.
- To provide remediation and assistance for all pupils, wherever possible, whatever their needs or abilities.

HOW THESE PURPOSES ARE ACHIEVED

1. **To help each individual pupil work towards achieving his/her full academic potential.**

Effective assessment will:

- measure pupils' progress against relevant assessment objectives and criteria;
- be planned and identified in departmental schemes;
- emphasise positive achievement;
- identify areas needing development or improvement;
- suggest strategies for effecting improvement;
- identify individual learning needs.

Effective assessment is carried out by:

- adhering to departmental policies on assessment, homework, coursework, etc.;

- adapting lessons and schemes to the learning outcomes identified;
- regular assessment, including marking and discussion of classwork and homework;
- discussing with pupils the outcomes of formal school-based assessment;
- support offered by subject teachers and year tutors.

2. To provide realistic and systematic judgements on the achievement and progress of individual pupils, set against agreed assessment objectives and criteria.

Effective assessment should:

- highlight positive achievement;
- clearly inform each pupil, and his/her parents, of the level of his/her achievement over a set period, against agreed objectives and criteria;
- set targets which will help a pupil to improve his/her achievement and rectify weaknesses.

Effective assessment is carried out by:

- formal school examinations for all pupils each year;
- “mock” examinations for those sitting external examinations that year;
- formalised examination practice, in preparation for external examinations;
- corroboration of individual teacher assessment by departmental monitoring, including standardisation meetings.

3. To monitor the progress of each pupil against a professional judgement of his/her capability and potential; and to reward sustained application.

This is achieved, in addition to the above, by the regular setting and marking of classwork and homework, monitoring by subject leaders, using value-added and target-setting techniques and by analysing and evaluating external examination results. Target setting will also be employed both to motivate and evaluate individual and class progress. Sustained application of assessment for learning instruction and annotation will be rewarded.

4. To keep parents informed about their child’s progress and achievement.

Regular liaison with parents is a vital aspect of effective assessment practice. At Antrim Grammar School, liaison with parents is carried out by:

- sending home a progress report towards the end of the Autumn Term and an annual academic report (after mock examinations for Years 12, 13 and 14, or in June for Years 8 – 11);
- inviting parents to discuss the report with year tutors, or respond on appropriate sections of the report;
- regular parents’ evenings at which all teaching staff are available for discussion;
- the practice of contacting parents as a matter of course if a pupil experiences persistent difficulties;
- encouraging parents to contact the school if they feel there is a problem.
- the use of weekly or daily homework and other report cards, to monitor application and homework;

- meetings to discuss with parents matters such as examination revision, coursework requirements and subject options choices.

5. To assist pupils to take an appropriate and increasing responsibility for assessing aspects of their own progress and learning.

This will be achieved through:

- setting, encouraging and monitoring independent/extension learning, beyond the classroom;
- detailed pupil profiles covering the requirements specified by DENI/CCEA or other statutory bodies;
- the development of peer and self-assessment strategies;

The process of pupil reflection is helped by:

- the use of self-evaluation forms, self-marking when appropriate, the evaluative element of coursework;
- direct pupil responses to prior teacher instruction and annotation.

It is further assisted by:

- a programme of study skills development;
- insisting on deadlines being met, (both interim and final deadlines);
- progressive emphasis on individual evaluation, research, use of study time, etc.

6. To provide information on actual and potential academic and other achievements to inform pupils' subject choices and to support their applications to higher education and employment.

This is achieved by:

- effective target-setting;
- the pupil profiles;
- an effective system for generating public examination predictions grounded on thorough reviews and the results of detailed school-based assessment;
- interviewing every pupil before entry into Years 11, 13 and 14, and all higher education applicants prior to completion of their application (and interviews).

7. To use the outcomes of assessment to help teachers enhance their teaching and planning to best meet the individuals and groups of pupils.

On a day-to-day basis, teachers gain and use the feedback from their marking of pupils' work. In addition to this, feedback is gained from:

- international, national or regional research;
- school and departmental analyses of external examination results;
- agreed departmental moderation procedures;
- departmental analysis of school-based assessment and examinations.

8. To encourage consistent, relevant, comprehensible and helpful marking, grading and annotation, so that assessment is an integral part of the Learning Cycle.

- each departmental handbook will contain policies which specify an agreed, consistent approach to assessment, homework and coursework;
- the subject leader will monitor all policy-into-practice issues and evaluate, with his/her colleagues, the effectiveness of policies and practice;
- all assessment objectives, key specifications, assessment criteria and marking grids should be communicated to all pupils;
- all members of each department should mark or grade according to departmental policy;
- annotation ought to be legible, comprehensible, encouraging of any degree of success and it ought to identify potential improvement;
- marking and annotation of coursework will follow examination board rubric.

9. To provide remediation and assistance for all pupils, wherever possible, whatever their needs or abilities.

- individual pupils will seek help and explanation initially from their classroom teachers;
- subject leaders will ensure that individual assistance is given where it is sought or needed (especially after periods of absence);
- year tutors will oversee overall individual progress and negotiate remediation strategies;
- ICT facilities will be provided in school for pupils without home access;
- various after-school programmes exist to aid individuals and groups.

HOMEWORK

Purpose of Homework

- to set learning beyond the classroom into the context of the Learning Cycle;
- to extend learning beyond the classroom;
- to offer a variety of tasks which extend knowledge and understanding, and which develop skills;
- to assess, develop and test the above;
- to encourage habits of lifelong inquiry and learning;
- to satisfy coursework demands;
- to offer opportunities to assess progress;
- to diagnose the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

Frequency of Homework

- in Years 8 – 10, year tutors will monitor and tabulate overall homework demands, in negotiation with subject leaders. These should be completed and distributed by October each year. Parents will have access to these, at the appropriate time, on the school website or by contacting the relevant Year Tutor;
- all subjects should set and mark homework, the frequency and nature of which will be specified in departmental handbooks and schemes;

- in liaison with parents and pupils, the volume and frequency of homework will be monitored by year tutors and subject leaders;
- the amount of homework set will, in part, reflect subject demands and timetabled teaching time;
- except when absolutely necessary for examination classes, written work will not be set over holidays.

Organisation of Homework

- homework tasks should be planned and core homework specified in departmental handbooks and schemes of work;
- tasks should not be set at the end of a period but as part of a learning context;
- all expectations should be clearly communicated and if they are generic or common requirements, a handout should be given and explained;
- pupils must use their diaries appropriately and this use should be monitored by class teachers and year tutors;
- coursework tasks for Years 11 – 14 should be managed so as to spread the work over a realistic period;
- where more than one teacher takes a class for any subject, there must be clear and equitable management of teaching, assessment and coursework.

Relevance of Homework

- the purpose, learning aims and relevance of each homework should be explained clearly and succinctly;
- tasks should be varied, reflecting different learning styles and purposes;
- necessarily recursive tasks should be interspersed with more stimulating tasks, and made as varied and interesting as possible;
- extension or remediation work will be provided for those who consistently find the work too easy or difficult;
- imaginative homework tasks can foster a love of learning;
- pupils should be facilitated in making a clear link between class and homework tasks and assessment.

Marking of Homework

- departmental schemes will specify how homework is to be assessed;
- all pupils' work will be assessed, annotated and returned as promptly as possible;
- subject leaders will monitor the consistency of approach and policy into practice within their departments;
- peer or self-assessment of homework may, on occasions, be beneficial;
- homework should be marked and annotated in line with clearly communicated assessment criteria, clearly specifying how work may be improved;
- pupils' work and progress will be monitored by subject leaders and the SLT.

Recording of Homework Outcomes

- all forms of assessment, including homework, should produce quantifiable results, which must be recorded;
- these records will facilitate report writing and discussion with pupils and parents, as well as departmental monitoring;
- the recording of homework marks/grades will reflect school and departmental policies, relevant examination specifications and subject requirements.

Target-Setting and Homework

- homework will always be set in the context of meeting targets;
- target-setting, in conjunction with homework, is a tool for encouraging pupils to attain their potential academic targets;
- common targets for an entire class or sub-group can inform the purpose and nature of homework;
- coursework tasks done at home will involve the communication of very specific targets and deadlines;
- target setting ought to be used to evaluate the suitability and quality of homework tasks.

Presentation of Accuracy of Homework

- quality rather than quantity is the key to effective learning through homework;
- departments will specify what homework is merely acknowledged or very thoroughly corrected, but thorough marking should be the norm;
- the school's Language and Presentation Policy will be reflected in departmental policies;
- departmental handbooks and schemes will specify expectations of presentation and accuracy of work, how these will affect marking and what penalties are triggered by specified inadequacies;
- the whole school approach to "forgotten homework" without valid excuse is extra work, followed by a Departmental Detention;
- poor English should not be accepted by any subject – other core skills will also transcend subject boundaries.

Annotation of Homework

- pupils are entitled to know what their grade/mark means, why they received it, and what they can do to improve upon it;
- the most useful annotation reflects assessment criteria, using language that is intelligible to pupils;
- vague, generalised comments like "very fair" should be avoided – they tell the pupil little or nothing;
- coded abbreviations for corrections should be explained to pupils;
- annotation of coursework will be formative for drafts and summative for moderation purposes.

Differentiated Tasks

- different individuals, groups and classes may, on occasion, require differentiated homework tasks;
- this differentiation should be managed through departmental handbooks and schemes; pupils, parents, subject leaders and year tutors may need to negotiate these.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Homework

- the subject leader is responsible for monitoring and evaluating homework setting, marking and overall usefulness;
- monitoring ought to be regular, ensuring that there is consistency of practice, guided by departmental policies and schemes;
- homework tasks will be evaluated for their effectiveness in regular departmental reviews;
- the school's Principal and Vice-Principals will monitor the management of this process by subject leaders.

Departmental Assessment and Homework Policies

- these will reflect external curriculum and assessment requirements;
- they will also seek to implement whole-school policies;
- they will articulate guidelines established through professional discussion within departments, managed by subject leaders;
- all policies should be reviewed and updated bi-annually;
- all policies should be working documents, which guide practice.

REPORTING

Something has already been said about reporting to parents, above. Much work has been done over the past three years to improve our reporting approaches and formats, using IT. We are constantly reviewing reporting processes and outcomes, to make them as comprehensible and useful as possible. It is envisaged that the nature, format and frequency of reporting will increasingly harmonise with a lifelong learning process expressed through pupil profiling.